



## Voter Apathy in Nigerian Electoral Democracy: An Insidious Enigma to National Development

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper examines voter apathy in Nigerian electoral democracy as an insidious enigma to national development, with an emphasis on the 2023 General Elections. Elections in democracies play a vital role in ensuring the representation of popular will and securing the legitimacy of the political system. However, in situations where voter apathy is pronounced in the electoral processes of democratic countries, national development in such countries is nearly defeated. Voter apathy remains an insidious enigma for national development, and Nigeria provides an example of such a country. What is the way out? To answer this question, the paper made use of the decision-making theory by Richard Synder as its theoretical framework, adopted a qualitative research design, relied on secondary sources of data, and analyzed the collected data using the qualitative content data analysis method. The findings of the study revealed the factors causing voters' apathy in Nigerian electoral democracy and their consequences on the country's national development. Recommendations were made based on the findings.

**KEYWORDS:** Democracy, Electoral Democracy, Voter Apathy, Voter Turnout and Electoral Participation

### INTRODUCTION

Credible election administration is fundamental to citizens' democratic rights and is necessary in any society or political system. With the conclusion of the Cold War, most democracies have been assured that holding elections is an acceptable way to bring about political change through the reinstatement of multiparty democracy and the gradual liberalization of the political field. Furthermore, "in Africa's developing democracies, credible competitive elections have emerged as a necessary, albeit sufficient, means of establishing behavioral, if not attitudinal, legitimacy" [1].

Electoral democracies are essential for guaranteeing the representation of popular will and preserving the political system's legitimacy. Therefore, "civilian involvement in the political process is essential to the viability and meaningfulness of democracy" [2]. However, global evidence also points to political indifference, a lack of psychological engagement in public affairs, emotional detachment from civic duties, and a refusal to participate in politics. The origins and nature of this political abstention continue to be subjects of concern. Voter apathy, a subset of political apathy, has become a significant issue in both established and developing democracies, stable and unstable societies, large and thriving economies, and small and troubled ones. It affects women, young people, and other marginalized groups equally, and has persisted as a sneaky mystery to national development.

Voter apathy has been a defining feature of Nigerian elections since its return to electoral democracy in 1999. A minor portion of the electorate casts ballots, which is in opposition to the concept of "majority rule." An essential component of democracy is majority rule. Consequently, in Nigeria, there is a minority rule as opposed to the majority rule. Statistics from the Independent National Electoral Commission show the country the rate of turnout in elections. INEC: 52.2% in 1999, 69.08% in 2003, 57.49% in 2007, 53.68% in 2011, 43.65% in 2015, 35% in 2019, and 25% in 2023. Put plainly, it means that those who abstained from voting essentially gave their right to vote to the few who did, enabling them to cast ballots on their behalf. In Nigeria, voter indifference of this kind is intrinsic to democratic consolidation [3]. This is an insidious enigma of the country's national development.

This paper therefore, after introduction, reviewed relevant literature materials depicting an overview of voter apathy in Nigerian democracy, environmental factors contributing to the alarming rate of voter apathy in Nigerian electoral democracy; the consequences of voter apathy on Nigerian national development; and the plausible way out among others.



## LITERATURE REVIEW

This section covers relevant literature that explains basic concepts that define the subject matter, an overview of voter apathy and Nigerian electoral democracy, environmental factors promoting voter apathy in Nigerian electoral democracy, and the consequences of voter apathy on Nigerian national development.

**Voter Apathy:** Divergent opinions exist regarding the definition of voter apathy. On the contrary hand, the Greek term "apathy" literally means "without feelings." The French poet, novelist, and dramatist Victor Marie Hugo, a leading figure in the Romantic Movement, once said that "the apathetic are alive but without feelings, so they are not living." The living dead are what they are. Thus, in accordance with Hugo's school of thought, voter apathy merely denotes the public's indifference to the democratic process in general, and voting in particular [4]. According to Crewe et al., the term "apathy" refers to apathy towards politics, passivity, and a lack of a sense of personal responsibility. Therefore, it signifies a lack of sense of personal commitment to take part [5]. According to Yakubu, voter apathy refers to voters' lack of interest in election procedures such as casting a ballot. There is a lack of concern and interest in the voting process [6]. Similarly, Cloud argues that not casting a ballot in a public election indicates voters' apathy. For us, Thus, a low voter turnout is caused by voter apathy. Apathy among voters is an indicator of a wider drop in public participation in a nation's political process. Succctly, the number of people who vote decreases. The level of indifference that citizens, especially those who are eligible to vote, exhibit in local, state, or national elections is known as voter apathy. Even better, this can be defined as a scenario in which a large number of individuals are eligible to vote abstain from doing so. This suggests that the populace is disenchanted by their governments or the political system in general, and most of the time, they show this dissatisfaction by abstaining from voting, particularly on election days. Low turnout among eligible voters is frequently attributed to voter indifference, particularly in areas or nations in which voting is not required by law [7].

