

## **IMPROVING ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION THROUGH GOOD GOVERNANCE: LESSONS LEARNED FROM NIGERIA'S 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS**

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**Abstract:** The phenomenon of declining voter turnout is a global issue that endangers the genuineness of electoral processes. This research paper addresses the role of political alienation in voter abstention during Nigeria's 2019 general elections through a study of a sample of 1,200 respondents from six local government areas in the country's different geopolitical zones. The research reveals that voters become alienated primarily because of the inability of elected officials to fulfil electoral promises, electoral fraud, and violence. This study intends to establish that voter apathy is not the sole reason for the decrease in voter turnout; political alienation is its significant factor. The research suggests possible measures to enhance electoral participation, including good governance based on people-oriented policies by elected officials and putting in place mechanisms to prevent and control electoral fraud and violence during elections at all governmental levels. The study highlights the necessity of voter participation in guaranteeing democratic processes' credibility, legitimacy, and stability. This paper contributes to the increasing concern over declining voter turnout by presenting political alienation as a cause of voter abstention and proposes feasible solutions.

**Keywords:** Voter Participation, Political Alienation, Electoral Fraud, Electoral Violence, Democratic Stability

### **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 a significant instrument of participation in a political system. 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- see statistical figures and analysis below ("International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance", 1999, 2004). With this scenario voter electoral 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). In Nigeria, electoral participation has been on the decline. Since the Fourth Republic, the percentage of voter turnout has been reducing; the last general elections of 2019 recorded a dismal turnout of 34.75% (International IDEA, 2019). 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 who try to find out the factors responsible (Franklin, 2004; Ellis, 2004).

Studies conducted in Nigeria regarding the subject had centrally focused on apathy as the reason for low turnouts. Some of these studies include ones done by the “Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)” in 2012; Fagunwa, 2019; Iyanda, 2020, etc. Without prejudice to the studies mentioned earlier, this research contends that aside from apathy which connotes the voter disinterest in political or voting activities amongst others, other variables could be responsible for the low voter turnout. The study argues that alienation which indicates the voter’s feeling of incapacity to influence political and electoral outcomes is the reason for the low turnout of the voter in Nigeria.

### **The Concept of Political Alienation**

The term political alienation connotes the relative continuing feeling of rejection or estrangement from the prevailing political environment by the individual citizen. The politically alienated individuals desire to vote, but their feeling of insignificance to the system restricts them. They feel that their interests are not respected and represented by political leaders (Glasberg & Shannon, 2010). The alienated are of the view that political leaders who hold offices are incompetent, selfseeking and corrupt; thus, they are suspicious, hostile, distrustful and sceptical of these leaders. They believe that the political process as a whole is fraudulent; a betrayal of public trust and a charade (Campbell et al, 1954).

Alienation has several connotations; but the overriding notion that best describes the term is that of ‘powerlessness’ that is, erosion of the individual’s freedom and control (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) described ‘powerlessness’ as a result of a sense of loss of selfworth. Powerlessness and self-estrangement have been identified as the fundamental features of alienation (Seeman 1959; Korzeniowski, 1994; Dalton, 2007). Further discourse by scholars described political alienation as a blend of a feeling of inefficacy and a lack of confidence in political institutions (Bowler & Donovan 2002; Kim 2005; Catterberg & Moreno 2006).

Political alienation has thus been categorised into two broad groups by Olsen (1968) vis-à-vis; political incapability (powerlessness) and political discontentment (disapproval or disappointment). He posits that the first case is compelled by the environment upon the individual, while in the second; it is a voluntary choice by them.

Finifter (1970) outlines five variants of political alienation. These are:

1. Political powerlessness: A feeling of incapability to affect political/electoral outcomes and governmental actions by the alienated.
2. Political meaninglessness: The perception by the individual that political/governmental outcomes/decisions are unpredictably unclear.
3. Political normlessness: The perception that there is a clear and rampant deviation from norms and regulations intended to govern political and governmental outcomes.
4. Political isolation: A rejection of widely held/shared societal norms and rules of behaviour by the individual.
5. Political disappointment: A display of lack of interest by the individual in political/electoral decisions and activity because of the misdemeanour by the ruling political elites

Political powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and disappointment serve as alienating factors preventing or constraining people from participating in the electoral process especially, voting during an election. Participating in an election would become hampered when people feel isolated, disappointed and incapacitated to influence the political environment. Participation can only thrive where there is confidence in the electoral operating system and the outcome of votes cast.

