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VOTER TURNOUT AND THE QUEST FOR FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF 2017 ANAMBRA GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION

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Abstract

This study examines voter turnout and the quest for free and fair election with focus on Anambra 2017 gubernatorial election. Despite government and other agencies efforts through creating awareness and political education in order to ensure citizens active participation in elections, the elections in the Anambra State appears worrisome which shows that there is continuous decline of voter turnout. Thus, the study interrogates what account for voter turnout and the specific factor responsible in the just concluded Anambra 2017 election. This, despite series of campaigns by stakeholders on the importance of voters' turnout in any election in Nigeria. Doing this, the study anchored on Elite Theory, while data for the study were generated through documentary techniques and analysed using the analytical inductive technique. The finding reveals that while efforts are in place to address the recurring low voters' turnout in an election in Nigeria, the challenges persist due to the culture of political apathy that is implicated in elite disposition in Nigeria politics vis-à-vis other multiple factors which IPOB exacerbated in the 2017 Anambra election. Taking cognizance of these, the study recommends regular town halls meetings both at the rural and urban areas so as to address voter's apathy among Nigerians as well as internet voting to address situation of insecurity.

Keywords. Elite theory, Free and fair election, IPOB, Political apathy and Voter turnout

Introduction

Voter turnout is the percentage of eligible voters who cast a vote in an election. In every democratic society, voter turnout is the most common form of political participation. Most of the existing theories of voter turnout deal with either the determinant or how to enhance turnout either at the national level or local level. Therefore, the absence of low voter's turnout always gives room for electoral manipulation and other forms of electoral vices which mar free and fair election in Nigeria. Accordingly, Nnoli (2003) argued that election entails the manner of choice agreed upon by the people out of many to occupy one or

number of positions of authority. This implies that it's the people who chooses who will represent them in government. An election is free if the electorates are allowed to make their choice without been intimidated or victimized. On the other hand, an election is fair if the procedure for conducting it is made public and applied equally to all parties without fear or favour (Akinbade, 2012).

The issue of conducting an election that is free and fair from any electoral vices is a general phenomenon which sounds unachievable in Nigeria. This is because election in Nigeria has been characterized by ugly incidents of political thuggery and violence, electoral malpractice, unending lawsuits, crisis of legitimacy, instability and chaos. This is the reason why the November 18, 2017 governorship election in Anambra state was applauded to a certain extent by many Nigerians because it came out to be one of the smoothest and least violent in the state history (Ayodamola, 2017). However, the report from INEC indicated that out of 2,064,134 registered eligible voters, only 457,511 representing 22.16% actually came out on the election day to be accredited while 448,111 about 21.74% actually casted their voter. This is worrisome bearing in mind that effort at addressing the issues of low voter's turnout have been on before and during the election.

In fact, similar pattern also played out in the 2010 and 2013 governorship election where out of 1.845million people, 301,232 voted and 465,891 voted out of 1,784,536 registered voters. The implication of this report shows that if no effort is done towards improving voter turnout, it will be hard to expect an increase in political participation in the subsequent elections in states and the federal levels.

Therefore, it is important to state that despite effort of government and other International agencies to addressing the recurring issue of voter apathy in developing countries, there is an increase of voters' apathy and challenges towards voter turnout in elections in Nigeria. This is campaign drivers over the years by non-governmental organizations and even National Orientation Agencies to create awareness on the need for people to participate in electioneering. Generally, every citizen in developed societies sees voting and political participation as a duty. While it is a duty among citizens of advance countries, in Nigeria, it is a mere obligation across Nigerian to towards participation and voter turnout that is always a mirage. Even with this, the alarming voter apathy and consequently decline in voter turnout have been feeding on the nation's quest for free and fair election, thereby creating rooms for politicians to manipulate the election.

According to Phillip (2005) challenges towards low voter turnout constitutes factors which include inter party crisis, loss of faith in their government and political apathy. Therefore, high turnouts of voters for an incoming government would enable it undertake significant reforms and initiate policies with little opposition while a low voter turnout out will lack such support. The high level of apathy by electorates has negative impacts on the nation's democracy. The Director, Centre of Democracy and Development (CDD) Idayat Hassan emphasized that the nature of politics also plays role in poor turnout of voters

during election as some of the electorates will be afraid of violence and political farce at polling units among contesting parties.

