

## **Frantz Fanon's Theory of Alienation, Powerlessness and Apathetic Political Behaviour in the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*Every democratically-elected government owes its legitimacy to the extent of popular participation of the citizens in the political processes. Oftentimes, governments under representative democracy make sense only when they are established by the concerted will of the greatest number of the population, as democracy itself is a game of numbers. By implication, where participation by the greatest number of the population declines, the legitimacy and accountability of the government becomes questionable. While literature abound, interrogating political participation and apathetic political behaviour in the 2019 general elections, efforts have not been made to trace the root cause of apathetic political behaviour in the 2019 general elections on psychic alienation arising from the individuals lived experiences of socio-political marginalization, oppressions, exploitations and inequalities. Complementing the existing literature, this study focuses on apathetic political behaviour in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria and how it interfaces with Frantz Fanon's theory of alienation. Utilizing Fanon's psychopolitical tool, the study contends that the apathetic political behaviour in the 2019 general elections was substantially a manifestation that aligns with Fanon's theory of alienation on account of widespread feelings of political powerlessness and normlessness.*

**Keywords:** Alienation, Apathetic behaviour, Elections, Normlessness, Powerlessness.

### **Introduction**

Citizens' participation in the electoral processes which remains the pillar of every democratic political system has been a contentious issue in Nigeria's political life. Studies conducted by scholars such as Arowolo and Aluko (2012), George-Genyi (2016), Okeke (2018), Ojukwu, Ukatu, Onuoha & Nnakwue (2019), Adigun (2020) and Okoye, Ezugwuorie & Onah (2020) etc. to interrogate the trends in political participations in Nigeria from 1999-2019 returned with the results that there have been steady decline in the level of participation in the political processes of the country by the citizens. This trend persists irrespective of the fact that the 1999 constitution of Nigeria (as amended) clearly and carefully in chapter four guaranteed the fundamental human rights as well as other civil rights such as access to education, equal employment opportunities, political participations or even the right to produce the head of a community or a governor or the president (Adesoji and Alao; 2009).

The reports by Verjee, Kwaja, & Onubuogu (2018) while emphasizing on the changes in elections in Nigeria since the 2015 general elections, which shows that the electorate is now more politically conscious, did not translate to increase in electoral participations in the 2019 general elections. To be more precise, voter turnout in 2015 was at 43.65%, while in the 2019 general elections, only about 34.75% of the 84million electorate that registered actually voted in the elections. Going back to 1999 general elections, while the total population of Nigeria was recorded at 108, 258, 350, the total number of registered voters was at 57, 938,945 representing 53.5%. The low turnout of registered voters in the 1999 elections maybe believed to be as a result of the psychological trauma following the years of military regimes as well as lack of political education and socialization in Nigeria. If that be the case, one should expect an outstanding improvement in the subsequent elections. In 2003, the population of Nigeria was estimated at 129, 934, 913, while the total number of registered voters was still as low as 60,823, 022 representing 46.8%. Also in 2007, Nigeria's population was 131, 859, 730 with registered voters at just 61, 567, 036, while in 2011, the population was 155, 215, 57 out of which only 73, 528, 040 registered (INEC Headquartes; 2011).

Voters' registration however, is not just the problematic here as Yakubu (2011) avers that registration is one thing, while participating in the voting processes on the day of elections is another thing. In 1999 for instance, out of the 57,938, 945 that registered for the elections, only 30,280, 052 participated in the voting process representing 52.2% turnout. In 2003, there appeared to be little improvement in voter turnout as about 42,018,735 cast their votes out of 60, 823,022 that registered for the elections standing at 69.1%. However, there was a shocking decline in voter turnout in 2007 general elections in which out of about 61, 567,036 registered voters, only 35, 425,208 voted representing 57.5% of the registered voters (NDI, 2007). It is worthy to note that even though this current trend of political apathy has its root in 1999 general elections; it became conspicuous in the 2007 general elections and has continued to worsen till the 2019 general elections. Worthy of note also is the subsequent 2011 general elections in which out of the 73, 528, 040 that registered, only 39, 469, 484 (53.6% of registered voters) participated in the elections (INEC Headquartes;2011). Taking it down to specifics in the 2015 Edo state presidential election, out of the 1,650,552 electorate that registered for the exercise, only about 599,166 voted (Vanguard, 2015). Also in the 2015 senatorial elections held in Benue state, George-Genyi ( 2016) noted that Zone A recorded 43.9% turnout less than 57.1% who did not turn out, Zone B recorded as low as 17.89% turnout against 82.11% that failed to vote, while in Zone C, only 30.9% participated against 69.01% that did not turnout.