### Electoral Participation

Research on public participation in politics by scholars in the discipline of political science has focused on conservatively electoral participation in the political system (Braddy, 1999; Van Deth 2001; Fawole, 2005; Glasgow & Alvarez 2005, Alechenu, 2012). Electoral participation can be viewed as citizens' legal acts in compliance with extant rules that allow the electorate to choose their representatives and to some extent, influence their actions in governance (Fawole, 2005; Glasgow & Alvarez 2005). Electoral participation has also been construed in terms of the activities undertaken directly or indirectly by the citizens to select their representatives and to support and/or influence the governance institutions at all levels (Braddy, 1999; Van Deth 2001).

Participation in the political/electoral system is not only restricted to voting periods but also encompasses other important political activities that take place around the election time frame in which the citizens attempt to influence political actions and governmental policies to their advantage (Höglund, 2009). This view of citizens' participation in the political or electoral process is all-inclusive in that it is not only limited to voting but also other political activities such as protests, boycotts and strikes. (Norris 2002a).

Effective participation of the citizens in the electoral system is desired because it is a podium of interaction between the citizens and the political officials during electioneering and allows the citizens to take part in decision-making and governance. It is also essential for ensuring the credibility, legitimacy and stability of the political system. Universally, there is a widely acknowledged gradual but consistent decline or abstention of voters in the past several years. Although there is little consensus in terms of what can be regarded as an acceptable or reasonable level of turnout, yet, this development has raised serious concern among governments, Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs), citizens as well as non-governmental bodies.

In 2006, The International IDEA conducted a study on voter turnout that made use of election statistics from 1945 to 2015 in 214 countries. The study which covers both presidential and parliamentary elections revealed that in the preceding years leading up to the late 1980s, there was an average turnout which fluctuated from the mid-to higher 70% range. There was an average turnout of 76.4% between 1945 and 1960; it increased slightly to 75%, and then to 77.1% in 1961 but declined between the periods of 1976 and 1990 to 74.8%. voter turnout on average declined significantly to 69.7% between 1990 and 2006; it reduced to below 69% in the decade to 2006 and the decline continued, reaching up to 66% between the periods of 2011- 2015. Furthermore, there was a decline in the standard deviation of these figures to around 2.5% from a previous over 3%. The study outcome indicates an overall world turnout decline rate in participation which shows that little variations now exist between advanced and developing democracies (International IDEA, 2006; 2016). The statistics as explained above are displayed in table 1 below.

Table 1: Voter Turnout Worldwide from 1945 to 2015

YEAR	%	YEAR	%	YEAR	%	YEAR	%	YEAR	%
1945	74.4	1958	80.7	1971	78.0	1984	78.0	1997	69.0
1946	78.5	1959	75.6	1972	80.1	1985	79.2	1998	70.9
1947	71.2	1960	73.7	1973	77.5	1986	72.8	1999	72.7
1948	75.6	1961	76.8	1974	74.1	1987	79.6	2000	66.7

1949	82.8	1962	79.2	1975	75.7	1988	73.4	2001	73.2
1950	74.6	1963	86.5	1976	76.0	1989	74.8	2002	67.9
1951	79.1	1964	74.9	1977	79.8	1990	70.3	2003	67.5
1952	74.4	1965	79.0	1978	74.7	1991	68.9	2004	68.4
1953	81.2	1966	76.3	1979	71.3	1992	72.0	2005	66.3
1954	74.6	1967	74.2	1980	80.4	1993	72.2	2006	66.5
1955	74.1	1968	75.5	1981	79.7	1994	73.6	2011- 2015-	66
1956	76.3	1969	73.8	1982	74.2	1995	67.3		
1957	74.9	1970	74.3	1983	74.7	1996	71.4		

Source: International IDEA (2006, 2016).

### **An Analysis of Voter Turnout/Participation 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, 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 number of registered voters in the general elections of 2007 was 61,567,036. This figure was a slight increase from that of 2003; disappointedly, 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 number of registered voters for the 2015 general election was 67,422,005, a little different from that of 2011; the total votes cast dropped significantly to 29,432,083 representing 43.65%, that is, 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, 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).

