

# VOTER'S BEHAVIOUR AND THE NIGERIA ELECTORAL PROCESS: ASSESSMENT OF 2019 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN KOGI STATE

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**ABSTRACT:** In recent years voter participatory behavior has reached worrying levels worldwide, through the various generations of elections, declining voter participation, especially among the youth, has steadily and increasingly become a major issue of concern that has been equally affecting emerging democracy and consolidated ones. The paper interrogates voters Behaviour and the Nigerian Electoral processes with focus on the cause of low turnout during elections and the role of INEC, political parties and political elites as it affects voters' behaviour. The paper adopted the Behavioral theory as the theoretical framework of analysis. The paper utilized the survey method of data collection for analysis hence; it relied on the primary sources of data. Data obtained were analyses using inferential statistics of  $x^2$ . From the findings, it was observed that there is decline in voter's participation. This was adduce to the fact that there is consistent failure of political parties and elites to fulfill their campaign promises made to the populace during election, electoral violence and fear that their vote will not count. It is therefore, recommended that politicians should endeavor to fulfill their campaign promises, stop violence and do or die politics and INEC to improve the efficiency of the electoral process. This, if done will improve the voter turnout in the electoral process in Nigeria.

**Key words:** Voters behaviour, Electoral Process and Democratic Sustainability

## INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has for long been in constant search for effective electoral processes, as an integral part of its transition to democracy. A long history of badly or poorly conducted elections has, until recently, created profound skepticism amongst ordinary Nigerians about the utility of electoral democracy. The relative success of 2011, 2015 and especially 2019 general elections seem to have revived hope amongst Nigerians that with determined effort, their votes could indeed count. However, more efforts are required from all concerned to ensure that this hope is kept alive and that the renewed positive expectations and democratic aspiration of Nigerians are not even again dashed.

Election is a very precious activity in a democratic set up. It is an important tenet of democracy which allows the people to have a government of their own choice. Without such a right, the people are bound to be helpless and democracy losses all its meaning. However, since the return of democracy in 1999 the history of election in Nigeria is marred by irregularities which often lead to violence. According to Adejumobi, (2010), "elections have become an integral part of representative democracy that by and large prevail across the world order". Election is a major institutional pillar of liberal democracy. To this end the conduct of regular elections is considered the single most important indicator of the presence or absence of the democratic context of the rule-based free, fair and credible election. Violence has always features prominently in all electoral processes in the post-colonial Nigerian but its frequency and magnitude of occurrence in the country since the return of the country to democratic rule in 1999 is devastating and have assumed a catastrophic dimension, particularly, in 2011 and 2015 general elections. Thus, threatening the democratization process in the country. "The electoral system of any given country plays a fundamental role in sustaining and molding the political behavior of its citizens" Okolo (2002:45). The way election is conducted in a country determines to a great extent the level of political culture, political behaviour and good governance in the country.

In recent years voter participatory behavior has reached worrying levels worldwide, through the various generations of elections, declining voter participation, especially among the youth, has steadily and increasingly become a major issue of concern that has been equally affecting emerging democracy and consolidated ones. Decreasing voter behavioural trends are a cause of concern because voter turnout is one of the main indicators to measure the levels of democratic development and robustness of a country. Low voter turnout can be related to and originated by many different factors closely related to the democratic, economic and social development of a country. The lack of genuine democracy in a country, peoples' perceptions of not being able to influence the political agenda and the lack of interest in political life are all factors that can influence the levels of electoral participation considerably.

Several factors that affect voter electoral behaviour have been highlighted in relevant literature. Some of these include broad psychological factors and collective memory of historical and contemporary events. Others are patterns of trust, feelings of efficacy, political engagement and disengagement at individual, group and regional levels (Fawole, 2005). In spite of the empirical evidence that the global trend has been toward a decline in voter turnout, there is lack of grounded and sustained scholarly attention to voter apathy in the context of voter turnout in Nigeria despite the challenges plaguing the country's electoral system. It is on this note that this study is poised at investigating the factors determining voting behaviour in the Nigeria electoral process.