Voter apathy is more than just apathy or indifference to the election process; it is also voters' insensitivity to the electoral process, especially when it comes to voting due to disappointment with the political system, ignorance, and, occasionally, inadequate education. Thus, a low voter turnout is caused by voter apathy. In a nation where elected authorities are supposed to rule, disgruntled and idle citizens may cause issues. This is due to the fact that elected officials may not accurately reflect the opinions and values of the broader public when there are very few voters. The influence of special interest groups increases, and the influence of popular votes decreases when fewer people cast ballots.

**Electoral Democracy:** This kind of democracy, sometimes referred to as indirect or representative democracy, is one in which a group of people is represented by chosen delegates. A democratic government based on a framework that allows every citizen to choose one candidate for a political office from a list of contenders is known as electoral democracy. We refer to this procedure as election. Every person becomes a voter and selects on a secret ballot. The election must be free, fair, devoid of bribery or coercion, and independent of the incumbents to meet the requirements for democratic integrity. In an electoral democracy, representatives are chosen by their fellow citizens to handle legislation and other aspects of the country or other political organizations. The electorate is responsible for holding the elected representatives accountable for their deeds [8].

In electoral democracy, people choose representatives to enact laws and set policies on their behalf. Approximately 60% of nations worldwide have a representative democracy-based system of government, such as the United States, a democratic republic; the United Kingdom, a constitutional monarchy; and France, a unitary state. Indirect democracy is another form of electoral democracy [9]. In contrast to direct democracy, which allows citizens to vote directly on laws and other matters, representational democracy is a type of democracy. Since most contemporary nations are electoral democracies, they face numerous difficulties. It contrasts sharply with regimes that grant little to no elected representation, such as totalitarianism, authoritarianism, and fascism.

Many political institutions have given rise to modern electoral democracies, the majority of which originally appeared in Europe and the United States throughout the eighteenth century. The most crucial idea is representation in and of itself, as it gives elected officials the power to enact laws and make significant choices. Among the notable establishments are the following:

- i. A formal, written constitution outlining the election procedure and rules for voters and candidates' eligibility. It also determines the extent of the authority that elected officials may assert. Recall elections and other direct democratic processes such as referendums can also be outlined in a constitution.
- ii. Free, fair, and regular elections in which the general population is allowed to participate as candidates or voters.
- iii. Freedom of expression allows people to openly discuss a wide range of politically significant topics without worrying about repercussions.



- iv. Accessible, independent political information sources that are not governed by a certain party or government. The legal rights of these sources to publish and distribute information are safeguarded.
- v. The right to form and join autonomous political organizations, such as parties and interest groups, is guaranteed by freedom of association.
- vi. An impartial court with the power to rule that choices made by representatives of popular votes are unconstitutional.

In Nigeria's electoral system, voter indifference is caused by the failure to follow these tenets. This, in turn, becomes an insidious enigma for the country's national development.

**Democracy:** Democracy, which means "rule by the people," is a form of governance in which public participation in politics is not only permitted but essential to its operation. The best definition of democracy may be from the U.S President Abraham Lincoln in his well-known Gettysburg Address in 1863: "government of the people, by the people, for the people". Longley asserts that democracy is about the decisions that the people make. Among the many definitions of democracy, the one that describes it as the rule of the people, by the people, and for the people, is the most well-known. This definition implies that democracy starts with the people. Fundamentally, democracy is impossible without the people. Democracy was ushered in by people. Democracy is a system of governance that gives people the ability to exercise political power, places restrictions on the authority of the head of state, allows for the division of powers among governmental branches, and guarantees the preservation of civil freedoms and fundamental rights. Democracies exist in various ways. Currently, there are other varieties of democracies in use, including liberal, parliamentary, pluralist, socialist, participatory, and constitutional democracies, in addition to the two most prevalent types (direct and representative) [9][10].