According to the survey conducted by Fagunwa(2018) on the nature of political participation in 2015 general elections in Nigeria, about 65% of respondents who registered for the 2015 elections actually collected their permanent voters cards (PVC) and yet did not participate in the election. From the survey, it was revealed that most of the respondents that actually registered for the 2015 elections did so not because they had interest in voting, rather they registered because of the importance attached to voters' cards as means of national identification in Nigeria. As a matter of fact, in states such as

Anambra, Imo etc. civil servants were mandated to register and present their voters' cards at their offices as one of the prerequisites for their end of the month pay ([www.naija.com/2017/07/anambra-state-govt-orders-public-servants-submit-voters-card/](http://www.naija.com/2017/07/anambra-state-govt-orders-public-servants-submit-voters-card/)).

While Agu, Okeke, & Idike (2013) emphasize on the long history of electoral violence as one of the major reasons for apathetic political behavior among the electorate; Frantz Fanon (1961) takes our attention back to the fact that psychological violence (Alienation) arising from the history of individuals' experiences of political marginalization, oppressions, exploitations, discriminations as well as institutionalized physical violence could be possible factors responsible for apathetic political behavior among the electorate in colonial/post-colonial social formations. According to Fanon, the colonized man is an alienated man and the alienated man is an angry man capable of disobedience to civic rules, abandoning his civic responsibilities as well as resorting to violence as the only means to dis-alienate himself. This study focuses on apathetic political behaviour in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria and how it interfaces with Frantz Fanon's theory of alienation.

### **Frantz Fanon: the Man and His Theory of Alienation**

Although the concept of Alienation was initially a Marxian theoretical coinage which was anchored on socio-economic factors, Frantz Fanon offers us a new dimension to the concept. Fanon sees the alienation of the Negro, the colonized, as essentially socio-economic, but it is a socio-economic (socio-political) alienation that has profound psychological effects on the alienated (Onwuanibe, 1983). Fanon's theory of Alienation stems from his harsh experiences of the devastating, destructive and crippling nature of racism and colonialism. When a mass of people invades and colonizes a region fostering an indigenous population, oppression is often a resulting factor (Hilton, 2011). Fanon notes that racism is a brain child of colonialism; according to him:

When you examine at close quarters, the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is, to begin with, the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species. In the economies, the economic substructure is also the superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white; you are white because you are rich. This is why Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem (Fanon, 1961:p. 40).

The above was possible because " the colonial world is a world divided into compartments. It is probably unnecessary to recall the existence of native quarters and European quarters, of schools for natives and schools for Europeans (Fanon, 1961). The model colonial society as a network of social interactions is unlike others because access to its structure of reward and sanction is predicated on race (Jinadu, 1980: p.30).

Fanon notes that the zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers; the two zones are directly in opposition to each other. The

colonists' sector is built to last with stones and steel, with lights and paved roads and it's characterized by immense wealth and cleanliness. Fanon said thus about the sector occupied by the natives:

The town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there; it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other, and their huts are built one on top of the other. The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. It is a town of niggers and dirty Arabs. The look that the native turns on the settler's town is a look of lust, a look of envy; it expresses his dreams of possession--all manner of possession: to sit at the settler's table, to sleep in the settler's bed, with his wife if possible. The colonized man is an envious man. And this the settler knows very well; when their glances meet he ascertains bitterly, always on the defensive, "They want to take our place." It is true, for there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler's place (Fanon, 1961: p.39).

