

The nature of political alienation and electoral violence in Nigeria: A critical analysis of the 2019 general elections

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Abstract

The Nigerian political system has experienced a high level of election-related violence at various epochs of its development. The incidences of violence during elections in Nigeria have resulted in the loss of lives and posed a threat to electoral participation and political stability. The study surveyed the perceptions of Nigerians on the effect of violence on the participation of eligible voters in the Nigerian electoral process. It attempts to ascertain the cause of the low turnout of voters in the 2019 general elections. The study adopted the survey research design and used data from 1,200 respondents selected from six local government areas representing the six geo-political zones. Simple percentages and Chi-Square statistical techniques were employed to test and determine the degree of association intrinsic to the stated hypotheses. The findings from the study show a positive relationship between violence and alienation. Thus, political violence perpetrated by political opponents and parties (among others) during elections results in the alienation of voters from the electoral process. Consequently, it is opined that the federal and state governments should put on modalities to mitigate the incidence of violence during elections. Also, perpetrators of electoral violence should be prosecuted and sanctioned accordingly.

Keywords: political alienation; electoral violence; voter abstention; voter turnout; 2019 general elections

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Introduction

Democracy the world over is based on the principles of adequate representation and participation. Without the participation of the citizenry in the democratic practice, there would be no democracy or a democratically elected government. This is so because an election that serves as the forum for selecting or electing representatives into a democratic government involves the ardent participation of the citizens. An election thus serves as a contact point between the people and the elected representatives. If this linkage or contact point is weakened by a low-level participation, it could lead to a destabilization of the political system since adequate participation in the voting process signifies voters' confidence, support, and legitimacy of the political and governance system. However, there is global evidence of a continuous and sustained reduction in voter turnout during every election period (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2016).

In Nigeria, statistics show a declining percentage of voters in various elections, especially from the Fourth Republic (i.e., 1999 to 2019) (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2015; 2019). The survey is based on the Nigerian 2019 general elections. The central thesis of the study is that electoral violence is a factor of alienation that is responsible for the low-level of voter



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turnout in Nigerian elections, including the 2019 general elections. The concept of alienation came from German philosophers into modern sociology, especially from Hegel and the young Hegelian scholars and Karl Marx, who was the one who first utilized it as a potent tool for diagnosis in a sociological investigation. Marx conceived alienation as a process that is expressed most forcefully in work and the division of labour. He held that four types of alienation emerged directly from the work situation: (i) alienation from the process of work, (ii) alienation from the products of work, (iii) alienation of the worker from himself, and (iv) alienation of the worker from others (Marcus 1941). From this view, alienation is multi-dimensional and all-encompassing, cutting across all aspects of human relations (political, social, economic, religious, and others), particularly as it affects labour (Sayers 2011).

The term political alienation can be construed as the relative continuing sense of estrangement from or rejection of the prevailing political system by the individual citizen. The politically alienated desire to vote, but their feeling of insignificance to the system restricts them. They feel that their interests are not regarded and represented by political leaders (Glasberg & Shannon 2010). The alienated are of the view that political leaders who hold offices are incompetent, self-seeking, 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). The individual citizen and civil society groups that hold positions contrary to the government's existing policy and actions may be frustrated and show attitudes that are negative to the political system as a whole. This group of citizens includes those who are critics of government policies and actions, such as Non-Governmental Organizations and academics who may become alienated from the political system, especially if successive changes of administration or governance do not actualize their political goals and also when there appear to be no credible opposition party to challenge the party in power. This position is supported by Miller (1974) and Herring et al. (1991), who aver that the variations of political alienation are determined by the extent to which the specific interest of groups are served by the prevailing political environment.

Alienation has been given several connotations, but the overriding notion that best describes the term is that of 'powerlessness,' i.e., 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 the loss of self-worth. 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 (Kim 2004; Catterberg & Moreno 2006).