We insisted that voter's Apathy generally in Nigeria can be linked to be a factor that contributed to the low turnout specifically in the 2017 gubernatorial election in Anambra. Although IPOB threat could have been a major factor that contributed to the low turnout in the 2017 gubernatorial election in Anambra, what of previous record of low turnout? This is because; there are records of low voter turnout in previous years in Anambra. The Vote Apathy continues to be the case in Anambra 2017 election despite other factors. In view of this, the study will establish this proposition bearing in mind that if the rising voter's turnout is not properly checked or treated, it will continue to affect the democratic transition and the quest for free and fair election in the state. In addition, the study here attempts to investigate why voter apathy has is a recurring problem among Nigerians despite years of democratic governance. Likewise provide possible solutions on how to ensure there is massive voters' turnout in other elections to come.

Literature Discourses

Voter turnout is the voting eligible population or the percentage of eligible voters who cast a ballot in an election. There has been a trend of decreasing voter turnout, and many efforts has been made to increase turnout and encourage voting. Political apathy which is one of the cause of the low turnout of voters, is based strongly on the lack of interest towards political activities. Roskin, Cord, Medeiros, Jones (2010) contributed that political apathy is mainly seen among young people who do not vote as much as the elderly ones or middle age. This is because the middle aged are concern about social security and are more interested in voting leaders who will make policies that have positive impact in the economy. This shows that in a situation where a greater percentage of young people in the society do not vote, there will continue to be massive low turnout since majority of the population are not interested in political activities.

Thomas (2006) argued that voter apathy does not arise primarily from a general belief that most elected officials are corrupt or that the political system has broken down and it's beyond repair, rather it is because the citizens are nonchalant about politics and they do not usually feel threatened, oppressed or victimized by government. Low voter turnout and political apathy is a kind of luxury for citizens. Mercy (2015) opines by pointing out that voter apathy goes beyond lack of interest, it is the insensitivity of voters to electoral processes, particularly voting caused by disenchantment arising from dissatisfaction with the political system and sometimes ignorance and lack of proper education. This contributes to low voter turnout.

Kuenzi and Lambright (2007) argued that because democracy in its most fundamental sense is "rule by the people" the proportion of the citizenry expressing its preference through voting is of interest. This therefore implies that the political apathy displayed by Nigerians does not encourage high turnout. Harvey J. Tucker, Political scientist from Texas

A&M University views that voter turnout matters because elections are where decisions are made in modern democracies and if there continue to be low voter turnout, the vote will only represent a small sample of the population. This shows that low voter turnout can be so devastating to democracy if the people are not accurately represented and therefore the country continues to act base on opinion from the minority. These groups are allowed to make decisions even when they have no positive benefit. Higher voter turnouts for an incoming regime would enable it undertake significant reforms and initiate policies with little opposition while low voter support will lack this (Sallah 2015). He maintained that this does not mean that other sources of regime legitimacy and support could not be generated elsewhere but the antecedent variable provides are ready reserve of support (or political capital) to start the process. Thomas (2006) maintained that the measure of political participation depends on the number of factors which he listed to be the extent to which vote are counted fairly, the size of the electorate (the larger the number of voters, the less impact each individual vote has) and the availability of meaningful choices.

Roskin, Cord, Medeiros, Jones (2010) in their work stated that high income people vote more than less affluent. The well-educated vote more than school dropout. It implies that lack of education and poor financial strength affect the turnout of voters. Although this case is different in Nigeria especially in the last Anambra election where voters see election as a means of acquiring money from politicians or political parties by selling their vote. This was witnessed in various zones where voters received #1000 and other enticing gifts including a pair of rubber slippers (Gbenga 2017). The argument here shows that in situation where all the different political parties are willing to give out one gift or another and at the same time, the voters received gifts, it shows that the greater percentage of voters are uneducated and those with low financial capability since they were willing to sell their votes for peanuts without thinking or considering the effect of choosing and electing the wrong candidate.

More so, Scholars have identified various factors which affect the turnout of voters during election. Election has been variously described as the expression by vote the will of the people; the selection of one person from a specific class to discharge certain duties in a state or society; the act of choosing or selection of one or more persons from a greater number of persons (Obegolu 1999). Mbah (2007) defined elections as the process by which members of the community or organization choose one or more persons to exercise authority on their behalf. These definition entails that participant or involvement of people requires a voter to indicate his or her choice of candidate or political party out of various candidates, then the vote obtained by a candidate or political party are translated into the allocation of seats or offices.