Fanon identified three types of violence prevalent in the colonial world: (a) Structural violence: structural violence reflects the fact of exploitation and its necessary institutional forms and props in the colonial situation; (b) Physical violence: this form of violence reflects the use of armed forces to achieve structural violence against the colonized; and (c) Psychological violence (Alienation): psychological violence captures the attention of Fanon because it embodies the whole consequences of both structural and physical violence. It reflects the effect of brainwashing, indoctrination of various kind, oppressions, dehumanization, marginalization and threats. According to Fanon, psychological violence is those injuries or harms done to the human psyche (Jinadu, 1980: p.47).

Fanon utilizes psychological concepts (psychopolitics) to draw our attention to the true extent and damages of colonial/political oppressions. Hook, comments thus on Fanon's psychopolitical tool of analysis:

...not only does Fanon bring politics into psychology; he also brings psychology into politics by analyzing power through a series of psychoanalytic conceptualizations which help to dramatize the working and the logic of such forms of power, in particular that of colonial racism( Hook, 2004: p.86).

Although the impacts of colonialism on the colonized reflect socio-economic realities, Fanon focuses more attention on the psychopathology of colonialism. Fanon's point is that,

if we are to understand the disruption or psychopathological nature of racial identity, we will need to understand it as the outcome of a double process; racial identity, is primarily sociopolitical, and only subsequently – once such effects have been internalized – psychological (Hook, 2004).

Frantz Fanon applies the notion of Alienation in a bid to describe what he termed the 'multiple psychological violence' of the racist encounter. For Karl Marx, the root causes of alienation rest in the substructure of the society, and particularly in the alienation of productive labor instituted by capitalism where in the worker's humanness is alienated as his labor is alienated. But for Fanon, it is racism birthed by colonialism and the various evil practices and meanings attached to it that is the main cause of alienation (Hook, 2004). These evil practices associated with racism bring about one's estrangement from one's humanness, from one's own body and sense of self, from a sense of even belonging to one's people. Fanon sought to emphasize the psychological dimension of a real material process of separation, and to draw attention to the full ramifications of the 'lived experience' and identity of the colonized individual (Hook, 2004).

To Frantz Fanon, alienation stems from the history of the lived experiences of oppressions, racial discrimination as well as dehumanization of the colonized. As much as Marx sees religion as the opium of the masses, Fanon sees it as an instrument of exploitation which results in alienation. According to Fanon:

The colonialist bourgeoisie is helped in its work of calming down the natives by the inevitable religion. All those saints who have turned the other cheek, who have forgiven trespasses against them, and who have been spat on and insulted without shrinking are studied and held up as examples. On the other hand, the elite of the colonial countries, those slaves set free, when at the head of the movement inevitably end up by producing an ersatz conflict. They use their brothers' slavery to shame the slave drivers or to provide an ideological policy of quaint humanitarianism for their oppressors' financial competitors. The truth is that they never make any real appeal to the aforesaid slaves; they never mobilize them in concrete terms. On the contrary, at the decisive moment (that is to say, from their point of view the moment of indecision) they brandish the danger of a "mass mobilization" as the crucial weapon which would bring about as if by magic the "end of the colonial regime (Fanon, 1961: p. 67).

### **Voter Turnout and Apathetic Political Behavior in the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria.**

The act of voting in an election remains the highest form of Civic responsibility as well as the exercise of right through Civic engagement in every democracy. This is because the act of voting offers the citizens with the opportunity to decide the directions of policies and government's programs, based on the Creed that government's legitimacy rest on the concerted will of the governed. In Nigeria, voter turnout during elections appears to be the major indices for measuring citizens' participation in the political processes as well as the legitimacy of the government. The above hinges on the fact that in the Nigerian situation,

there is a huge disconnection between voter registration and voter turnout in election as increase in the former does not translate to increase in the latter. This substantiates the views of Yakubu (2011) that voter registration in Nigeria is one thing, while participation in the voting processes, on the election day is another thing. Fagunwa(2018) while being of the opinion that there are various reasons why people participate in voter registration outside voting in elections, agrees with Fayomi and Adebayo (2018) that coerced or mandated voter registration and the use of the PVC as means of National identification contribute to a very large extent, the increase in voter registration in Nigeria.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF VOTER TURNOUT PER GEOPOLITICAL ZONE IN 2011, 2015, 2019 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