Five alternative dimensions of alienation were identified by Seeman (1959; 1975), these are powerlessness (the erosion of an individual's freedom and control and perceived inability to affect political events through his effort); meaninglessness (the perception that political events or actions are incomprehensible or too complicated for the individual hence, his inability to determine and act upon means of influencing political outcomes); normlessness (the individual's perceived inability to identify with the central and prevailing societal values); isolation (a feeling of exclusion, rejection or segregation from one's community); and, self-estrangement (this is when a person feels alienated from other people and the society in general; it refers to man's alienation from himself, from his feelings and loss of purpose; a feeling of incapacity and realization of that).

Political alienation has been categorized into two broad groups by Olsen (1968); 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 their voluntary choice. Finifter (1970) outlines five variants of political alienation. These are political powerlessness (a feeling of incapability to affect political/electoral outcomes and governmental actions by the

alienated), political meaninglessness (the perception by the individual that political/governmental outcomes/decisions are unpredictably unclear), political normlessness (the perception that there is a rampant deviation from norms and regulations intended to govern political and governmental outcomes), political isolation (a rejection of widely held/shared societal norms and rules of behaviour by the individual), and political disappointment (a displayed lack of interest in political/electoral decision and activity because of the misdemeanour by the ruling political elites).

The political activity of the alienated

The politically alienated do not share the view that the system is just and that it is responsive to their feelings. This may lead to withdrawal as unresponsiveness of the system may create a sense of frustration; because even if one wanted to participate, the actions would be futile. But this is only one possibility regarding the political role of the alienated. Given the fact that the alienated do not share the values operative in the system, they may also choose to attack those values. So a 'danger' would always remain that the alienated may disrupt the political process. It can also be hypothesized that those who distrust the existing political process are an ideal audience for extremist appeals. So the politically alienated is a pet constituency for all sorts of populists and demagogues (Gamson 1966; Wright 1976).

The underlying assumption here is that the alienated have a negative attitude toward the political system and may support radical-revolutionary movements. It is in demonstrations, riots, and other acts that one is likely to find the alienated. Furthermore, it is also possible to expect that those who are very efficacious but distrustful will act in unconventional ways. For instance, Gamson (1966) has suggested that a high sense of efficacy and a low degree of trust is the optimum combination for mobilization. Thus, there is a concern about the dangerously disruptive potential of alienation. The danger is not so much in the withdrawal of the alienated as in their potential for mobilization (Wright 1976).

The most impressive hypothesis is that the alienated turn apathetic (developing indifference towards political and electoral activities). Theoretically, those who do not have a sense of political efficacy are not likely to participate in political activities. Besides, if the environment is adjudged as unresponsive, participation will not result. Thus, alienation would lead to withdrawal from any active political (electoral) participation. This would result in abstention because of low levels of political interest (Wright 1976). According to Kim (2004), confidence and efficacy are imperatives in ensuring a developed civil society as well as for a successful collaboration between the government and the citizens. Confidence reflects the feeling that the government is working for the citizen's interests, while efficacy is seen as the belief that the action of the individual can affect political and electoral outcomes (Campbell et al. 1954). Thus, a feeling of low or lack of confidence in political authorities and a perceived individual's inability to participate or affect electoral/political outcomes is indicative of political alienation. Political alienation is, thus, a set of attitudes about the political system in general. This issue becomes relevant in the context of the political system since the actions of the disenchanting may endanger the stability of the political system. This analysis also affects people who refrain from joining or participating in political party activities (even if the said parties canvases high levels of welfare) because they are disenchanting with the prevailing political environment.

A conception of violence and electoral violence

Violence

The term violence has been explained from the point of the employment of force illegitimately to enforce decisions or actions on other people against their will (Kolawole 1988; Høglund 2006; Keane 1996). Subsequently, violence can be construed in terms of the employment of physical force or power deliberately (whether as treated or attempted) against one's self, another person, a group or a community that has the likelihood to or results in psychological harm, deprivation, and an injury or

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death (World Health Organization 2002). Violence has been pigeonholed into three typologies; physical, structural, and psychological. Physical violence relates to harm or attacks that inflict injury on persons, which can lead to death. Structural violence has to do with the unfair and biased treatment of people in society. Psychological violence deals with harm or injury to the mind of the individual, such as all forms of threats, harassment, indoctrination, and brainwashing (Jinadu 1980; Galtung 1985; 1991; Schröder & Schmidt 2001).