Other factors may include; low confidence in the political candidates/parties due to unfulfilled promises, insufficient levels of accountability of elected candidates to their constituents, lack of confidence in the political leaders, lack of political maturity of

parties, violence during the electoral process; and low levels of “democratic culture” and awareness of the electorate and other stake-holders.

Any of these factors alone, or in combination, could significantly affect voter participation. After all, to participate, voters must have full trust in the electoral process, in the way in which elections are administered, in the candidates/parties they are going to vote for, in the overall outcome of the voting exercise, in the way in which those elected can be accountable to deliver the commitments they took before being elected, and in the way in which those who don't deliver can be voted out.

The missing link between election and democratic sustainability in Nigeria is due to the fact that, competitions for meaningful electoral politics have remained problematic. There are facts that suggest that efforts at establishing democratic electoral process in Nigeria have been tainted and marred by manipulation of the highest proportions, (Ishaku and Obi, 2017; Uche and Obi, 2016; Obi and Ocheja, 2016). This constantly makes Nigeria's movement toward democratic elections and government prone to crises. It is however disheartening to note that in many states in Nigeria (and particularly in Kogi State) democratic election have been obstructed, frustrated and marred as a result of electoral violence perpetuated by political hoodlums and desperate politicians which pose a serious threat to lives and democratic process in Nigeria and Kogi state in particular, it is because of this nefarious activities of electoral violence that makes the legitimacy of the state and local government elections which took place in 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 questionable due to the actions of electoral violence during these elections. This is a situation where some political analysts observed that electoral violence has reached a stage where democratic elections process and governance seems to lack principles and ethics, and if not checked, the state affairs will be lawlessness, anarchy, underdeveloped and may mar future election. It is based on the forgoing that this study is geared towards examining the roles of the electorates in the electoral process, the cause(s) of low voter turnout during Presidential elections in Kogi State and to find out how the INEC and political elites has affected voters' electoral behaviour.

### **Methodology**

This research work adopted survey research method and made use of primary and secondary data as the main source of data collection through the instrument of structured and unstructured questionnaire. The study randomly selects 100 respondents from Lokoja metropolis who participated in 2019 general election. Data obtained were analyzed with both descriptive and inferential statistical method. The questionnaire sought information on questions that were relevant to voter's behaviour and Kogi State electoral process in the 2019 presidential election in Kogi State. The Data obtained were analyzed Quantitative method via SPSS. This paper was undertaken in essence of critical enquiry, with the aim of bringing to limelight the role of INEC and fulfilled political promises on voting behaviour in Kogi State.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The study was guided by the following hypotheses:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** INEC credibility/plan of action in the electoral (registration and voting) process has no significant effect on low voter turnout in the electoral process.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant impact between non-fulfillment of electoral promises by political candidates/parties and voter behavior in the electoral process.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework adopted for this work is the behaviouralism theory. Its appellation stems out of its proximity and exactness in explaining the political behaviour. Behaviouralism as a theoretical framework was a protest within the political science because the political scientists in the United States were thoroughly dissatisfied with the achievement of the traditional study of political science. It owes its origin to intellectual development in psychology and philosophy. The writings of Pavlov in Russia and John B Watson in the United States who wrote extensively on behavioural psychology and the writings in the field of philosophy by logical positivist influenced the behaviouralists in political science. It became prominent in the early 1900's, with the writings of Graham Wallas and Arthur Bentley of the United States (Mahajan, (1998: 21).

The term political behavior comprehends those actions and interactions of men and groups which are involved in the process of governing. It has shifted its emphasis from the ideal state, government and political institutions to the day to day problems of the people and new methods of study and research have been developed for that purpose.

Behavioralism is a theory in political science which studies the behaviour of people in the political process using scientific tools. Voter behavior has to do with those actions in the politics as it pertains voting. The Nigerian electoral system is those processes that make up the pre-election, election and post-election stage. It can also be view as those inter-connected parts or component that function as a whole to see to the conduct of election in a democratic system. Since, it is the individual that constitute the electoral system so the focus should be on the individual. It should be noted that the thrust of behaviouralism is the behavior of individual in the electoral process and the work is centered on the voter. Therefore, the application of behavioralism to it, will enable us to be able to study how the behavior of individuals and groups shapes the electoral system. In other words how did the electoral system influence the voter turnout in any election? It is as a result of the perception of the individual voter about the election. In the sense as to why people vote and why they don't vote and what are those things that need to be done to enhance voter's behaviour in the electoral process. And the use of scientific tools will give us value free and accurate findings.