Thomas (2006) identified that the elitist theory of democracy is seen as a sham or myth. It does not matter what the people think, say or do because they have no real influence over public policy and therefore democracy is governed neither by voters nor variety of

competing interests but a small number of wealthy individuals. The implications of this shows that when larger proportion of the citizens goes with this school of thought, then they see no need of participating in electoral activities because no matter the party where the winner emerges from, nothing changes since the winner will always pass policies that matches the goals of his donors irrespective of the negative effect it has on the people. Lai and Jege (2011) sees privatization of security, thuggery, and arms proliferation as a major factor that contributes to low turnout of voters which causes problem for the conduct of free and fair election in Nigeria. Many voters are disenfranchised as they are denied effective participation in determining who governs them or represent them because of fear of violence and intimidation. This fear is a major factor that affects the turnout of voters in Anambra 2017 election where citizens did not turnout due to fear of threats from IPOB group.

The issue of physical harassment and intimidation of voters before, during and after election is a serious problem which needs to be handled by all necessary means. Impartiality is a necessary quality that one does not expects any individual or body charges with the function refereeing contests such as national election which INEC is not an exception (Lai and Jege 2011). This shows that the electoral board is charged with the duty of collaborating with the security agencies in ensuring that citizens are not victimized by thugs or forced against their will to support who they do not wish to. Although INEC board is expected to be impartial and autonomous without supporting any political party but this is not the case in most elections held in Nigeria because the board will always be biased especially when the chairman is being appointed by the President, this will make him dance to his tune and give room for most of the policies to benefit the minorities in power. This is why there are unending lawsuits after election which shows that the election had been manipulated thereby making it hard for an election that is free and fair from electoral vices thereby making free and fair election an imaginary tale. It makes election look like a waste of time.

Obegolu (1999) also identified that the appointment of ad-hoc officers by political parties or candidate running for a political office which they do in other to facilitate falsification of figures and results to their favour also discourage massive participation of citizens. The negative effect it has on the people who witnessed as both the ad-hoc officers and security agencies are bribed, how they turn blind eyes to electoral malpractices tend not to participate in future elections. Vergne (2009) holds that the expected benefit of voting depends on some variables which are based on the policy packages that the electorates prefer to have political power to represent their interest.

When no party is offering the type of candidate and policies that the voters prefer, then they see no need in participating in elections. So therefore they prefer not to turnout on Election Day. But the case is different when the policy package and candidate appeals to the citizens. Falade (2011) view that the political in Nigeria is influenced by money, ethnic

and religious factors. He maintained that religious and ethnic polities characterized electioneering process and that is why it is practiced with bitterness, hatred and rancour. The result of this is the apathetic low turnout due to fear of getting hurt and mingled with their evil games. Roskin, Cord, Medeiros, Jones (2010) identified that location also affect the turnout of voters. They were of the view that those in urban areas are likely to vote more than those in the rural area because the cities are centre of education and sophistication where intellectual dwell. Adding to the effect of demography, the issue of poor road network or bad transportation system. In most cases the distance from the collection station where electoral material for election are taken and distributed to various wards is far from the polling booth coupled with bad road. This affect the time the election starts and in most cases forces voters to leave before the election starts.

A study on estimating the electoral effects of voter turnout by Thomas G. Hannaford and Brad T. Gomez concluded that low voter gives room for career politicians to take advantage of the vote which can easily be manipulated to their favour without the masses revolting against them thereby producing politicians and leaders who only focus on pleasing their donors more than the people they are representing. But in a situation where there is massive turnout of voters in various polling stations, it makes it difficult for electoral officers who collaborate with candidate of their choice to rig or manipulate the result to successes since the masses will ensure that the whole exercise follows the due procedures thereby ensuring free and fair election.