From a semantic perspective, the word democracy is derived from the Greek terms for "rule" (karatos) and "people" (dēmos). However, despite the conceptual simplicity of the term, establishing and maintaining a government by the people, or a "popular" government, is significantly more difficult.

### **National Development:**

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines development as a process that seeks to improve the well-being of people through expanding their capabilities and choices. This definition goes beyond purely economic indicators and emphasizes the importance of human development, including factors such as education, health, political participation, and environmental sustainability. National development refers to the sustained, coordinated efforts of a nation to improve the well-being of its citizens and enhance its overall economic, social, and political structures. It encompasses a broad range of goals and activities aimed at achieving long-term progress and prosperity for a country and its people [11]. In simple terms, national development refers to the improvement of a country's political, economic, social, cultural, scientific, and material aspects. It is a gradual process that aims to create a conducive environment for growth, progress, and positive changes within modern society. The key focus is to enhance the overall well-being of the population by addressing issues such as unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, insecurity, and voter apathy. Achieving national development involves investing in plans and initiatives that will benefit citizens on a large scale

## **METHODOLOGY**

The paper utilized a qualitative research approach, which is a method of naturalistic inquiry aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural settings, with a focus on the "why" rather than the "what" of such phenomena, and relies on humans as meaning-making agents in their everyday lives [12]. Additionally, the study utilized secondary data sourced from various materials, including books, journals, and newspapers. The collected data was analyzed using qualitative content analysis, which is a research method for subjectively interpreting the content of text data through a systematic process of coding and identifying themes or patterns [13].

### **➤ Theoretical Framework and Application**

The research utilized the decision-making theory developed by Richard Synder (1916-1997) as its theoretical foundation. Synder posits that politics is the process of allocating value based on sound decision making. In accordance with Obikeze and Obi, decision making is a deliberate activity involving the analysis and selection of the best option from numerous alternatives and applying it [14]. Nwokoye also emphasized that decision making is a key mechanism for all political actions and can effectively address changing circumstances [15]. As Nwokoye noted, in order to gain a clear understanding of political action, it is crucial to analyze it from the perspective of the decision-makers. Additionally, grasping the political actions of decision-makers requires examining



their behavioral patterns and the factors that influenced their choice-decision, such as environmental and educational factors, competence, communication flow, personal traits, and motivation. The collective impact of these factors shapes the decision-makers and their subsequent actions [15].

Decision making is an inevitable behavioral pattern exhibited by political actors, including eligible voters and politicians, in order to chart a course that can be either self-centered or generalistic in nature. This is evident in the Nigerian past general elections, including the most recent 2023 general elections, which were marred by voter apathy due to the continuous occurrence of violence, hooliganism, militarization, destruction, bloodshed, manslaughter, shooting, oppression, voting buying, godfatherism, bribery, corruption, ballot snatching, and unbridled rigging before, during, and after elections in the country.

It's interesting to note that many voters' casual, disinterested, indifferent, and uncaring sentiments during general elections are a direct outcome of the politicians' conduct. Therefore, poor governance is the reason behind the people's decision to abstain from voting. The act of avoiding polling places is but one way that people choose to protest the awful state of affairs in their nation. As seen by the elections held in Nigeria between 1999 and the recently held general elections in 2023, this tendency did, in fact, result in a complete fall, low voter turnout, and a lack of legitimacy [16].

The determination of political candidates to obtain power by any means necessary suggests that elections in Nigeria are a battle. Voter apathy seems to be a recurrent occurrence in Nigeria's elections, likely due to the failure of politicians to fulfill their promises during campaigns and the misuse of public funds for personal gain instead of implementing intended projects [16]. This has led to a loss of interest or motivation among the electorate in Nigeria for participating in electoral democracy. Voting on Election Day is a critical aspect of democracy, but when eligible voters choose not to exercise their civic duty by showing up to vote, the democratization process in Nigeria becomes weaker and can be dominated by a minority of participants.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **➤ Overview of Voter Apathy and Nigerian Democracy**

Democracy allows election participation, which is regarded as one of the three primary markers of democratic performance [17]. According to Dalton, citizen participation in the political process is critical for the viability and meaning of democracy. While voting requires minimal initiative and cooperation from others, it is the most visible and common form of public participation [2]. Unfortunately, most democracies, including Nigeria, have experienced diminishing electoral turnouts and low political participation. Many Nigerians are uninterested in political and, particularly, election issues. Dahl and Stinebrickner suggest that people are not naturally civic-minded beings. Many of our most powerful desires, as well as the source of many of our greatest pleasures, can be traced back to old and persistent biological and physiological urges [18]. Professor Attahiru Jega, the former INEC Chairman, condemned the level of political indifference demonstrated by Nigerian citizens in the 2011 General Elections.