Year	North-Central	North-East	North-West	South-East	South-South	South-West
2011	46.17%	53.03%	51.96%	65.58%	73.82%	32.12%
2015	40.72%	42.48%	51.20%	37.30%	54.55%	37.92%
2019	36.95%	42.48%	44.86%	24.50%	29.23%	32.65%

Source: [www.election-monitor.org](http://www.election-monitor.org)

TABLE 2: TREND OF VOTER TURNOUT FROM 1999-2019 FOR PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

Year	Population	Voting age population(VAP)	Registration (as collated)	Total votes cast	Voter Turnouts
2019	208,679,114	106,490,312	82,344,107	28,614,190	34.75%
2015	181,562,056	91,669,312	67,422,005	29,432,083	43.65%
2011	155,215,573	81,691,751	73,528,040	39,469,484	53.68%
2007	131,859,731	71,004,507	61,567,036	35,397,517	57.49%
2003	129,934,911	64,319,246	60,823,022	42,018,735	69.08%
1999	108,258,359	52,792,781	57,938,945	30,280,052	52.26%

Source: I-IDEA (2019).

TABLE 3: TREND OF VOTER TURNOUT FROM 1999-2019 FOR PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

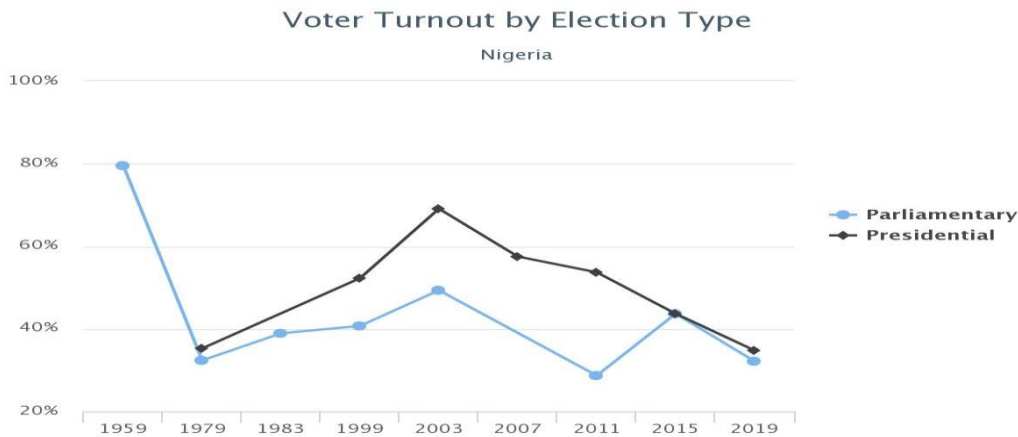
Year	Population	Voting age population(VAP)	Registration (as collated)	Total votes cast	Voter Turnouts
2019	208,679,114	106,490,312	82,344,107	26,468,211	32.14%
2015	181,562,056	91,669,312	67,422,005	29,432,083	43.65%
2011	155,215,573	81,691,751	73,528,040	21,074,621	28.66%
2007	131,859,731	71,004,507	61,567,036	—	—
2003	129,934,911	64,319,246	60,823,022	29,995,171	49.32%
1999	108,258,359	52,792,781	57,938,945	23,573,407	40.69%

Source: [www.election-monitor.org](http://www.election-monitor.org)

Table 1 above shows a downward slope of voter turnout in Presidential elections from 2011 to 2019 general elections across the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. From the above table, voter turnout in South-East moved from 65.58% in 2011, to 37.3% in 2015 then to 24.5% in 2019. In South-South, turnout moved from 73.82% in 2011 to 54.55% in 2015 then

to 29.23% in 2019, while South-West recorded 32.12% in 2011, 37.92% in 2015 and 32.65% in 2019. The North Central geo-political zone had 46.17% in 2011, 40.72% in 2015 and 36.95% in 2019, while in North East turnout were at 53.03% in 2011, 42.48% in 2015 and 42.48% in 2019. The North-West zone was not left out in the trend as turnout which was at 51.96% in 2011, moved to 51.2% in 2015 and 44.86% in the 2019 general elections.

FIGURE 1: VOTER TURNOUT BY ELECTION TYPE IN NIGERIA



Source: I-IDEA (2019).