Linus and Richard (2012) participation and effective turnout of voters give citizens the opportunity to express their own point of view and secure the greatest good for the greatest number. This therefore provides citizens a sense of dignity and value, alerts both the rulers and the ruled to their duties and responsibilities and facilitates broader political understanding. By involving people in the affairs of the state, participation promotes stability and order in the system. It not only stimulates political learning but also makes citizens responsible. It deepens the political awareness and increases the sense of political effectiveness.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of analysis for this research/study is anchored from the proposition emanating from Elite theory. According, Chuma in Onu, Umeriruike, Biereenu-Nnabugwu and Nwankwo (2009) believe that the Elite theory arose as critique of egalitarian ideas such as those related to the principles of democracy and socialist. It is rooted in the philosophical ideas that every society is divided into two major groups. The elites and non-elites, the ruled and the rulers, the political class and the non-political class then the governing and the non-governing etc. It is important we express the view that the concept of elite is considered as ascribed by many to Weber (1922) as the founding father of Elite theory due to his work on power and domination (1992). However, the theory was

developed by classical elitist Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923), Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941) and Robert Michels (1876-1936). Generally, these scholars believed that the idea and concept of democracy for instance is an illusion or imaginary because in every society a privileged group known as the minority (Elite) as in existence to exercise political power on behalf of the average citizens. Fundamentally, at the heart of the proponent of Elite theory is a clear presumption of the average citizens' inadequacies. Hence, the core assumption of elite's theory includes: a) In every society, there is and must always be minority that rules and that minority rule is the reality in all society both developed, under developed, simple or complex. b) The minority that rules derived its original power invariably from force or coercion power which is transformed into hegemony through reutilization, that is, mythical and ideological rationalization. c) As an inevitable characteristic of human society the elite argue that they are necessary for any socio-political organization to function effectively within these minorities, governing elites exist to take active part in the running of government directly or indirectly and the non-governing elites set influencing major decisions of government through various means. d) The minority ruling circle is composed of all those who occupy commanding political position. It is over time under goes changes in different ways. At times, it is through a recruit of people from the lower strata of society into the ruling elite group. e) The changes in the composition of the elite group merely the form and not the structure of society who remain at all times minority dominated.

In the application of this theory to the study of voter turnout and the quest for free and fair election, it connotes that the citizens have lost interest in government because of the influence of Elites who device various means in other to retain power within their domain. Those means could involve various means which have negative effect on the ruled especially when they fall victim of electoral crisis where some lost their lives in the process or are injured. These crises arise among elite's in various political parties. This encourages low voter turnout, loss of interest towards political activities which goes a long way in affecting the society. The effect of this theory in the voters' turnout of citizens or electorate can also be sending when citizens knowing fully well that those who they will vote for will always represent the interest of the elites in their political parties because they are been recruited by these powerful individuals from the lower strata deviates from participating in elections. Not only that, the candidate that won will only be in power to achieve their personal set goals, including that of the elites.

Methodology

For the purpose of this study, the method of data collection extensively used is the documentary method. This source refers to data extracted from the already made or published documents collected not from the original source but from published and unpublished works. The documentary sources used are internet materials, journals and textbooks. The nature of analysis was analytical inductive technique. By this technique, analytical process on phenomena and issues like voter turnout and quest for free and fair

election which has assumed prominence in Nigeria democratic journey are explained. The import of this is that, it has a relationship with our hypothesis and also textual and tabular instrument of presentation used in this study. On the former, evidence which suggests that Anambra residents were apolitical historically, the election showed in the percentage number of registered voters.

Voter Apathy and Voter Turnout in Anambra Election

Political apathy is a feeling of disinterest in politics or apathy towards political activities. It arises in a country where citizens see themselves to be powerless or inferior towards making changes in who makes decisions in the society. Political apathy is generated through feelings of disinterest or indifference towards the state they consist of interest apathy, voter apathy, and information apathy. This can lead to loss of democratic values in the country.

In Anambra state, political apathy is largely seen in the citizens' turnout during elections where the total number of votes casted is not up to average number of registered voters. This is seemingly innocuous issue in the Democratic process in the state and lack of devotion to the state. Political apathy has manifested itself in Nigeria, in the following forms: one, the decline to register as a voter; two, the refusal to vote; three, failure to protest against rigging and four, failure to assist the security agents with useful information (Yakubu, 2012). Part of the character of political apathy in Nigeria is bad governance. In Nigeria, the governments who occupy political position are carefree and make policies that only satisfy their selfish interests. Their acts do not motivate people or their citizens thereby making them to nonchalant towards political activities. Unarguably, this can be said to be the largest cause of political apathy. The failure of the politicians to provide good leadership brings about the outcome of eroded trust and any willingness to oblige to the demands of patriotism.