As previously noted, statistics from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) show a trend in voter turnout during general elections in the country: 52.2% in 1999, 69.08% in 2003, 57.49% in 2007, 53.68% in 2011, 43.65% in 2015, and 35% in 2019. These findings point to a further decline in voter turnout during elections. Voter apathy and low turnout are detrimental to democracy as voting is a vital form of citizen engagement in politics [17][18].

Vergne [19], Falade [20], and Amdi [21] identify several factors that contribute to voter indifference and turnout. According to Vergne [19], the predicted advantage of voting depends on a few criteria. Very critically, this is predicated on the policy packages that electorates desire to see as implemented and the parties or leaders that they wish to have in power. This indicates that there should be at least one party that offers the type of politicians and ideas that voters favor; otherwise, they will not profit from voting and will be reasonable to abstain. When there is no policy package or leader that people find appealing to, they simply do not vote.

According to Amdi [21], the state's institutional architecture is a major factor contributing to poor voter turnout in Nigeria. He believes that the democratic process and political engagement in Nigeria are learning experiences, owing to the fragility of democratic structures and institutions, as well as citizens' low levels of democratic culture as a result of lengthy years of military dictatorship. These unstable democratic frameworks have impacted political processes, diminishing citizens' confidence in the political system. This had a significant impact on their willingness to participate in political processes. In line with Falade, money, ethnicity, and religion all influence Nigerian politics. Since independence in 1960, he claims that religious and ethnic politics have



characterized the election process, which has been practiced with animosity, hostility, and rancor. As a result, citizens feel indifferent and passive, which leads to a poor voting turnout [20]

In a similar manner, the politics of godfatherism in Nigerian political space before, during, and after elections, and the preference of the godson to satisfy the terms of agreement reached with his godfather rather than delivering the dividends of democracy to the people, contributes to voter apathy in Nigeria. Nwambuko et al. contended that although politics of godfatherism is not an unfamiliar phenomenon in Nigerian political history, the country has seen an increase in it since returning to democratic rule in 1999, which continues to weaken government authority and rendering citizens' voting value meaningless. Its practice has not only retarded the process of democratic consolidation in Nigeria but also undermines effective state governance and restrictions rather than broadening democratic representation [22].

Again, many Nigerians were deterred from participating in democratic processes by political leaders' dishonesty and broken promises. Falade contends that throughout election campaigns, politicians make declarations. After being elected to office, the majority of these promises are frequently unfulfilled, which causes many voters to lose interest in politics and turn apathy against them [23]. In addition, Anthony Downs developed the "Rational Choice Theory" in 1957 in an effort to identify the cause or causes of voter indifference. He hypothesized that people cast ballots in elections in order to maximize their gains. If the expenses outweigh the benefits, people might not participate. Getting killed, feeling insecure, etc., could be the price. They may also choose not to vote in a scenario where advantages like sustainable development and infrastructure are nonexistent [24]. In his theory of political alienation, Gebhard Kirchgassner suggested that factors such as voters' inconsequentiality (powerlessness) and lack of political accountability could lead to their apathy or abstention. In addition, the people may choose not to vote during elections as they are more concerned with what to do to get out of poverty and how to go about it. poverty. The reality is that the increasing poverty rate in Nigeria has gone beyond mere examining the causes and proffering solutions to them [25]. In other words, there is a need for a sincere commitment to adopting strategies and taking measures in reducing poverty in Nigeria. This is only possible when there is political will which is lacking among Nigerian leaders. Lack of political will is a major obstacle to development and development cannot occur or be meaningful without the electorates coming out in mass to vote their preferred candidates into public offices [26]

All of the aforementioned elements are undoubtedly present in Nigerian politics and may be to blame for the apathy of the electorate. Furthermore, a 2011 research paper by the Independent National Electoral Commission and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung states that voters' apathy has been linked to political leaders' broken promises, violence, corruption, lack of voter mobilization, lack of credible leaders, ignorance, political deception, and voters' helplessness. The table below reports as follows:

**Table 1: Statistics on Voter Apathy in Presidential Elections in Nigeria**

Statistics for the presidential elections in this piece cover the years 1999 to 2023

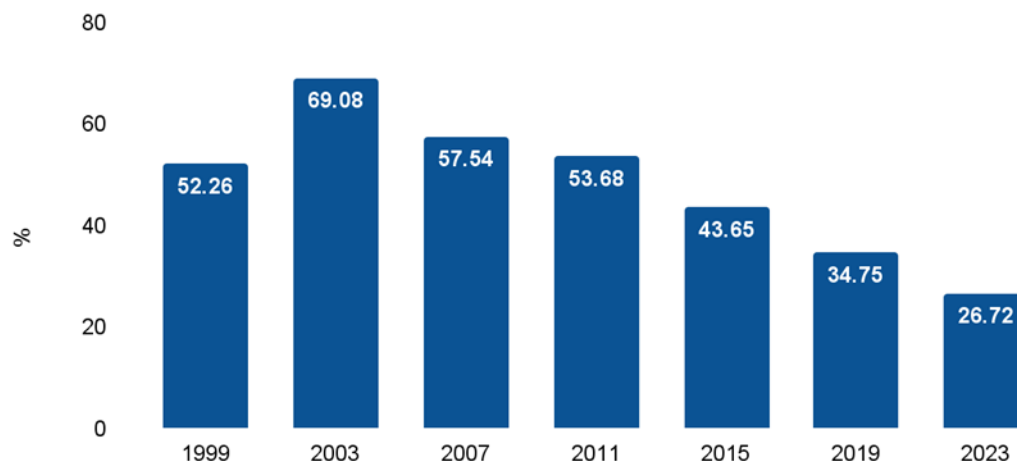
<b>Election Year</b>	<b>Registered Voters</b>	<b>Total No of Accredited Voters</b>	<b>Difference of registered voters and accredited voters (%)</b>
1999	57,938,945	30,280,052	52
2003	60,823,022	42,018,735	69.08
2007	61,567,036	35,397,517	57.4
2011	73,528,040	39,469,484	53.68
2015	67,422,005	29,432,083	43.65
2019	82,344,107	28,614,190	34.75
2023	93,470,000	25,286,616	26.72

*Source: African Elections Database and INEC, 2023*



## Percentage of Voter Turnout in Nigeria's General Elections

Voter turnout has been on a steady decline since 2007

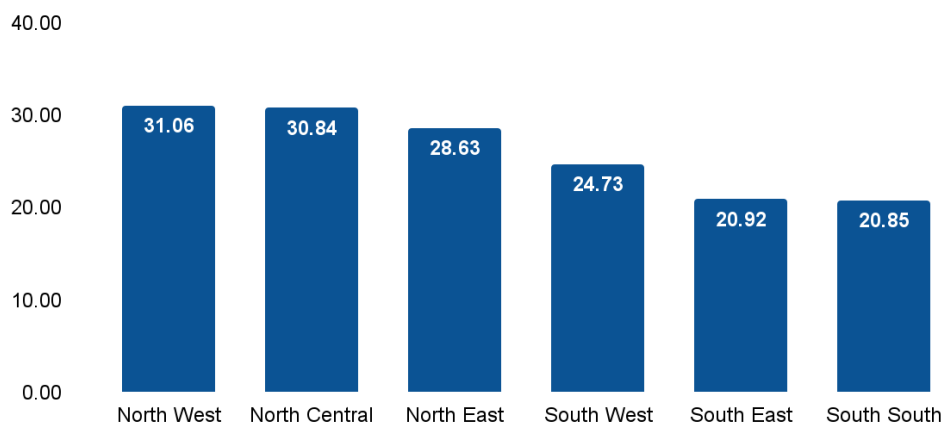


Source: INEC; IDEA | Chart: Dataphyte

Figure 1: Percentage of Voter Turnout in Nigeria's General Elections Since 1999

As previously mentioned, voter turnout is the proportion of total votes cast to all registered voters. Thus, in the recently 2023 presidential and National Assembly elections, just 24.9 million of the 93.47 million registered voters cast ballots. This amounts to the lowest voter participation since the return of democracy in 1999, at a pitiful 26.72 percent. Similarly, Nigeria held its seventh general election on February 25. Only 24.9 million of the 93.47 million registered voters cast ballots in the election, according to the results, which were released by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the early hours of Wednesday. This indicates a voter turnout of 26.72 percent. The recent election saw an 8.03 percent decrease in voter turnout from the 34.74 percent recorded in the 2019 general election. In addition to the poor turnout that has now become typical in Nigeria's recent elections, the 2023 election's turnout fell well short of the 50% threshold that INEC had set for the poll [27].