Electoral violence

According to Höglund (2009 in Taylor 2018:8),

“...widespread agreement on a clear definition has proven relatively challenging. Broadly speaking, electoral violence can be grouped within one of two more common fields of political analysis ... First, electoral violence can be thought of as a subset of political violence and thus conceptually similar to communal violence, rebellion, and civil war... Electoral violence might be thought of as a type of political violence that is defined by four criteria: 1) the motive of the violence, 2) the timing of the violence, 3) the actors perpetrating the violence, and 4) the targets of the violence...”

Violence refers to acts inimical to the electoral process, which is carried out by agents that are anti to credible, free, and fair elections. Such acts perpetrated against the actors in the electoral process include blackmail, coercion, various forms of threats and intimidation as well as inflicting physical injury, including assassinations and deaths (Fischer 2002; Sisk in United Nations Development Programme 2009). Electoral violence has been differentiated from other types of violence by Höglund (2009 in Taylor 2018), who aver that electoral violence is a type of violence associated with the processes of elections and voting periods, which is intended to influence electoral processes and outcomes.

“Alternatively, electoral violence can be thought of as a type of election malfeasance, and therefore more similar to election rigging, vote-buying, and other forms of electoral fraud. Violence is then one element of the menu of manipulation that can be used to manipulate election results” (Schedler 2002 in Taylor 2018:8). According to (Nwolise 2007), electoral violence epitomizes any type of planned action that is tantamount to physical, psychological, and structural threats directed to intimidate, harm, blackmail, or pressure a candidate for political office. This action could be before, during, or after the conduct of an election intended to influence and subvert the otherwise fairness of the electoral process.

“In terms of motivation, violence is usually intended to influence the outcome of an election. The specific type of violence employed can take a variety of forms, but it is temporally close to Election Day. The perpetrators of violence are generally actors with a vested interest in the election outcome, such as members of the state security apparatus (police, military, and others), militias that are loyal to particular parties, and rank-and-file party supporters. For this subject, electoral violence can be understood as a coercive force, directed towards electoral actors and/or objects that occur in the context of electoral competition... [It] can occur before, during, or after elections and it can target a variety of actors, including candidates, activists, poll workers, election observers, journalists and voters” (Birch & Muchlinski forthcoming in Taylor 2018:8).

From the foregoing, violence associated with electoral activities can be construed as acts directed overtly or covertly, directly or indirectly aimed at undermining the actors in the electoral process. The objective of agents of electoral violence is to influence the processes of elections unduly and to gain an advantage over other political rivals or opponents. The activity of violence during an election is often intended to scare away opposing party officials and supporters to manipulate the election result

as well as reduce the votes that may accrue to other political party opponents. This form of violent action may also prevent the voters from voting significantly. The above analysis is supported by Burchard (2015).

An analysis of alienation as the cause of voter abstention

The concept of political alienation, as popularized by Seeman (1959), Roberts (1987) and Finifter (1970), can be construed as the relative continuing sense of estrangement from or rejection of the prevailing political system by the individual citizen. The politically alienated desire to vote, but their feeling of insignificance to the system restricts them. They feel that their interests are not regarded and represented by political leaders, who are considered as incompetent, self-seeking, and corrupt. Thus, the politically alienated abstains from the voting processes that elects these types of leaders. Seeman (1959) and Finifter (1970) identified five alternative meanings of political alienation—powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement.

Political powerlessness, normlessness, and self-estrangement are the main factors that may account for the abstention of eligible voters from the electoral process in Nigeria. Closely linked to these variables is political disappointment indicated by Finifter (1970) (an individual's disinterest in a political decision or participation because of bad governance and corruption by political leaders). These variables speak of the individual's own perceived incapacity to affect electoral and political outcomes. Also, there is the issue of distrust of government by the electorates, which could result from unfulfilled electoral promises. There is also the case of corruption by political elites and leaders and the belief by the electorates that their interests are not taken into account by the Nigerian government. Thus, citizens and eligible voters become alienated from the electoral process and the entire political system.