There is also the notion that elections in Nigeria have the tendency of 80% of being rigged in the interest of the political elites. This is a menace that has severely undermined the electoral process, leaving the electorates feeling unconfident that their votes count. So many citizen's beliefs that no matter the level of security election are going to be rigged either directly or indirectly thereby they see voting as a waste of time and energy. In fact, another indicator for the case for political apathy is Violence and intimidation of voters during election especially as threat of IPOB was evident. IPOB threats as a intimidation of voter's in low voter turnout in Anambra election later graduated to "vote and die" warning issued on day to day basis to residents in Anambra State in other to steer clear from any activity relating to election (Anthony 2017).

The implication of this, is that people staying clear from political activities to avoid falling victim or been killed in the process. It can be argued that part of the reason for fear is that most of the times, the security provided by the government during election or

campaigns or any demonstration are always too weak to provide adequate security; this therefore creates fear in the heart of people and make them not want to participate. There is a hidden belief among the electorates that going out to vote during elections can be unsafe. Political Apathy in Nigeria is therefore the upshot of the above reasons within the context of the various dimensions of electoral violence discussed above. In other words, the continuous uprising and electoral crises associated with our electoral system affects the rate of voter turnout in public elections in Nigeria.

Table 2.1 LIST OF CANDIDATES AND THEIR POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE 2009 ELECTION

S/n	Candidates	Political parties
1	Chris Ngige	AC
2	Andy Uba	LP
3	Peter Obi	APGA
4	Mike Nwafor	ALP
5	Mike Nnamdi Ejezie	ANPP
6	Ralph Okey Nwosu	ADC
7	Ndubuisi Godfrey	NBP
8	Ogochukwu Egolum	NNDP
9	Okolie .C. Nwachukwu	UNPP
10	George Ike Okoye	NMPP
11	Mrs. Njideka Anyadike	NAP
12	Nicolas Ukachukwu	HDP
13	Arc Geofrey Onyejebu	PPN
14	Chukwuemeka Kenneth	CDC
15	Godson Ohajem Okoye	UDP
16	Emmanuel Nwalunor	ARP
17	Eugene Ezekweze	PMP
18	Benjamin Obidigbo	RNP
19	Onunuchi Valentine	BNPP
20	Kenneth Nwoba	NPP
21	Christopher Ikwegbu	NMDP
22	Hon. Uche Ekwunife	PPA
23	Egono Richmond Olisa	CPP
24	Victor Anigbasa	NSBP
25	Chukwuma Soludo	PDP

Source: Bolaji (2010) USA Africa Dialogue Series

Anambra gubernatorial election of 16th November 2013 had the total number of 1, 784, 536 registered voters while 442, 242 votes were casted.

Table 2.2 NAMES OF VARIOUS CANDIDATES, POLITICAL PARTIES AND THEIR SCORES

S/N	Candidates	Political Party	Scores	Percentage
1	Okeke Chike Jerry	AA	249	0.06
2	Chukwuemeka Nwankwo	Accord	185	0.04
3	Dr. Ifeatu Ekelem	ACD	490	0.12
4	Engr. Anthony Anene	ACPN	899	0.21
5	Comr. Aaron Igweze .E.	AD	180	0.04
6	Chief. Anayo A. Arinze	ADC	699	0.16
7	Patrick C. Ibeziako M	APA	1607	0.38
8	Dr. Chris Ngige	APC	95, 963	22.57
9	Chief Willie .M. Obiano	APGA	180, 178	42.37
10	Chief Austin Nwangwu	CPP	879	0.29
11	Chijioke G. Ndubuisi	DPP	632	0.15
12	Christian I. Otti	ID	205	0.05
13	Chief Dennis N. Oguguo	KOWA	321	0.07
14	Patrick Ifeanyi Ubah	Labour	37, 495	8.82
15	Pastor Simon C. Okafor	MPPP	155	0.04
16	Okonkwo E. Webster	NCP	264	0.06
17	Prince Leonard Uchendu	NNPP	696	0.16
18	Tony Nwoye .O.	PDP	97, 700	22.97
19	Ezemo Godwin .C.	PPA	5120	1.20
20	Hon. Basil Iwoba	PPN	325	0.08
21	Onuorah B. Onyeachonam	SDP	235	0.06
22	Barr. Okoye G. Ohaenyem	UDP	153	0.04
23	Prof. Benedict .N. Akanegbu	UPP	624	0.15

Source: INEC 2013: Total number of accredited voters = 465, 891 Total number of casted votes = 442, 242 Total number of valid votes = 425, 254 No of rejected votes = 16, 988

Anambra 2017 gubernatorial election was held on 18 November 2017, having the total number of 2, 064, 134 registered voters while 457, 511 representing 22.16% were accredited.