## Percentage of voter turnout in the 2023 Presidential election by Geo-political zone



Source: INEC | Chart: Dataphyte

Figure 2: Percentage of Voter turnout in the 2023 presidential election by Geo-political zone



In the general election of 2023, less than twenty-five percent of voters cast ballots in any of the three southern Nigerian zones. It is important to note that in the 2023 election, the South-South region which in 2019 saw the highest voter turnout in southern Nigeria recorded the lowest turnout. Low turnout, however, might have resulted from instances of violence, voter suppression, thuggery, and INEC officials arriving late. For example, at a voter in Port Harcourt, INEC materials arrived at the polling place around 2:00 pm, and officials left two hours later. As a result, a large number of people lost their rights to vote without their consent. Therefore, it is quite challenging to evaluate voter turnout based just on the results of February 25. The documented poor participation was caused by violence, suppression, ineptitude, and INEC's delay in arriving at several units [27]. Taiwo Adejare, a political analyst, reportedly suggested that the voter participation in Nigeria may have been inflated in the past since technology had shown shortcomings. Despite the undoubtedly disorganized nature of the most recent presidential and National Assembly elections, technological advancements have revealed the likelihood of vote manipulation in multiple regions of the nation [27].

### ➤ Environmental Factors Promoting Voter Apathy in Nigeria Electoral Democracy

Concerning Nigeria, a variety of environmental factors contribute to voter apathy, such as the following:

- 1) *Bad Governance*: Where there is poor government, there is voter apathy. The political and socioeconomic climate of Nigeria is linked to terrible governance and is typified, among other things, by corruption, poor leadership, extreme poverty, and inadequate infrastructure. Top government officials loot the public funds and divert them into their private account, while the masses suffer in abject poverty and die of starvation [28]. When the people they elect to office fail to live up to their expectations, they would prefer not to vote again.
- 1) *High level of Illiteracy and Ignorance*: The high percentage of illiteracy and ignorance among Nigerians who consciously chose not to engage in political activities prior to, during, and following elections in Nigeria is the root reason of the ongoing rise in voter apathy in that country. This unethical political behavior is a result of the government's inability to establish the kind of welcoming atmosphere necessary to educate voters about the value of casting ballots and participating in politics in order to improve Nigeria. Furthermore, in line with Ogunbiyi[4], it's critical to emphasize that political illiterates who abstain from political participation are the worst kind of illiterates. Unfortunately, he is unaware that political actions have an impact on everything. Regretfully, by publicly stating that he despises politics, the politically inactive person takes delight in his political illiteracy. He is unaware that the prostitute, the thief, the abandoned infant, and, worst of all, dishonest and inept public servants all stem from his political indifference.
- 2) *Pronounced Rigging and Snatching of Ballot Boxes*: Voter intimidation groups and dishonest INEC employees have been observed to manipulate or steal vote boxes during Nigerian elections. These illicit activities are frequently carried out in the presence of law enforcement organizations, which are obligated by law to stop them from occurring, to make sure that elections are conducted in accordance with the requirements of the electoral laws, and to safeguard the lives and voting rights of eligible voters during elections within the bounds of the law. Rigging works against the establishment of national growth and good government [29].
- 3) *Victimization of Political Opponents*: In significant Nigerian states, there are numerous instances of political opponents being victimized both before and during elections. When political opponents are victimized by the ruling party, images of injustice, intimidation, and dread for their lives and property are imprinted in their brains. Voter apathy is fostered by the government in power's inability to stop victimizing political opponents.
- 4) *Lack of Proper Accountability*: One important criterion for assessing the level of good governance in contemporary cultures is accountability. Accountable, responsible, and liable government leaders are the result of free and fair elections with substantial voter turnout. Voters become apathetic when public authorities fail to provide an explanation.
- 5) *Voter Fatigue*: The electoral voting procedure is rigorous and time-consuming. This often results in the inertia or weariness of voters' energies necessary to fully and effectively engage in the elections, both physically and mentally. Voters become apathetic due to their physical and mental exhaustion.
- 6) *Financial Inducement*: The existence of favorable voting conditions during the conduct of elections in Nigeria is refuted by the financial inducement of voters both before and after the elections by unhappy political office holders and power-hungry, money-bag politicians. Voters would be subjected to various forms of political victimization, intimidation, and threats if they refused to accept financial reductions. Voters will become apathetic as a result of this.