From the analysis, the voter turnout rate has been gradually reducing since the 1999 general elections. Overall, the turnout figures from 199 to 2011 were in the 50 and 60 percentiles; that of 2015 reduced to 43.65% and 34.75% in 2019. Although the genuineness and authenticity of these statistics can be contested, they are however unimpressive. Even though since 1999 the votingage population has been increasing, the turnout has been reducing. For example, the voting-age population increased from 52.7 million in 1999 to 106 million in 2019 (International IDEA Data Base, 2015, 2019; Ojetunde, 2019; Pulse. ng, 2019). These scenarios are tabulated in figure 1 and table 1 below.

Table 2: 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
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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 Argument

Several studies on voter abstention had concentrated on apathy as the major reason for low turnout. These include the ones conducted by the “Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)” in 2012- “Voter Apathy and the 2011 Elections in Nigeria: A Research Report” (Alechenu, 2012); “Fagunwa (2019)- Voter Apathy and Nigeria Electioneering Process: A Synopsis On the 2015 General Elections”; “Iyanda (2020)- Assessing the Changing Nature of Voters Apathy in Nigeria: A Comparison of Old and New media; “Agu et al (2013)- Voters Apathy and Revival of Genuine Political Participation in Nigeria”; “Ebegbulem and Adams (2022)- Electoral Apathy and its Implication for the Conduct of Credible Elections in Nigeria”; and “Ibeogu et al (2019)- Voting Apathy among the Nigerian Electorates in 2019: The Role of INEC, Issues and the Way Forward”.

This study is not on apathy, and thus, not necessary to discourse on the listed studies above in detail. However, this study contends that the majority of non-voters in Nigerian elections cannot be classified under apathy to suggest that they all lack interest and knowledge of political activities. The author thus, introduced the variable of alienation to argue that the Nigerian voters’ are not majorly apathetic to the electoral system but could be disenchanted and frustrated with the system and its environment that constrained them from participating in voting activities. Thus, alienation is projected as the cause of the abstention of voters from the electoral process and this study sought to test the relationship between the mentioned variables by employing the qualitative research methodology. The variables - bad governance, electoral fraud and electoral violence were tested through statistical and qualitative analysis to establish a nexus or otherwise with alienation.

Political alienation refers to a person’s rejection of the existing political environment (Glasberg & Shannon, 2010). Although the alienated persons are interested in the political and electoral system, they are constrained from participating in it by political and environmental variables. Thus, an individual who rejects the prevailing political and electoral system may decide not to participate. This action is not that of an apathetic citizen but an alienated one. The investigation of alienation as the main cause of voters’ abstention in the Nigerian electoral process is a novel contribution to academic literature.

### Stating the Problematic of Voter Abstention

Democracy requires the psychological involvement and active participation of people in the electoral process since societal goals are determined and executed through discussions, popular opinion, and commitment to the political system. Thus, citizens’ engagement in the democratic process gives it legitimacy and direction (Dalton, 2002). Voter abstention is already a global phenomenon. It has become a major problem in developed and developing democracies (International IDEA 1999; 2006). The various elections in Nigeria, especially in the Fourth Republic, have witnessed a gradual but steady decline in turnout that has negatively impacted the democratization process (Agu, Okeke & Idike, 2013). To buttress the above point, the turnout statistics of voters for the general elections of 1999 was 52.3%; that of 2003 was 69.1% while in 2007, it was 58%. In 2011, the turnout figure was 53.7%; that in 2015 was 43.6% and 34.7% in 2019. These declining turnouts may

erode the credibility of elections, legitimacy, and popular representation, which are the hallmarks of democracy. Low voter turnout trends in Nigeria call for concern because it indicates a country's levels of democratic development.

### **What did we study and how?**

The research seeks to answer the following question: what is the impact of unfulfilled campaign promises/governance on voter abstention? what is the impact of electoral corruption on voter abstention? what is the impact of electoral violence on voter abstention?

The significance of the study is premised on the adverse effect of continuous reduction in the statistics of voter turnout in the political system. Low voter turnout can negatively impact the credibility of electoral outcomes, the legitimacy of government, and political stability. Furthermore, abstention from voting can also prevent people from voting and actively participating in the governance and policy outputs of the state. Voter behaviour is identified and specifically measured in the context of voter turnout, and voter abstention describes the aspect of the behaviour of voters who did not vote in an election. This study is necessitated by the global recognition that credible elections perform a fundamental function in entrenching democratic development and good governance.