Table 2.3 NAMES OF VARIOUS CANDIDATES, POLITICAL PARTIES AND THEIR SCORES

S/N	Candidates	Political Party	Scores	Percentage
1	Oby Okafor	ACD	232	0.05
2	Akunwata Ojiba	ACPN	346	0.08
3	Paul Obianoso	ADC	477	0.11
4	Ifeanyichukwu Okonkwo	ADP	603	0.14
5	Nwoye Tony	APC	98,752	23.38
6	Adaeze Okafor	APDA	2,111	0.50
7	Willie Obiano	APGA	234,071	55.43
8	Nweke Chukwudubem	APP	661	0.16
9	Ohanugo Cecil	BNPP	70	0.02
10	Emmanuel Nwibe	DA	97	0.023

11	Edochie Chibuike	DPC	145	0.03
12	Onuorah Onyeachonam	GPN	41	0.009
13	Samuel Oraegbunam	HDP	31	0.007
14	Ndife Ikenna	ID	37	0.008
15	Rufus Ezeokolonkwor	KOWA	49	0.011
16	Okafor Christian	MMN	79	0.018
17	Christian Enemuo	Labour	963	0.23
18	Praise Okechukwu	MPPP	39	0.009
19	Chinedu Okpalama	NCP	74	0.017
20	Benneth Abaniwu	NDLP	33	0.008
21	Felix Obi-Okafor	NEPP	84	0.012
22	Okafor Ogbonna	NNPP	68	0.016
23	Val. Oguejiofor	NPC	138	0.033
24	Nnoli Justin	NUP	69	0.02
25	Peter Chibuike	PDC	381	0.09
26	Oseloka Obaze	PDP	70, 293	16.64
27	Godwin Ezeemo	PPA	2, 787	0.66
28	Henry Onuorah	PPN	55	0.01
29	Kenneth Modezie	PPP	87	0.02
30	Stephen Mbah	PRP	59	0.01
31	Ifeanyi Obalim	SDP	20	0.005
32	Stanley Ezeanyaku	UDP	222	0.05
33	Osita Chidoka	UPP	7, 903	1.87
34	Ozoemena Nnoso	YDP	72	0.017
35	Nnaemeka Ezibe	YPP	65	0.015

Source: INEC 2017. Voter turnout in 2017 Anambra gubernatorial election in various local government. Results from four major political parties

Table 2.4 LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND FOUR MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES

S/N	Local Government	APC	APGA	PDP	UPP
1	Njikoka	5756	16, 944	3477	108
2	Dunukofia	7016	8,575	1530	106
3	Awka-South	6167	18, 957	5354	105
4	Ayemelum	5412	14, 593	2323	77
5	Anaocha	5297	11, 237	6554	146
6	Orumba South	3808	8,125	2412	465
7	Ekwusigo	5412	8,595	3856	320
8	Aguata	5807	13,167	4073	280
9	Onitsha North	3808	10,138	4143	435
10	Ogbaru	3415	6,615	4416	59
11	Idemili South	4063	5,742	2629	600
12	Oyi	5085	11, 840	1296	111

13	Orumba North	3551	8,766	3865	190
14	Awka North	3727	7,162	3347	92
15	Onitsha South	2012	7,082	3423	471
16	Ihiala	7814	14,379	4706	128
17	Anambra East	5248	20,510	1132	53
18	Anambra West	4261	8,152	1578	207
19	Nnewi South	2765	10,465	3255	596
20	Idemili North	4632	12,180	2767	2847
21	Nnewi North	3616	10,845	4157	5

Source: INEC 2017: Total number of accredited voters = 457, 511 Total number of casted votes = 448, 111 Total number of valid votes = 422, 314 No of rejected votes = 6, 457

Statistical Data on Voter Turnout in Anambra Election

Electoral participation is one of the three main indicators of democratic performance Powell (1982). According to Dalton (1998) citizen's involvement in political process is essential for democracy to be viable and meaningful voting though it requires little initiative and cooperation with others. It is the most visible and widespread form of citizen's involvement.