### **Presentation of Results and Discussion of Findings**

#### **Test of Hypotheses**

In testing hypotheses, the researcher assumes the level of Significant to be 5% and the chi- square distribution is used as the test of statistic significant level with the observed and expected frequencies.

#### **Test of Hypothesis 1**

**H<sub>01</sub>:** INEC credibility/plan of action in the electoral (registration and voting) process has no significant effect on low voter turnout in the electoral process.

**Effect of INEC credibility/plan of action in the electoral (Registration and Voting) Process and Low Voter Turnout in the**

**Electoral Process**

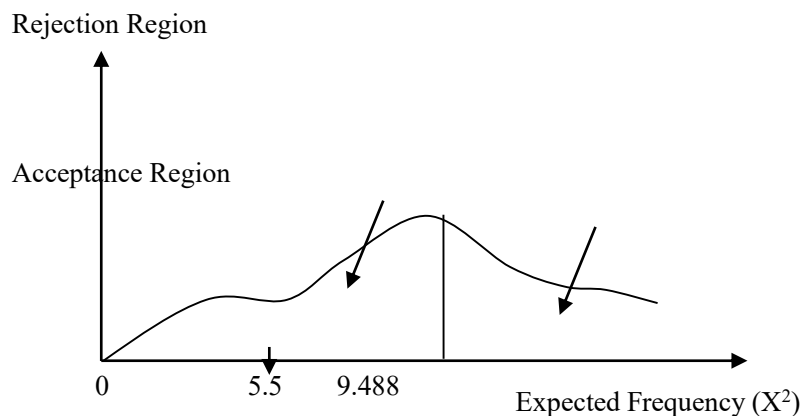
RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
Strongly agree	25	25
Agree	26	26
Undecided	18	18
Disagreed	17	17
Strongly disagree	14	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2022.

Computation of  $X^2$ . Degree of freedom = 5-1 = 4 at 5% level of significance = 9.488.

Option	O <sub>i</sub>	E <sub>i</sub>	O <sub>i</sub> - E <sub>i</sub>	(O <sub>i</sub> - E <sub>i</sub> ) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$
Strongly Agree	25	20	5	25	1.25
Agree	26	20	6	36	1.8
Undecided	18	20	-2	4	0.2
Disagreed	17	20	-3	9	0.45
Strongly disagreed	14	20	-6	36	1.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>				<b>5.5</b>

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2022.



Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2022.

**Decision:** Since the computed  $X^2$  (5.5) is less than the critical value (9.488), we reject the alternate hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>) and accept the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>). This means that INEC credibility/plan of action in the electoral (registration and voting) process has no significant impact on low voter turnout in the electoral process.

**Test of Hypothesis 2**

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant impact between non-fulfillment of electoral promises by political candidates/parties and voter behavior in the electoral process.

**Relationship between Non-fulfillment of Electoral Promises by Political Candidates/Parties and Voter Behaviour in the Electoral Process.**

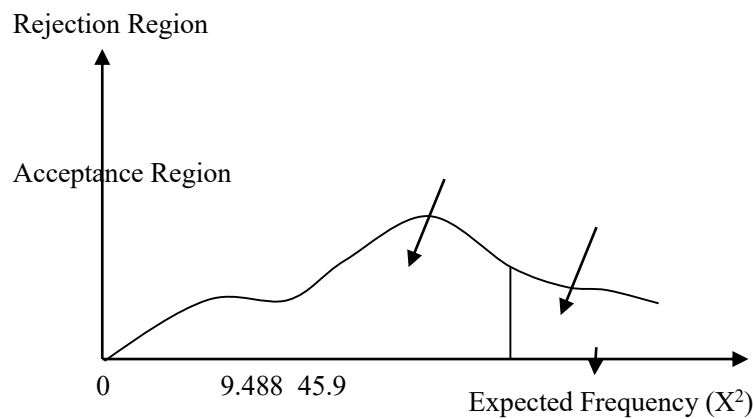
RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
To a very great extent	22	22
To a great extent	40	40
Undecided	5	5
To an extent	28	28
To no extent at all	5	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2022.