Pertinent to the issue of alienation is violence either before, during or after the electoral activities. Electoral violence has become a phenomenon experienced in Nigerian elections. It is capable not only of alienating the voters from the electoral process but also of instigating them to attack the political system. Apart from abstaining from the electoral and political process, the alienated may engage in other acts that are adverse to the political system and the respective government; since they do not share the view that the system is just and responsive to their feelings. Given the fact that the alienated do not share the values operative in the political system, they may choose to attack those values and support civil disorders, protests, revolution, electoral violence, and others against the political process and the state. It can thus be hypothesized that those who distrust the existing political process are an ideal audience for extremist appeals; and an explosive potential for radical-revolutionary programs. For instance, among the reasons the Boko Haram terrorist group gave for taking up arms against the Nigerian State was bad governance resulting in corruption, poverty, and failure to meet the socio-economic needs of Nigerians, especially in the Northern States (Walker 2012; Forest 2012). Thus, it is likely that the alienated may support or even be recruited by such sects to subvert the state. From the foregoing, it is clear that alienation takes place in two forms, passively (i.e., withdrawal from participation) and actively (i.e., participating in acts that may disrupt the political process). Since the resultant effect of alienation has its dangers both passively and actively, it should be given adequate attention.

Electoral participation and the 2019 general elections

The consolidation and sustenance of the democratic structure through a free, fair, credible and periodic election is the most fundamental challenge of most African countries, including Nigeria (Nzongola-Ntalaja 1997; Centre for Democracy and Development 2019). Abiding by the rules of the game in ensuring a credible electoral outcome has posed a serious challenge to the Nigerian state since the birth of the Fourth Republic (1999- 2019). Since 1999, six civilian administrations have been installed, while five general elections have been organized by civilian governments (till 2019) in the quest for democratic consolidation. That is, the elections conducted between 2003 and 2019 have

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witnessed the transfer of political power from one civilian administration to another. For example, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (the incumbent president in 1999) was re-elected president in 2003 on the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Also, the Late Alhaji Umaru Yar'Adua of the PDP won the 2007 general election and was sworn in as president. In April 2011, the Acting President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan (who became president following the death of President Umaru Yar'Adua), won the 2011 elections and was sworn in as president on the platform of the PDP (Aniekwe & Kushie 2011). Furthermore, Muhammadu Buhari, the candidate of the All Progressive Congress (APC), an opposition party, won March 28, 2015, presidential election (British Broadcasting Corporation 2015). President Buhari was re-elected as president on the platform of the APC on February 23, 2019 (Ojetunde 2019).

Though democracy (transition of government) was consolidated in the period between 2003 and 2019, various elections conducted during these periods were infested with electoral frauds leading to several electoral and violent conflicts resulting in loss of lives, displacements, and destruction of property worth billions of naira. For example, the 1999 general election witnessed a presumably more peaceful atmosphere with minimal violent incidences arguably because it was midwived and supervised by the military. Subsequent elections especially those of 2003 and 2007 conducted under the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo were marred by serious irregularities and violence and were adjudged as the most fraudulent and corrupt elections conducted in the history of the Nigerian State (Kurfi 2005; Animashaun 2010; Aniekwe & Kushie 2011).

The 2003 general elections were bedevilled with numerous irregularities and malpractices, such as fraudulent electoral practices, ballot box stuffing, intimidation of voters, assassinations, killings, and others. It has thus been contended by political analysts that the election of 2003 was a charade and a mockery of voters and the electoral process because it was a process of merely selecting pre-determined winners by political elites and their caucuses. The above malfeasances were attributed as the probable reasons for violence in the 2003 general elections (International Foundation for Electoral Systems 2011; Abimbola & Adesote 2012). Human Rights Watch (HRW) (2004) for instance, reported that about one hundred persons lost their lives and with many sustaining various degrees of injuries during the election period (between April and May 2003) in Nigeria.