The 2017 gubernatorial election in Anambra state was held on 18th November with over 35 political parties presenting their candidates together with their running mates. According to official result from INEC in their website, the total voting age that registered for the election are 2, 064,134, out of this figure, regrettably only 457, 511 voters actually turned out to vote. The implication of this show that more than 1, 606,623 eligible voters did not vote for one reason or the other. This also indicates that only 448, 111 voters participated in the process that brought in set of leaders to pilot the affairs of the state. The total percentage of voter turnout of 2017 governorship election stood at 21.74% (Ayodamole 2017).

Lower voter turnout in gubernatorial elections has become a reoccurring decimal in Anambra state. This has been on since 2003 when Peter Obi presumably won with 235, 000 popular votes out of registered population of 1.9million. It has been pointed out that Anambra version of National Register of voters was flooded and filled with fictions and non-living objects from 2003-2010 in the extensive investigation carried out by Inter Society. It was discovered that 50% of names contained there never existed but rather filled with strange names, passports and pictures of dead people. In 2010, the governorship election that was conducted indicates that out of 1.84million only 301,232 representing 16.3% votes, out of this figure, Peter Obi under the umbrella of APGA won his second tenure with only 97,833 valid votes followed by Ngige of APC with 60,240 and Prof. Charles Soludo of PDP with 59, 355 votes. In November 2013 a new governorship election which was conducted in Anambra state had out of registered voting population of 1,776,167 only 442,242 voted (25%) where out of it, Obiano won with 180, 173 valid votes, followed by Anthony Nwoye

of PDP with 97,000 and Chris Ngige of APC with 95,963 valid votes out of 442,242 who voted (Bolaji, 2010).

These statistics shows that voter apathy and low voter turnout of voters have been feeding on the states question for free and fair election. In all the elections in Anambra have been witnessing one lawsuits and another with filed cases coming from grieved candidates who claimed the election was rigged and the rest of them.

Implication of Low Voter Turnout in Election

Whether low voter turnout is a threat to democracy depends largely on the difference between those who participated and those who do not. Concerns on low turnout of voters are usually based on the assumption that non-voters differ in terms of their political interest. When such exist and turnout becomes low, then the interest of some citizens are taken into consideration and account in policy making more than others which undermine the view that all citizens should have equal rights.

The political impact of low voter turnout can never be overemphasized; this is because it is the genesis of the problems that arise in the society after election. This is as a result that low voter turnout is an express road for selfish and greedy candidates to take the mantle of leadership without the general consent of the people. A lot of political crisis going on in most countries which Nigeria is not an exception is largely between the elites. This is as a result of citizens been nonchalant in exercising their rights, thereby creating room for electoral malpractices. The truth is that when there is massive turnout of voters, any plans which these greedy and evil candidates have plotted on how to manipulate the election will not be easy to carry out and in some cases suspended because of the presence of active citizens who know their rights and are fully prepared to make sure that the exercise of choosing the best are carried out smoothly in all the various polling units. But when the turnout is low, any electoral vices can easily be carried out without any stress or opposition.

Another political implication of low voter turnout is that it gives the incoming winner believes that the people lack interest in political activities and therefore will not care about the decisions made in the environment. It also leads to a particular political party monopolizing a political position for years and taking any means possible in order to ensure that the mantle of leadership continues to circulate among elites or particular group of people; encouraging godfatherism which makes those in power to be answerable to the group that put him in political position to the detriment of the citizens.

Social Impact of Low Voter Turnout

Social has to do with the society and how they are being organized. It goes down to deal with what happens in the environment. The social impact of low voter turnout therefore means the effect of poor turnout of voters in electing a leader and how this affects the society at large. As previously stated that low voter turnout in most cases breed about

leaders and citizens who do not perform their duties to which at the end brings about a society filled with chaos and crisis since each party do not care on how their actions are affecting the other.

Social aspect of the state and the economic aspect operate hand in hand with each other. A leader who lacks the plan on how to generate money and what to provide for the society will end up occupying the position for years without providing the general need of the people like accessible road network, electricity supply, access to clean water, healthy environment, better security network talks more of building industries in other to provide employment opportunities for the citizens. The environment turns to a place which is inhabitable because nothing is working there. The institutions are so weak that people perform any crime and go free without paying the consequences of their actions; reason is because justice can be bought with money. Another effect of this is that it leads to mass exodus of the citizens especially brain drain. The citizens prefer even without minding the risks involved in other to seek for greener pastures.