Data available in tables 2 and 3 show that overall voter turnout in the 2019 presidential and parliamentary elections in Nigeria stood at 34.75% and 32.14% respectively. The turnout in the 2019 presidential election was adjudged the lowest in the history of elections in Nigeria. In fact, the winner of the presidential election was elected by only 18% of the registered voters and about 7% of over 200 million estimated population of Nigeria in 2019. Available data for both presidential and parliamentary elections show that the 2019 general elections was characterized by high level of apathetic political behavior among Nigerian citizens.

### Highpoints of Frantz Fanon’s Theory of Alienation and the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria.

Frantz Fanon in his most celebrated book *‘Wretched of the Earth’* put forth the concepts of compartmentalization Manichaeism and elitism to buttress the character of the colonial world. Fanon uses the concepts of compartmentalism and Manichaeism to explain the situation of mutual exclusivity and uncomplementarity between two classes of people, in which the numerically powerless group is actually the sociologically/politically superior as a result of the latter’s access to, and Monopoly of socio-economic and political sources of power (Jinadu, 1980).

The two zones inhabited by the two are highly opposed to each other with no possible conciliations as the zone occupied by the numerically disadvantaged class is superfluously decorated and beautified with the choicest materials befitting the gods, while the town belonging to the colonized people was a place of ill fame directly opposite of the other.

One was represented by affluence, while the other was represented by abject poverty and inhabited by men of evil repute.

When you examine at close quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species. In the colonies, the economic substructure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich... (Fanon, 1961:40).

The compartmentalization was so intense that one could easily say this is a quarter for the numerically disadvantaged (Europeans) people, this is the one for the poor masses, this is the school for the poor masses and this is the school for the European settlers. In fact the numerically disadvantaged elites (petty bourgeoisie) see the rest of the masses (proletariats) as their creation which cannot exist without them. This created a Manichean condition of continuous struggle between Good and evil, in which one group sees themselves as good and perceive the other as terribly evil and less human. The post-colonial capitalist state of Nigeria draws her structure and nature of hostility, inequality and marginalization as well as her inspirations from the colonial situation. In fact the post-colonial capitalist States in Africa (emphasis on Nigeria) is a continuation of the colonial Manichean situation. Mon-Mon the then president of the republic of Gabon was quoted to have stated in one of his official visits to Paris that "Gabon is independent, but between Gabon and France nothing has changed, everything goes on as before" (Fanon, 1961:67).

The false decolonization processes in Nigeria gave rise to the emergence of political elites, the petty-bourgeoisie class, who has maintained and perpetuated the colonial situation of compartmentalism, Manichaeism, economic marginalization, dehumanization and exploitation. This is very evident in the recent ranking of Nigeria atop the list of countries worldwide in which the gap between the rich and the poor has worsened (ASU, 2018). A closer look at the Nigeria's present socio-economic and political structure reveals its determinant factor which is the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given class. In Nigeria the economic substructure is also a superstructure, the cause is the consequence; one is rich because he belongs to the political elite class, one is political elite because he is rich. The towns where the poor masses in Nigeria dwell is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes and of coal. It is a town lacking in all basic social amenities. The Nigeria political elites who are numerically disadvantaged and the poor masses exist in a Manichean world. The political elites see the masses as less humans deserving no good road no electricity no sound education no good health care system as well as other basic amenities. The World Poverty Clock Report (2018) reported that over 86.9 million Nigerians live in extreme poverty despite being the largest economy in Africa and the gap between the rich and the poor has widened lately through deliberate unequal distribution and allocation of resources.

The education sector kept receiving lower budgets annually from 10.7% of the annual budget in 2015 to 7.9% in 2016 then to 7.4% in 2017 to 7.05% in 2019 budget (Olufemi, 2020).



This budget covers about 43 Federal Universities, 36 Federal Polytechnics, 23 Federal Colleges of Education, 22 Monotechnics as well as numerous unity school that scattered all over the country. These public schools have been poorly funded over the years and most recently have been abandoned to their rots. Not only are these institutions poorly founded, but they are at same time overpopulated; for instance, Harvard University with its \$4.5 billion budget has only 22,947 students while the University of Lagos (UNILAG) alone has about 58,000 students (Kanu and Okonkwo, 2019).