The general election of 2007 was adjudged the worst election yet, in post-independent Nigeria (Human Rights Watch 2007). The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) stated that there were nine hundred and sixty-seven (967) incidences of "pre- and post-election violence" (Omotosho 2007; Human Rights Watch 2007; International Foundation for Electoral Systems 2007). An interview conducted by Human Rights Watch prelude to the 2007 elections showed that some eligible voters indicated their unwillingness to participate in the election. For instance, a retiree from Oye-Ekiti indicated the resolve of some older men and women not to participate in the 2007 elections for fear of electoral violence. During the April 2007 elections, close to three hundred (300) persons reportedly lost their lives. The resultant turnout level of eligible voters was very low as many registered voters were discouraged by the spate of violence across the country (Human Rights Watch 2007; Asemota 2011; Binniyat 2011). The 2007 elections witnessed high levels of political thuggery assassination, deliberate disfranchisement of the electorates, vote buying, corrupt practices, massive rigging, compromise of justice, outright disregard for the rule of law, otherwise. These factors were mainly attributed to the causes of violence in the general elections of 2007 (Animashaun 2010; Aniekwe & Kushie 2011).

The election of 2011 was generally accepted as partially fair by observers from the local and foreign divide. Although also marred by irregularities such as the intimidation of voters, snatching of ballot boxes, vote-buying, and others, it marked improvement from previous elections such as in 1999, 2003, and 2007 elections (Bilkisu 2011; Bekoe 2011). "...Unfortunately, the election adjudged as one of the most credible in the history of Nigeria was dented by the escalation of an unprecedented level

of post-electoral violence in which unquantifiable lives and property were lost/ destroyed...” (Centre for Democracy and Development 2019:29).

“Nigeria’s 2011 elections were the most violent in the country’s modern history as more than 800 people were killed in just three days following the presidential election ... The 2011 elections represented the greatest bloodshed in the country since the 1967-70 civil war. This violence was largely triggered by the loss of Muhammadu Buhari (now running under the banner of the Congress for Progressive Change [CPC]) to PDP incumbent Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian from the South who had assumed the presidency after the death in office of President Yar’Adua. As with the re-election of Shagari in 1983, Jonathan’s decision to run and subsequent victory was seen violating the unwritten agreement between North and South to share power by alternating presidential representation every two terms. Many Northerners felt that as Yar’Adua had died in office during his first term, the North was still owed another full term of the Presidency and were therefore aggrieved by Jonathan’s candidacy.” (The Fund for Peace 2018:14).

The above analysis shows that the failure of the Southern leaders in the leading political parties to honour the power-sharing unwritten agreement between the Northern parts of Nigeria was mainly adduced to the outbreak of electoral violence in the 2011 general elections in Nigeria.

The general elections of 2015 (March 28 and April 11) have been adjudged the best election ever conducted in Nigeria (Gabriel 2015). Election monitors from both the domestic and foreign divides scored the election high. The election was relatively peaceful. The technological innovation by INEC—that is the introduction of biometric voters’ registration and use of the Smart Card Reader improved efficiency and standard of the election. Also, sensitive electoral materials such as the result sheets and ballot papers were customized and possessed high-security features and codes. However, despite these great improvements in the electoral process, the 2015 election was not without flaws. Some of the anomalies identified concerning the election include “late arrival of election materials, overcrowding, failure of the card reader, result manipulation and voting of under-aged in some units in the Northern part of the country” (Udu 2015:102). According to the Centre for Democracy and Development (2019:29):

“...The 2015 general election did not witness much electoral violence largely because of the spirit of sportsmanship demonstrated by the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan, who conceded defeat and willingly handed over power to the opposition that emerged victorious at the polls.”