The "International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA, 1999; 2002)" noted that representation of popular will and the legitimacy of the political process are ensured by credible elections. They are also essential for effective political socialization and for ensuring enduring democratic stability. It is thus imperative to draw scholars and government attention to this seemingly ignored malaise by investigating in this regard.

Furthermore, findings from the study would provide the basis for understanding the continuous and declining status of voter turnout in the Nigerian political system. It will also provide tools for policymakers to arrest the declining trend in voter participation.

Moreover, this is the first primary research (to the best of my knowledge) to investigate the nexus between political alienation and electoral participation in Nigeria or the Fourth Republic. The study will provide adequate information for making the appropriate suggestions that would positively affect public policy and governance in Nigeria. In addition to providing solutions to solving the problem, the study will make a good readership piece for scholars, students, and the interested public and also serve as a basis for further research. The study adopted the ex-post facto and the descriptive approach in the presentation and analysis of data. The population of the study is the Nigerian State covering the six Geopolitical Zones. The National Population Census of Nigeria in 2006 puts the figures of the Nigerian population at one hundred and forty million, four hundred and thirty- one thousand, seven hundred and ninety (140,431,790), (Nigerian Data Portal, 2006). A sample size of one thousand two hundred (1,200) respondents was sampled from the selected Six (6) Local Government Areas of the Geopolitical zones in Nigeria.

The sample size of one thousand two hundred (1200) respondents was arrived at by adopting the formula of Taro Yamane, the statistician which he developed in 1967 to calculate sample sizes from a given population (Yamane, 1967). The adoption of a 5% error margin and a 95% level of confidence, in calculating the population of one million, four hundred and ninety- seven thousand, one hundred and fifty- seven (1, 497, 157) yielded a sample size of 400. To account for possible attrition, reduce the level of error, and increase sample representativeness, and the confidence level, the number of subjects was increased to 1,200 (that is  $400 \times 3$ ). This action became imperative since the sample of 400 represents the minimum standard sample required for the study to produce a 95% confidence level in line with Yamane's formula. The questionnaire comprised of closed-ended question sets was utilised for the study. The stratified random sampling technique was employed to select three zones (North- Central, South- West, South-South) from the six geopolitical zones;



two states each (Plateau, Kogi, Oyo, Ekiti, Rivers, Delta) from the three selected zones, and one local government each (Jos South, Dekina, Ibadan South West, Ekiti West, Degema) from the selected states; making a total of six Local Government Areas.

The systematic sampling technique was then employed to select households from the selected Local Government Areas. Consequently, the questionnaires were administered to the voting age population in each of the selected households. Primary data formed the nuclei of data collection for analysis. The questionnaire for data collection comprised of open-ended question sets was utilised for the study. The data were analysed using the descriptive-analytical technique in a systematic manner that yielded an adequate understanding of the subject.

One thousand, two hundred (1,200) questionnaires were administered to the respondents for the study. From this figure, one thousand and sixty (1,060) questionnaires were completed and returned by the respondents. An analysis of the data shows that the males constituted a majority of 57.1% and the females, 42.9%. The distribution of the respondents' age constituted 50% between 18-25 years; 38.2% between 26-40 years; and 11.8% over 41. Thus, the majority of the subjects constituted the virile political participation age group. The sample distribution further revealed that the married respondents constituted 26%; single, 69.3%; divorced, 3.3%, and the "others" category, 1.41%. 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% hold post-graduate certificates. The sample data revealed that the subjects were made up of people who have sufficient education to make useful contributions to the research. 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.

#### Insights from the Study Results

##### Question One

Are you of the opinion that elections are important in Nigeria?	
A majority (Yes)	Elections guarantee democratic arrangement and ensure change and continuity in governance. Elections are important in Nigeria only when they are properly conducted.
Minority (No)	Votes do not count. Leaders are picked in the interest of the godfathers.

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

##### Question Two

Are you of the opinion that credible leaders can be selected through voting in Nigeria? State the reason for your response.	
A majority (Yes)	If due process is followed. If the political officials would stop hijacking the electoral process to ensure free and fair elections.
Minority (No)	The peoples' votes do not count because of manipulation of the electoral process. The political process is very porous; godfathers pick their loyal subjects and elections are not free and fair. The process is full of bribery and corruption.

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

## Question Three

Did you register as a voter in the 2019 general elections? If yes, state why and if no, why not?	
The majority (Yes)	To vote out the non-performing government. To select the desired candidate. In the interest of patriotism.
Minority (No)	Insecurity. Manipulation of elections. Leaders are not chosen by vote cast. Stressful registration process.