The children and wards of these political elites are sent to the best schools abroad with the taxpayers' money that would have been used to fix the education system in the country. Out of the eight children of the current president of Nigeria, five of them attended prestigious universities in London, the vice president recently celebrated his son's graduation from Warwick University, Atiku Abubakar celebrated his daughter's graduation from foreign University despite owning the American University of Nigeria in Yola. The former senate president of Nigeria Bukola Saraki, the current Governor of Kaduna state, former senator Dino Milaye and a host of other political elites had in one time or the other openly celebrated their children's graduation from foreign universities (Kanu and Okonkwo,2019), while public universities in Nigeria were shut down for poor funding. Yusuf (2021) reported the outcome of the research conducted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace which state that over 40% of Nigeria's current and former state governors have educated their children in the United Kingdom alone.

In an interview, the president of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) Prof. Osodeke laments that the total abandonment of public universities in Nigeria is a deliberate ploy by the political elites to ensure that we have two classes of Nigerian children. The class of the rich and government officials who go abroad to get quality education, who will come back and occupy their so-called lucrative positions in the Central Bank of Nigeria, NNPC, as well as government positions, and the children of the ordinary Nigerians who have to attend Nigerian universities that are not funded and cannot compete with the children of the rich (<https://www.allschool.com.ng/nigeria-needs-law-banning-public-officials'-children-from-schooling-abroad/>). From the above, it becomes so glaring that the Nigerian Petty-bourgeoisie utilizes poor funding of public education system as powerful instrument with which to perpetuate inequality and maintain their hegemony over the poor masses.

The incessant display of wealth without sources by this numerically inferior Petty bourgeoisie class who has nothing to contribute in the processes of economic production have with their unjustly acquired wealth, made the poor masses feel their poverty and wretchedness. According to Fanon, these poor masses look lustfully and enviously on the petty-bourgeoisie with the dreams of at least one day, setting themselves up in the elites place (Fanon, 1963).

According to the National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD), about N576 billion is lost to medical tourism annually in Nigeria ([www.m.guardian.ng](http://www.m.guardian.ng)). The funds that would have gone a long way in revitalizing the moribund health care system in Nigeria are being spent by the few political elites abroad, while over 180 million Nigerians are left

to die with annual budgets as low as N632 billion. Fanon (1961) notes that the poor masses are conscious of the economic and political marginalization, exploitation and inequality they have been subjected to over the years and their psychological effects on them as well as their ever readiness to get liberated from the chains of inequality holding their necks. According to Fanon, the colonized man is an alienated man and an alienated man is an envious, angry and violent man capable of evading his Civic responsibilities and taking up every means, including violence, to ensure his liberation. The above portrays the conditions prior to and the reasons for apathetic Political behavior among Nigerians in the 2019 general elections.

### **Political Powerlessness and Normlessness in the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria.**

Fanon employs the concept of alienation to portray the interconnectivity that exist between an individual's internal world and the external world of socio-economic and political inequalities that impede them in several spheres of life. His use of the concepts affords us the means of linking individual's personal experiences with socio-political and historical conditions they faced from time to time (Hook, 2004). While Marx's alienation borders on real material process of separation, Fanon conceived the concept of alienation as the manifest lived experiences and feelings of individuals with regards to socio-political inequalities, marginalization, exploitations and discriminations; what he termed psychological violence. Psychological violence is injury or harm done to the human psyche. It includes brainwashing, indoctrination of various kinds and threats, all of which not only serve to decrease the victims' mental potentialities, but also constitute, in Galtung's words "violence that works on the soul"(Jinadu, 1980:47).