- 7) *Vote will not Count Mentality*: Notwithstanding, there were marginal advancements in the way the most recent Nigerian elections of 2023 were conducted in contrast to earlier ones. Previous elections were tainted by electoral misconduct, such as voter impersonation and the use of phony identification cards. Such electoral fraud was lessened by the deployment of Card Reader machines in 2019 and the added use of the Biometric Voters Accreditation System in the 2023 elections. In the event that INEC adopts electronic voting, this might be combined. But even with these advancements, people are still not encouraged to participate in elections or have their confidence restored. This encourages voter apathy by supporting the "Vote will not Count Mentality" among Nigerians.

Adeyemi and Salawudeen and Akinyemi [3] have identified additional environmental factors, which include: a lack of trust in political leaders; stringent voting procedures; election shifts; religious constraints or affiliations; insincerity or lack of trust in the electoral body, INEC; delay and denial of justice; extreme poverty, particularly in rural areas; corruption; high levels of insecurity; unfair government policies; marginalization of ethnic groups; political violence and electoral violence; unfulfilled political promises; and unequal resource distribution, among others [29]. Nevertheless, it is ineffective for the populace to avoid polls or stop taking part in elections in Nigeria, regardless of the truth of the many explanations for voter apathy in the nation that were previously mentioned. For Nigeria's and Nigerians' current democracy, some people dedicated their lives. Therefore, if this attitude of voter apathy persists, it will be a huge insult to their legacies.

#### ➤ **Consequences of Voter Apathy on Nigerian National Development**

1. *Violation of Human Rights*: In few states in Nigeria during general elections, some ethnic groups were not allowed to vote simply because their preferred candidates were not the choice candidates of the indigenes of those state. Violation of human rights remained the order of the day.
2. *Lack of Transparency*: The electoral processes before, during and after the conduct of elections in Nigeria were not transparent enough to enthrone a legitimate government across the levels of government in the country
3. *Unpopular Public Policies, Programmes and Projects*: Due to the government is housed by unpopular public officials, the making and enforcement of unpopular policies, programmes and projects remain a normality in the political system.
4. *Low Political Participation*: Voter apathy breeds low political participation of majority of the citizens in taking keying decisions affecting them. This is detrimental to national development.
5. *Timid Patriotism to National Issues*: Voter apathy breeds timid patriotism to issues of national interest which the drive to national development is one of them.
6. *Non-adherence to Due Process*: The existence and sustenance of a robust national development are dependent on strict adherence to due process. Due process remains legal process of ensuring accountability and transparency initiated and implemented by popular government based on the consent of majority of the citizenry. Voter apathy negates this practice.
7. *Non-adherence to the Principle of Rule of Law*: Rule of men is antithetical to stable political system/national development. No country can develop in an unstable political system like Nigeria where low voter apathy exist due to non-adherence to the principles of rule of law
8. *Politicization of Security Outfits*: In summary, the legal duties of security outfits remain to ensure, promote and safeguard the rights, lives and properties of the citizenry regardless of their ethnic background, religious affiliations and political party membership and choice of candidate(s). In the Nigerian case, the security outfits have been politicized in favor of the power drunk politicians that see politics as a do or die affair but to the detriment of majority of the ordinary citizenry.
9. *Corrupt Judicial System*: Civilization is a product of good justice system. Thus, a civil society is a society where the judiciary is the last hope of the common man. But in Nigeria, the judiciary is not the last hope of the common man but that of the money bag politicians who buy justice from corrupt judges. Election victories in Nigeria are no longer determined by voters' votes but by the judgement of corrupt judges in the judiciary. The consequence this is that public office holders (who are product of the corrupt judicial system) do not see themselves as being accountable to the people but to themselves and the corrupt political system.

Similarly, Ogunniran identified several detrimental effects of voter indifference on Nigerian national development, including the election of an unpopular government, a lack of accountability, citizens' disinterest in the political system and governance, unequal representation of the populace, skewed government policies and decisions, etc [25].





## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The people, for whom democracy is intended, are the best ones to protect it. However, in order for democracy to truly serve the interests of the people, all democratic norms and values must be respected. We are all envious of some of the world's most developed democracies these days. In actuality, though, their greatness has been attained by fortifying grassroots democracy. It goes without saying that the majority's participation in the democratic process is the only way to improve democracy. As a result, voter engagement is essential to the survival of democracy and to the advancement of the country. Voter apathy, however, has persisted as a persistent problem for Nigeria's electoral system and a sneaky hindrance to the country's progress. High voter turnout during elections and the validity of the results ensure that elected public office holders are held accountable and transparent, which in turn ensures national development. Good governance is a byproduct of credible elections that are free and fair, as well as the discouragement of antidemocratic practices and culture (electoral fraud, political violence, human rights violations, corruption, etc.) that breed voter apathy in Nigeria before, during, and after elections.

Sequel to the above, the paper recommends the follow plausible measures to avert the afore mentioned consequences of voter apathy on national development:

- a) The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should be restructured in such a way as to ensure its independence.
- b) There is need to ensure and promote the development of administrative competence in public sector organizations like INEC in Nigeria [30]. This is vital if INEC wants better performance of their employees before and during elections in the country. The display of administrative competence by INEC before and during elections would make the people trust the electoral process, and vote massively to ensure that their preferred candidates win.
- c) There is need to curb political violence through socialization of students through the teaching of practical Social Studies and democratic behaviour learning in Civics at Junior Secondary School levels.
- d) Workshops and seminars should be organized for teachers of Social Studies and Civics to improve their skills in teaching citizenship education, political participation and voters' education.
- e) National Orientation Agency and Civil Organizations should step-up advocacy to ginger citizens on the need for better democratic participation in future elections.
- f) If democracy is to truly be the government of the people and for the people, the people must own the process from the beginning to the end. Active involvement in the political process signifies that everyone is a critical stakeholder, having the best interest of the country at heart. It is a practical demonstration of being a responsible citizen.
- g) Compulsory voting: This we believed could help to tackle the low turnout in election. Franklien pointed out those countries where this was applied, the average turnout was 89% . He argued that such a change would surely increase turnout. During the FGD discussion, many said that they had consistently registered without voting, this was done in-case government rise tomorrow to demand for voter's registration cards. They wouldn't want to lose their jobs. Law could be introduced in the system thereby prioritizing voting. In the findings, we discovered that the youngsters had lost interest in voting. Compulsory voting could arouse their interest. Women should also be made to participate actively in election. The introduction of 35% representation is quite commendable [31].
- h) To lure the people back to the polls, elected political leaders at all levels, should not take the electorates for granted. It is sheer treachery for an elected leader to ignore his/her electoral promises while in power.
- i) Compatriots who ignore all difficulties in order to participate in voting ought to be given a better deal. In addition, to give credibility to the electoral process, the practice of turning elections into a 'do or die' affair should be discouraged.
- j) Additionally, INEC, political parties, the civil society, the press and other stakeholders should give greater attention to voters' education as well as other enlightenment campaigns that could re-enact the confidence of the people in the electoral process.
- k) Introduction of civic and voter education: This should be carried to the rural areas not only in television and radio sets because many don't listen to televisions and radios.
- l) We also suggest a free, credible and fair election to enable voters build confidence in the electorate and to see election as an agent of change. This will go a long way in increasing voters' turnout.
- m) Government should also devise suitable measures on how to permanently bring an end to this issue of ethnic conflict which is seemingly becoming a permanent feature in Nigeria and the culprits go Scot free all the time. Also, concerted efforts should be made from all relevant stakeholders to correct this problem.



- n) To deter the practice of antidemocratic norms and culture that breed voter apathy and sustain the "Vote will not Count Mentality" among Nigerians before, during, and after elections in Nigeria, the government at all levels and INEC should support and encourage the use of Card Reader machines and the Biometric Voters Accreditation System during elections.

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*Cite this Article: Nwambuko, Temple C, Njoku, Chukwunenye C, Omiunu, Funmilayo (2024). Voter Apathy in Nigerian Electoral Democracy: An Insidious Enigma to National Development. International Journal of Current Science Research and Review, 7(3), 1769-1779*