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

## Question Four

Are you eager to vote during elections? If yes, why and if no, why not?	
A Majority (Yes)	It is an opportunity to vote out bad leaders, but such an opportunity is not available because the electorates' votes do not count in the Nigerian situation. If it is free and fair.
Are you eager to vote during elections? If yes, why and if no, why not?	
Minority (No)	It is a necessity. Previous votes cast amounted to nothing; votes do not count in Nigeria and there is no good governance. It amounts to time-wasting to vote for nothing. Elections are not free and fair. Because of electoral violence.

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

## Question Five

Are you aware of any person who was registered but fail to vote during the election of 2019? If your response is yes, please, state the reasons.	
A majority (Yes)	*Inability to access voter's card. *The people's votes will not count. *It is useless to stand under the sun to vote and in the end, the votes would be manipulated. *Cumbersome voting procedures. *Insecurity and violence. *To use voter's card for other purposes- such as the opening of a bank account.
Minority (No)	*Respondents had no such experience.

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

## Question Six

Are you of the opinion that the electoral process in Nigeria (registration and voting) is violence-prone and marked by insecurity?
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A majority (Yes)	Violence and insecurity have become norms in Nigeria's elections, for many years now. Violence and insecurity obstructs free and fair election and scares people away from casting their votes. Insecurity and violence are amongst Nigeria's major electoral problems. people always lose their lives during elections in Nigeria.
Minority (No)	• Respondents had no such experience.

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

#### Question Seven

Are you of the opinion that many Nigerians of voting age are eager to cast their votes during elections but end up not voting for fear of violence?	
A majority (Yes)	No one wants to become a victim of electoral violence no matter how patriotic. People had gone out to vote in a series of elections only to end up being shot or killed.
Minority (No)	• Respondents had no such experience.

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

#### Question Eight

Do you have implicit confidence in the INEC's capability to deliver a free and fair election? Give your reasons.	
Minority (Yes)	The INEC is overcoming several limitations to conduct credible elections in Nigeria. If INEC is autonomous. If INEC is allowed a free hand to operate by the government and political officials.
Majority No)	INEC tends to favour the political party in power. INEC officials are induced with money most of the time. INEC officials are corrupt. INEC cannot deliver free and fair elections. INEC is not independent so, they cannot conduct credible elections.

Source: Field Survey: 2019".

#### Question Nine

Are you of the opinion that many people of voting age want to participate in voting but do not? Give your reasons.	
A majority (Yes)	The votes would not count. Godfathers secure elective positions unduly for their desired candidates so that the peoples' votes do not count.
Minority (No)	• No sufficient evidence to believe so.

Source: Field Survey: 2019".

#### Question Ten

Are you of the opinion that the registration and voting process in Nigeria is very cumbersome, and therefore, can discourage many Nigerians from voting?	
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A majority (Yes)	People line out under the sun and in the end, they do not get registered. Very cumbersome process.
Minority (No)	Not cumbersome if it will reflect the peoples' votes. Wrong assumption and belief by some people.

Source: Field Survey: 2019”.

#### Question Eleven

How would you rate Nigerian political officials' fulfilment of electoral promises? Satisfactory or unsatisfactory? Please comment.	
A majority (Unsatisfactory)	The political officials believe that with their money they can manipulate elections and neglect the electorates to serve themselves. Electoral promises are just propaganda meant to induce eligible voters to vote for the political officials in their bid to capture power. Political officials have failed to fulfil electoral promises.
Minority (Satisfactory)	• Very few politicians are fulfilling their promises to their constituencies.

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

#### Question Twelve

Are you of the opinion that the majority of Nigerians want to participate in the electoral process, but do not because they believe that political office has been hijacked by political elites/godfathers and therefore electoral promises would not be fulfilled?	
A majority (Yes)	Electoral manipulation takes place at every level of the Nigerian state. Electoral manipulation is very visible in the Nigerian political process. It is the godfathers' game.
Minority (No)	• It is the corrupt politicians that hijack political offices and not the elites.

Source: Field Survey: 2019”.