The 2019 general elections were violence infested. The European Union Observer Mission stated that:

“The election became increasingly marred by violence and intimidation of voters and INEC officials, primarily by party supporters. This harmed the integrity of the electoral process and may deter future voter participation. Party leadership did not take sufficient steps to rein in their supporters but accused opponents of using violence to disrupt the process and/or selectively depress turnout. Based on updated information available from media and other sources, during the campaign and the three election days observed, approximately 145 people were killed in election-related violence.” (European Union 2019: 33)

The violence that marred the February 23, 2019, presidential and national assembly elections in Nigeria led to the arrest of one hundred and twenty-eight (128) people for various electoral offences

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which include ballot box snatching, malicious damage of items, vote trading and homicide; while several explosives were recovered (The Nation 2019). Generally, the factors have been adduced as the reasons for electoral violence in Nigeria. The causes of electoral violence in Nigeria including election rigging, electoral abuses, alienation, marginalization and exclusion. Causes of electoral violence have also been adduced to the lack of compliance to and enforcement of extant laws, lack of adequate security, fraudulent electoral practices by electoral and party officials, poor management of election petitions, loss of confidence in the judiciary, and the conflicting interests between and among contending political parties and candidates (Ugiagbe 2010).

The electoral or voting statistics in Nigeria especially from 1999 to 2019 show a gradual and continuous decline. For example, the 1999 general elections recorded a 52.3% turnout of registered voters. In 2003 it was 69.1%; 58% in 2007; 53.7% in 2011; 43.6% in 2015, and 34.7% in 2019 (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2015; 2019; Ojetunde 2019). These statistics show a decline in the turnout of registered voters aside from the voting-age population who did not even register. This trend can harm the country's level of democratic development. Low turnout levels in Nigeria can be associated with several factors closely linked to socio-political and economic development. These factors may include the perceived inability of the citizens to influence the political and electoral mandate of the ruling elites; the loss of confidence in the political parties, and candidates as a result of bad governance; electoral violence; poor management of elections by the Electoral Management Bodies; poor electoral procedures, and electoral malpractices. Any of these factors or their combination could adversely affect turnout significantly resulting in alienation.

The study sought to find answers to questions such as: What is the impact of electoral violence on political alienation by gender, age, and educational status? The research thus sought to determine the relationship between electoral violence and political alienation; the degree of relationship between political alienation and electoral violence by respondents' gender, age, and educational status.

The study is vital because of the dangers that continuous low voter turnout poses to the democratic system. This trend can adversely affect not only the legitimacy and stability of the electoral process but also impede many eligible voters from taking an active part in the governance and policy decisions of their country. It is also necessary to identify the nature and degree of alienation between or among the variables (gender, age, education) of interest in the electoral process circle as affected by electoral violence. This can help to encourage turnout, especially in the part of society most affected by alienation.

Methods

The study adopted the ex-post facto and the descriptive analytical approach in the presentation and analysis of data. The ex-post facto design was appropriate since the study deals with the phenomenon of electoral behaviour that has already occurred. The descriptive analytical approach was employed to ensure a critical and thorough description of issues underlying the subject for easy comprehension. The population of the study was the Nigerian State covering the six geo-political zones. The National Population Census of Nigeria in 2006 put the figures for the Nigerian population at one hundred and forty million, four hundred and thirty-one thousand, seven hundred and ninety (140,431,790) (Nigeria Data Portal 2006). The study adopted Nigeria as the population of study since the phenomenon of election violence was a common occurrence in all parts of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. The 2006 National Population Census was employed for the study because it is the authentic and official census figures. The sample size of 1,200 respondents was sampled from the selected six local government areas of the geo-political zones in Nigeria using the stratified random sampling technique. The sample size of 1,200 respondents was arrived at by adopting the formula of Taro Yamane, the statistician 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 400×3). 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 utilized for the study. Primary data formed the nuclei of data collection for analysis and contingency tables were the mode of data presentation. Simple percentages and the Chi-Square statistical techniques were used to analyze the data. The simple percentage helped to ascertain the data percentages for easy analysis while the Chi-Square was utilized to test the hypotheses. The choice of the Chi-Square technique hinges on the fact that it measures the direction and degree of relationship of the variables involved in the phenomenon of study.