Citizens that show political apathy towards the activities going on within their environment will also give birth and tutor children that will follow their part. The family which is the first contact a child had with the outside world goes a great length to influence and mold the child's character, likes and hobbies. Psychologically, half of the characters which a child exhibits are what he learnt from the family which he or she grew up in. A child who has become acquitted with political activities in their state will also likely follow such pattern. This will help the society because their younger generations are politically active but when the opposite is the case, the same problem which comes from low participation in election will continue to hunt generations to come.

Economic Impact of Low Voter Turnout

Economic impact of low voter turnout is a general disease that affect everyone in a given society or state. This is because the economy is what drives a state and the state cannot do without it. A weak economy produces a weak government and vice versa. Low participation in an election is a clear indication of waste of resources. This is because resources or money budgeted for the election, which is used in providing electoral materials like ballot papers, ink, and the rest becomes useless when there are few persons to vote. It is important to note that budgets for election are determined using the population figures of registered voters.

Then in a situation where the population is not up to the average figures of registered voters didn't turn out to vote, those materials becomes wastes immediately. Finances which could have been allocated to other sectors of the economy are wasted.

Just like the political impact or implication of low turnout cannot be over emphasized, the same way is the economic impact. The way citizens exercise their support towards voting for a particular administration determines the support they will give during the winners

four years in office. When there is no support coming from the citizens towards a particular administration, it is seen in their constant refusal to pay their taxes which makes government to provide necessary infrastructures both for the citizens and how to yield further profits for government. This will help to provide necessary services for the people. But when citizens do not pay their taxes, it prevents the state from achieving a sustainable development and growth forcing the state to rely on Federal government for allocations and at the same time depending on loans from both internal and external sources.

By depending on external loans, the state becomes pawn in the hands of their debtors. These external loans come from transnational corporations and International Economic Organization like WTO, World Bank, has carrot and stick relationship where in order to receive loan, there are conditions attached which has negative impact on the nation's quest to develop economically. Such conditions might include government in the receiving end to remove tariff that are placed on goods coming from the foreign country of their donor.

Apart from the fact that citizens who show lack of interest in political activities do not pay taxes which force their government into borrowing and thereby falling in pit of debt trap or debt bondage. It is also necessary to point out that when citizens do not perform this duty, then it will be difficult for government to create and provide employment opportunities for the citizens or attaining adequate pension, confronting escalating health care cost / providing standard health care facilities together with providing effective and efficient public services because the government lacks the financial strength to provide all these. In a state where these are inadequate and not functioning, it will continue to weaken the economy of the state.

It is important to note that leaders have the legal power to determine and make economic decisions on how best to improve the standard of living of the citizens. When such power gets to the wrong hand because of voters' inability to partake in election, it thereby endangers the economy of the society in the hands of leaders who lack the ability on how best to provide a conducive environment for the citizens but only bother on how to enrich their personal pocket. Due to these things, the society lacks adequate infrastructures, good road network and steady electricity supply which are the key major factors that help in driving the economy into a progressive one.

Poor access to good roads makes it impossible for there to be both the effective production and steady production. This is because when there is poor access to good roads which enables the easy movement of getting raw materials to industries and also taken it to where those goods are needed. Bad transportation network discourages foreign investors. A situation where there is poor transportation system such a country will find it difficult to produce since there is no means of exporting it from that country's border.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, one interesting fact about the political history of Anambra state is that majority of the people does not seem to be interested in electing leaders. Politics and voting in the state appears more elitist than people driven. The historical analysis of registered voters and voters' turnout since 1999 indicates that there is increase in the level of voter apathy in the state. It is necessary to point out that there are citizens who have reached the minimal voting age yet they do not register for elections talk more of voting. These apathetic situations threaten the survival of democracy and have a lot of negative implications as pointer out.

In view of this, the study proposed a promoting of compulsory voting with provisions for it in the constitution. In this situation, citizens are obliged to register and vote in elections. A situation where an eligible voter does not vote, they should be subjected punitive measures such as fines and imprisonment. Regular town halls meetings should be held to encourage citizen's participation in an election. Voting therefore becomes a civic duty rather than a civic right. Also, online and internet voting should be included in the electoral act. This will help address the issue of insecurities and also enable voters cast their votes from any part of the state and in the comfort of their place.

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