#### Question Thirteen

What is or are the reasons why people who registered for elections fail or refuse to cast their votes during elections?	
Majority	Violence and insecurity. Thugs' activities and killings. Ballot box snatching. Hijacking of electoral materials. Tedious registration and voting processes. Stress in waiting endlessly for electoral materials. Corruption and godfathers' undue influence on the electoral process. The feeling or belief that votes will not count.
Minority	is not everybody that votes during elections; some people are just lazy while others are unpatriotic and self-serving.

Source: Field Survey: 2019”.

#### Question Fourteen

What should be put in place to motivate people to participate in voting during elections?	
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Majority	Use of electronic transmission to reduce fraud, manipulation and stressful voting procedures. Provision of adequate security. Ensure free and fair elections. Ensure that the votes of the electorate count. Eliminate corruption. Discourage godfathers' undue influence.
Minority	People should be patriotic no matter the situation and go out and vote; there is no perfect system. To educate the electorates on the need to exercise their franchise.

Source: Field Survey: 2019”.

#### Question Fifteen

What are the reasons why you would not vote during elections?	
Majority	Violence or fear of violence Insecurity Irregularities in the voting process. Corruption, rigging, godfathers' influence. Manipulation of votes. Vote buying. Cumbersome voting process. Delay of electoral materials. Failure of political officials to keep to electoral promises. Dictatorship of godfathers.
Minority	I will vote no matter what. It is my right to vote. I am a patriotic Nigerian; after all, Rome was not built in a day-Nigeria is still developing.

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

The respondents' responses are categorised and analysed in line with the research question. What is the impact of unfulfilled campaign promises/bad governance on voter abstention?

Respondents' responses to questions eleven and twelve clearly show the impact of unfulfilled campaign promises on voter abstention. In question eleven, the majority of the respondents rate the fulfilment of electoral promises by political officials as unsatisfactory. They stated that political officials have failed to keep to electoral promises and that electoral promises are just propaganda meant to induce voters to vote for them during elections. Responses to question twelve indicate that a majority of the respondents opined that many Nigerians decide not to participate in the electoral process because they believe that political office has been hijacked by elites and godfathers, therefore, electoral promises would not be fulfilled. Thus, in response to question sixteen, the majority of the respondents listed the failure of political officials to keep to electoral promises as one of the reasons why they would not vote on Election Day. The respondent responses are corroborated by Campbell et al (1954) and Glasberg & Shannon (2010) who aver that the alienated individual is of the view that political office holders are incompetent, self-centred and corrupt. The alienated persons do not trust these sets of leaders because they believe that their interests are not well represented by them. The feeling and belief that the elite political godfathers had hijacked the political system impeding people-oriented

governance have resulted in their alienation from the electoral system. Therefore, the outcome of research question one shows that unfulfilled campaign promises by political officials hurt the participation of voters in elections.

On the question, what is the impact of electoral corruption/fraud on voter abstention, the results just the following. The impact of electoral corruption/fraud on voter abstention can be understood from respondents' responses to questions nine and eight. Responses to question nine show that majority of the respondents opined that many people in Nigeria do not vote during elections because they feel that their votes will not count due to manipulation by electoral and political officials. Responses to question eight indicate that the majority of the respondents opined that they do not have confidence in the INEC to conduct credible elections in Nigeria; this is because the body is not independent in its activities and tends to favour the political party in power. Thus, in response to question four, majorities of the respondents are eager to vote during elections only if the process is free and fair. They opined that votes cast in previous elections amounted to nothing, it is thus, a waste of time to go out and vote and then the election will not be free and fair. Also, in response to questions five and thirteen, one of the reasons given why registered voters do not vote on Election Day was that their votes would not count due to manipulation or electoral fraud. The opinion of the respondents is supported by Glasberg & Shannon (2010) who posit that although the politically alienated citizens desire to vote in elections, they restrict themselves because they feel that they are not significant to the political system. A further submission by scholars such as "Bowler & Donovan (2002); Kim 2005; Catterberg & Moreno (2006)" posit that political alienation can be viewed as a combination of a feeling of lack of efficacy and confidence in the political system. Hence, the citizens' opinions are corroborated by Campbell et al (1954), who aver that the whole political process is a fraud, a farce, and a betrayal of public trust. This scenario has alienated eligible voters' in the Nigerian electoral process. Thus, the outcome of research question two shows that electoral corruption/fraud harms voter participation in the electoral process of Nigeria.