Fanon emphasized on the evil of socio-political cum economic inequalities, marginalization, discrimination and exploitation that accompanied colonial racism and the psychological damage they caused in the colonized people. While the material effect of inequality and marginalization may be short-lived on the marginalized, the accumulated deposits of lived experiences of inequality and marginalization in the psyche of the marginalized last for ages and tend to condition their overall existence. "There is an attempt by the coloured man to escape his individuality, to reduce his being in the world to nothing. Whenever a coloured man protests, there is alienation. Whenever a coloured man castigates, there is alienation...the inferiorised black man goes from humiliating insecurity to self-accusation and even despair"(Fanon, 1967:41). Hansen in his analysis of Fanon's alienation posits that alienation is mostly perceived in Political oppression; according to him:

The colonizer controls the political destiny of the colonized, who is not allowed to participate in the political processes that affect him. All decisions that affect him are made by the colonizers and thus the colonized also suffers political oppression. He is made to feel alien in his own country. Such conditions lead to feelings of humiliation, inferiority and powerlessness (Hansen, 1977:92).

The long history of inequality, marginalization, exploitation, dehumanization, unfulfilled electoral promises, as well as excessive militarization of the electoral processes and institutionalized violence among others, that characterize Nigeria's political system have cumulatively deposited in the psyche of the masses, the feelings of political powerlessness and political normlessness. "Because it is a systematic negation of other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: "in reality who am I?"(Fanon, 1961:250).

Just as it is obtainable in Fanon's colonial situation, the characteristics of the Nigerian political system listed above, being a brainchild of the colonial system, forces the numerically superior but eco-politically inferior masses to ask themselves the questions; is the wealth of Nigeria for the elites alone? What share do we have in Nigeria? Are we supposed to be part of Nigeria in the real sense?

According to the survey conducted by Omilusi after the 2019 general elections, to ascertain feelings as well as the level of trust the masses have on the Political system and its link to the outcome of the elections, about 88% of the respondents do not consider Nigerian political elites to be trustworthy. In fact, the summary of the responses stated thus:

How does one trust a political class that has not hidden its disdain for the common men and women? It is a pathetic case of less than 1% of the population making life miserable for the rest of us. We bear the brunt of the struggle for power without commensurate obligations after election. They are totally disconnected from the needs of their constituents (Omilusi, 2020:115).

Whenever a people develop the psychological feelings that they can no longer influence or direct the actions of government, especially where it directly concerns them in the area of authoritative allocation of values, such a people is politically powerless. Flanigan and Zingale(1998) notes that general attitude of distrust and dissatisfaction with the government have a direct link with the individual's psychological feelings of inability to influence the government; what Fanon called psychic alienation. Reporting the research conducted by PEW Research to ascertain the feelings of the masses towards the 2019 general elections, Adekoya(2019) notes that 72% of respondents were of the opinion that most politicians were corrupt and had nothing to offer, while 57% said that no matter who wins the elections, nothing will change for better. This is as a result of the long history of unfulfilled electoral campaign promises by past political elites. Just like in Fanon's colonial world, where a boxer was forcefully arrested, having committed no crime his passport and 600,000 Francs confiscated, forced to join the French service or risk imprisonment and with promises of enlistment bonus of 90,000 francs and salary of 7000 Francs as well as other numerous benefits. Haven joined the service for the sake of the promises, unfortunately he lost his freedom still while in barracks, the starting bonus of 900,000 France was never paid,

the 7000 francs monthly salary and every other promises were completely unfulfilled (Fanon,2018:540).

Successive governments in Nigeria have been characterized by lies, insincerity and deception largely on account on that they hardly fulfill electoral campaign promises. Survey by Omilusi indicates that 90% of the respondents agreed that political elites and political parties fail to implement their party manifestos and campaign promises after elections. According to him during the 2019 general elections "their campaigns were largely rhetoric about good governance and provisions of social amenities, which we have ceaselessly heard from political leaders since independence without fulfillment. I am beginning to suspect that voters are also fed up with such monotonous promises (Omilusi, 2020:116). The Guardian newspaper editorial published in March 1, 2019 titled Nigerians Voted- by not voting, reports thus: "in this election, Nigerians made their feelings clear- by not voting... (Okeke, 2019: 28), this feeling is that of alienation, of powerlessness and of total separation. The study conducted by Fagunwa gave a clear picture of the feelings of powerlessness especially as it concerns the 2019 general elections. He summarized the responses of majority of the respondents thus:

I didn't bother to vote, why do I have to vote? The truth we must face is that those in power don't care about us and we will be fooling ourselves thinking our votes are going to make any difference. It does not matter who emerges victorious, they will still dupe us like they have always done (Fagunwa, 2018:30).