Computation of  $X^2$ . Degree of freedom = 5-1 = 4 at 5% level of significance = 9.488.

Option	O <sub>i</sub>	E <sub>i</sub>	O <sub>i</sub> - E <sub>i</sub>	(O <sub>i</sub> - E <sub>i</sub> ) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$
To a very great extent	22	20	2	4	0.2
To a great extent	40	20	20	400	20
Undecided	5	20	-15	225	11.25
To an extent	28	20	8	64	3.2
To no extent at all	5	20	-15	225	11.25
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>				<b>45.9</b>

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2022.



**Source:** Researcher's Field Survey, 2022.

**Decision:** Since the computed  $X^2$  (45.9) is greater than the critical value (9.488), we reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) and accept the alternate hypothesis ( $H_1$ ). This means non-fulfillment of electoral promises by political candidates/parties and voter behaviour in the electoral process affects voter behaviour

### Discussion of Findings

The outcome of the tested hypothesis shows that there is a significance relationship impact between non-fulfillment of electoral process in Kogi State, from the above it was shows that the consistent failure of political parties and politician to fulfill their campaign promises made to the populace during electioneering process has a negative effect on the voters turnout. Findings from the hypotheses table above which is about respondents views on why majority of Nigerians do not vote in elections is because they believe that political office has been hijacked by political godfathers and therefore electoral promises would not be fulfill. It shows that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that majority of Kogilites 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 the second hypotheses which is about the respondents views on INEC/political parties in Nigeria are regularly carrying out voter education, enlightenment and mobilization to sensitize Nigerians on the electoral process. A great number of respondents agreed to the opinion that INEC/political parties in Kogi State are regularly carrying out voter education, enlightenment and mobilization to sensitize Nigerians on the electoral process. However this has no impact on shaping the mindset of the electorate towards voting because the electorates were more concern about fulfillment of campaign promises to better their life. This means that the INEC plan before and during elections does not really affect the turnout of the populace in election, taking cognizance to the 2019 Presidential election held in Kogi State.

### Conclusion

Voter's behavior serves as critical ingredients in a democracy. Apart from guaranteeing the life expectancy of a democratic system these democratic elements enable individuals to select their leaders at the elections, thereby fulfilling their civic obligations, as patriotic citizens. In the 2015 and 2019 Presidential elections in Kogi State, political participation and its corollary voting behavior was significant not only because it was central to the change of power from the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) to the All Congress Progress (APC) and from APC to PDP both at the national and State level in the cause of Kogi State but because it restored credibility, legitimacy and trust in the democratic process in Nigeria at large.

Nevertheless, there is evidence that there exists voter Apathy in Kogi State leading to a steady decline in the voter turnout at election. This paper reveals that, lack of interest and commitment to electoral process by the electorates is due to lack of confidence in the electoral process and culture. A political culture characterizes by failed promises, ethnicity, nepotism, insecurity of the masses, abuse of rule of law, making others feel like second class citizens, violence, intimidation, godfatherism, intimidation, manipulation and deception is reflective in the electorates shunning the ballot. The work also reveals that Kogilites do not have confidence in their political leaders anymore from Oshomole, Ize Iyamu to Obaseke due to undelivered campaign promised and non-responsiveness to the needs to the masses. Security challenges in some rural communities of the area cover were seem to be a reason for low voter turnout. Respondents identified voter mobilization as key to reducing declining voter participation/voter apathy and ensuring Credible, inclusive, transparent, free and fair elections. This, according to them, requires the cooperation of stakeholders, such as the Independent National Electoral Commission, politicians, political parties, Government and the voters themselves. The following recommendations to improve the electoral process and encourage voters, participatory behaviours are offered for consideration and possible action by the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, INEC, political parties, and any other relevant stakeholder. To further improve the transparency of the process, official results should be published broken down to polling unit level. The Electoral Act should include provisions for the publication of results per polling unit, collation centers, wards and constituencies. From the proclamation of the winners, such results should be available to the public, by using among other means the INEC website, and political entrepreneurs should avail themselves to service of humanity and delivery of democratic dividends by fulfilling their campaign promises.

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