What is the impact of electoral violence on voter abstention? - Respondents' responses to questions six and seven clearly show the impact of violence during elections on voter abstention. In question six, a majority of the respondents opined that the electoral process in Nigeria is enmeshed in violence and insecurity, obstructs free and fair electoral process and scares them away from casting their votes since people always lose their lives during elections. Respondents' responses to question seven indicate that majority of the subjects opined that many Nigerians who want to vote during elections decide not to for fear of violence. Also, the response to question three shows that some of the respondents did not register or vote in the 2019 elections because of fear of insecurity and violence. Similarly, one of the reasons given by respondents why they are not eager to vote during elections in response to question four and the reason people decide not to vote during elections listed in questions five, thirteen and fifteen, is the fear of violence and insecurity. They opined that people had gone out to vote in a series of elections only to end up being shot or killed. The opinions of the respondents are reinforced by Seeman (1959), Roberts (1987), and Finifter (1970) who aver that the notion of alienation is fundamentally based on the erosion of the individual's liberty and power to make political decisions.

From this submission, it can be deduced that when citizens' perceived any form of danger in participating in the electoral process, their freedom and desire to vote are short-circuited. From this perspective according to Seeman (1959: 784) "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." The above submission implies that even though the citizens want to participate in the electoral process, they are constrained to stay away because of the perceived danger of electoral violence. The factor of violence has led to the alienation of citizens from voting in elections. Thus, the results of research question three show that violence during elections negatively affects the participation of voters in the electoral process.

The findings of the study are summarized thus:

1. Voter abstention in Nigerian elections is mainly due to alienation.
2. Bad governance is responsible for voter alienation in Nigeria.
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 political officials, parties, and INEC officials, which undermines the votes cast by the Nigerian electorates during elections.
5. The violent activities carried out by political opponents and parties during an election are the cause of the alienation of voters in the Nigerian political system.
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. **Other observations participants generated are as follows:**

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

The 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 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 very stressful and discouraging.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Generally, the findings of the study epitomize contribution to existing academic knowledge as the variables of political alienation- unfulfilled campaign promises, electoral violence, and electoral fraud are strong determinants of low turnout of voters in Nigerian elections. Specifically, the empirical study of political alienation using survey data for analysis is novel in Nigeria (to the best of my knowledge). The study revealed that political alienation is a determinant of voter abstention in the Nigerian electoral process. Until now, studies have focused on political apathy as the main cause of low voter turnout in Nigeria.

The credibility of elections ensures the sustenance of the democratization process and good governance. This credibility is occasioned by effective electoral participation which is an epitome of a viable and representative government in democratic societies. The voting activity serves as the linkage point between the elected political officials and the people. It serves as the basis and opportunity for discussions, deliberations, and participation of the citizens in the politics and governance of the state. Therefore, if participation decreases, the linkage point between the people and the political system may be negatively affected. This development may threaten the legitimacy and stability of the process of democratization. Participation in the governance process is essential for attaining a just and civilized society. However, if the majority of eligible voters abstain from the process of voting, participatory democracy and governance may be unachievable.

In line with the findings of the study, the following solutions are suggested.

1. The elected political officials should ensure good governance based on meeting the needs and demands of the citizenry. The qualities of good governance like transparency, accountability, rule of law, fairness and equity in resource distribution and opportunities for capacity development should be ensured. The citizens' basic needs such as food, shelter, water, adequate power supply, access roads as well as sustaining and enduring market structure 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 institute credibility in the electoral process.

The INEC should be independent to manage the electoral process. Political interference from political leaders and rulers should be discouraged. Also, the political parties and electoral candidates should be sensitized to allow for equity and fairness in party primaries and other election activities. The use of electronic transmission should be encouraged and mandatory to reduce electoral fraud and manipulation. Fraudulent practices during elections should be penalized with appropriate sanctions.

3. Preventive and control mechanisms should be put in place to reduce the level of violence during elections minimally. This should be done by deploying adequate security personnel to effectively provide security to polling units in both rural and urban centres. The security personnel should be supported by an intelligence network to provide intelligence reports and monitor activities in all election centres to forestall and manage any acts of violence.

4. Governments at all tiers should put in place mechanisms to lighten the often stressful registration and voting processes to encourage more participation in the electoral process. These can be done, by ensuring that the various electronic gadgets for registration and voting are in good working condition, using well-trained and experienced staff, and re-delimitation of registration and polling units to reduce the population for effective management. The registration and voting centres should open on time, and electoral officials and materials should arrive at the polling units at the stipulated time.

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