Table 1.
Distribution of selected local government areas

Geo-political Zones	Selected Zones	Selected States	Selected Local Government Areas
North- East			
North- West			
North- Central	North- Central	Plateau Kogi	Jos South Dekina
South- East			
South- West	South- West	Oyo Ekiti	Ibadan South West
South- South	South- South	Rivers Delta	Ekiti West Degema Ughelli South

Table 2.
Distribution of respondents in six selected local government areas

Selected Local Government Areas	Population	Sample Size	Percentage (%)
Jos South	311,392	250	21
Dekina	260,968	209	17
Ibadan South West	283,098	227	19
Ekiti West	179,600	144	12
Degema	249,461	200	17
Ughelli South	212,638	170	14
Total	1,497,157	1,200	100

Source: Nigeria Data Portal (2006) and researcher compiles

In Table 2, the sample size was arrived at by multiplying the population figure of each local government area by the total sample figure divided by the total population of the six selected local government areas (see Table 1). The percentage of the sample size was derived by multiplying each sample size by 100 divided by the total sample size figure.

Frequency distribution of variables computed with percentages and chi-square from the researcher’s fieldwork (2019)

For this study, a total of 1,200 questionnaires were administered, out of which 1,060 were completed and returned by the respondents. Out of the 1,060 respondents, the majority of them were males representing 57.1% while the females represented 42.9% of the sample. The age distribution shows that 66.04% of the respondents were between 18- 39 years old while 33.96% were 40 years old and above. This shows that the majority of the respondents who took part in the study constitute the

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youthful and virile age necessary for political participation. Also, 25.9% of the sampled respondents were married while 74.1% were single. Moreover, 28.3% of the respondents were secondary school certificate holders and below while 71.7% were OND/NCE/Post-Graduate certificate holders. This distribution shows that the majority of the respondents had basic education and thus were equipped to make informed responses useful to the study.

Results and Discussion

Political alienation and electoral violence

(Question 7) Are you of the opinion that electoral violence is one of the major problems in the Nigerian electoral process?

Table 3.
Political alienation and electoral violence by respondents' gender

Bad Governance	Male	Female	Total
Yes	580	410	990
No	25	45	70
Total	605	455	1060

Source: Field survey in 2019

Calculated $X^2 = 13.95$

Critical $X^2 = 10.83$

df = 1

$\alpha = 0.001$

The calculated X^2 is greater than Critical X^2 at $\alpha = 0.001$. Therefore, data are statistically significant at a 1% sampling error. An association exists between political alienation and bad governance.

Yule's Q of +0.40 shows that there is a largely positive relationship between electoral violence and the alienation of eligible voters from the electoral process by gender.

Among the population from which the sample was drawn, Table 3 shows that the male respondents are more likely to be alienated from the electoral process as a result of electoral violence than the females and vice versa. On the whole, electoral violence by elected political officials is responsible for the alienation of eligible voters from voting during elections in Nigeria.

(Question 8) Do you share the view that the majority of the citizens are willing and eager to vote during elections in Nigeria but do not for fear of electoral violence?

Table 4.
Political alienation and electoral violence by respondents' age

Electoral Violence	18-39 Years	40 Years and Above	Total
Yes	681	319	1000
No	19	41	60
Total	780	280	1060

Source: Field survey in 2019

Calculated $X^2 = 33.50$

Critical $X^2 = 10.83$

df = 1

$\alpha = 0.001$

The calculated X^2 is greater than Critical X^2 at $\alpha = 0.001$. Therefore, data are statistically significant at a 1% sampling error. An association exists between political alienation and electoral violence.

Yule's Q of +0.64 shows that there is a largely positive relationship between electoral violence and the alienation of eligible voters from the electoral process by age.

Among the population from which the sample was drawn, Table 4 shows that the respondents from age 18 to 39 are more likely to be alienated from the electoral process as a result of electoral violence than the respondents from age 40 and above and vice versa. On the whole, electoral violence is responsible for the alienation of eligible voters from voting during elections in Nigeria.

(Question 9) If you suspect that during a certain election period, there will be violence, will you go out and vote?

Table 5.

Political alienation and electoral violence by respondents' educational status

Electoral Malpractice	Secondary and Less	OND/HND/Post Graduate	Total
Yes	265	715	980
No	35	45	80
Total	300	760	1060

Source: Field survey in 2019

Calculated $X^2 = 10.18$

Critical $X^2 = 6.64$

df = 1

$\alpha = 0.01$

The calculated X^2 is greater than Critical X^2 at $\alpha = 0.01$. Therefore, data are statistically significant at a 1% sampling error. An association exists between political alienation and electoral violence.