Alienation also manifests in the 2019 general elections in the individual's feeling of normlessness. Normlessness is the individual's perception that norms or rules of political relations are not observed or that there is no adherence to the rule of law (Johari, 2012). The European Observers Mission (2019) reported that the 2019 general elections were marred by electoral malpractices and violence, in violation of the provisions of the electoral act. In their report, INEC laments that there were 61 electoral offence prosecutions following the 2015 general elections but with no convictions. Madu in Ekanem(2012) had accused the political class in Nigeria who are by implication the few rich and strong, of being apparently above the law, dictatorial and self-acclaimed owners of the country, who can always get away with every crime, including killings, bank frauds and embezzlement of public funds. This non-enforcement of the country's electoral laws on prohibition of the use of violence and electoral malpractices give impetus for impunity resulting in continuous anarchy during elections. The use of police and army to intimidate voters in opposition zones, killing of opponents and their supporters, kidnapping of electoral officials, snatching of electoral boxes(see appendix 3) and the use of INEC officials to manipulate and falsify election results characterized the 2019 general elections (<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/09/electoral-malpractice-3-varsity-dons-indicted-3-inec-officials-sacked-in-aibom/amp/>).

With long history of non-prosecution of political elites that are indicted alongside their messengers have created the feelings that laws in Nigeria are meant for the poor masses

while the Political class stand above them. While University lecturers and other INEC officials were arraigned in court for manipulating election results in favor of their paymasters (<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/09/2019-elections-inec-to-arraign-iversity-lecturers-over-malpractices-in-a-ibom/amp/>), nothing was done to these political class whom results were manipulated for. The conduct of the political class is unfortunately becoming a disincentive to some Nigerians as it regards participation in the electoral processes (<https://www.cddwestafrica.org/electoral-trends-in-Nigeria/>). The Center for Democracy and Development (CDD, 2019) also reported that " it is the common place to hear some politicians say: no matter what, they are going to win the elections, whether the masses vote or not; many voters take that to mean that their votes won't count and so don't participate in elections in Nigeria". The survey conducted by Omilusi to ascertain the peoples' confidence in the electoral process in the 2019 general elections, indicates that about 73% of the respondents believe that democracy in Nigeria is a total failure. The summary of the responses of the 73% participants state thus:

Ordinarily, one would expect that our votes should influence electoral outcomes and ultimately bring about the desired change in the polity. However, every form of participation in the electioneering seems to be alienating the people further from governance deliverables and the decision-making process. Indeed the most ardent believers in this democracy today are getting frustrated with the pitiable living condition the system has guaranteed them (Omilusi, 2020:112).

The long history of the lived experiences of inequality, marginalization, oppressions, discriminations, institutionalized violence and economic exploitations suffered by the numerically Superior masses in the hands of the numerically inferior political class in Nigeria have cumulatively in the 2019 general elections, created in the psyche of the former, the feelings of Political powerlessness and normlessness (psychological violence).

### **Conclusion**

Democratically elected governments owe their legitimacy to the extent of popular participation in electoral processes of the country by the citizens. That is to say that government under representative democracy becomes reasonable only when they are established by the concerted will of the greatest number of the population. Whenever political apathy increases in a society, the democratic status and the legitimacy of the government becomes questionable. Citizens' participation in the electoral processes in Nigeria has been on steady decline since the inception of the Fourth Republic but became more intense and trendy since 2007 general elections. The voter turnout in the 2019 general elections, in which only 18% of the 84,004,084 registered prospective voters and only 7% of the over 200 million Nigerians voted was an indication of the worst apathetic political behaviour in the history of elections in Nigeria.

The study also identified the manifestation and alignment of Fanon's theory of alienation with the apathetic political behaviour in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria on

account of political powerlessness and normlessness. This was accentuated by the long history of cumulative lived experiences of socio-political cum economic inequality, marginalization, dehumanization, discrimination and exploitation which the masses have suffered in the Manichean relationship that exist between them and the political class in Nigeria. This long history of lived experiences has cumulatively deposited in the psyche of the marginalized, the feelings of political powerlessness and normlessness; what Fanon called psychic alienation or psychological violence.

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