Yule's Q of -0.35 shows that there is a medium negative relationship between electoral violence and the alienation of eligible voters from the electoral process by educational status.

Among the population from which the sample was drawn, Table 5 shows that the respondents who hold secondary school certificates or below are less likely to be alienated from the electoral process as a result of electoral violence than the respondents with OND/HND certificates and above and vice versa. On the whole, electoral violence is responsible for the alienation of eligible voters from voting during elections in Nigeria.

Research findings

The study set out to investigate the effect of electoral violence on voter alienation in the political and electoral process in Nigeria using the 2019 general elections as a case. It also aimed the determination the effect of electoral violence on political alienation by the variables of gender, age and educational status. This was meant to identify the section of society most affected by alienation.

The findings of the study are summarized thus: 1) Voter alienation in the Nigerian electoral process is a factor of electoral violence. 2) Electoral violence as perpetrated by political opponents and parties

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during elections affects electoral participation and, therefore is responsible for voter alienation in the Nigerian political system.

Concerning electoral violence: a) male respondents are more likely to be alienated from the electoral process than females. b) The respondents from age 18 to 39 are more likely to be alienated from the electoral process than the respondents from age 40. c) The respondents with secondary school certificates or below are less likely to be alienated from the electoral process than the respondents with OND/HND certificates and above.

Conclusion

Credible elections are relevant in achieving an enduring democracy and democratization process and in essence good governance. Electoral participation serves as the instrument for the attainment of a viable and representative government in democratic societies. Voting then becomes the main contact linkage between the representatives and the citizenry and provides the foundation for discussions, deliberations, and citizens' engagement in the operation of the political system. Consequently, if turnout declines, the primary linkage between the citizen and the political system may become weakened, and this may threaten the legitimacy of the democratic system. Citizens' participation in the process of governance is necessary to accomplish an equitable and civilized society. These tenets will not be achieved if a majority of eligible voters continue to stay away from voting during elections as a result of recurring violence. It is on record that more than half of the population of eligible voters have not voted since the Fourth Republic and also that about half of registered voters or less have not also voted during elections. This situation calls for concern especially as it is worsening. The need for this study becomes imperative since the level or degree of voter turnout serves as a parameter for measuring popular will, credibility, and legitimacy of elected officials. Besides, they are vital to political socialization and serve as the bedrock for democratic stability.

The study set out to examine the effect of violence on voter alienation in Nigeria as well as to determine the degree of alienation among the tested variables. The findings have been exhaustively discussed in the relevant chapter and have been summarized in this section above. It is hoped that the relevant institutions and stakeholders will take cognizance of these findings and the recommendations hereafter to positively address the voter alienation challenge. It is also expected that the study will engender more scholarly investigation and interest in Nigeria's electoral system and voting process. However, it is imperative to state here that the findings of the study do not suggest that anticipated violence during elections causes the electorates to become lazy in political/electoral participation. The findings show rather that the people are eager and interested in the political system and voting but are constrained to abstain because of violence and the danger it poses to their well-being.

Consequent to the research findings, the following suggestions as solutions to voter alienation in Nigeria are made. Firstly, the federal and state governments should put on modalities to mitigate the incidences of violence during elections. This should be done to encourage the citizens, especially those most affected by alienation to active participation in the electoral process. This could be ensured by designating adequate security personnel to ensure safety during voter registration, political rallies and campaigns and the voting periods. Secondly, the security personnel should be charged with the responsibility of forestalling violence and most importantly preventing any act or actions that negate the electoral regulations which often lead to violent outbreaks during elections. Thirdly, adequate and effective intelligence and monitoring team should be assigned to cover all election centres during elections in Nigeria. This team should also monitor the activities of the security personnel at designated election centres to check their excesses. Finally, election regulations should be strictly enforced and violators should be arrested and prosecuted.

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