

## **Voter Apathy and Political Participation in Nigeria: An Interrogation on Deficits in Governance, 1999-2019**

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### **Abstract**

As a vital ingredient of democracy, political participation is utilised to authenticate and legitimise a government for general acceptance. Voter apathy is a potent protest against outrageous irregularities in electoral process and bad governance in Nigeria. In the last two decades, non-political participation of voters in Nigeria's electoral processes has become the country's major perennial challenge in election administration. The study interrogated deficits in governance to unveil the critical factors implicated in voter apathy in Nigeria. Reciprocal determinism theory was used to explain how the political environment serves as stimulus to voter apathy in the electoral processes. The study used descriptive qualitative method supplemented by descriptive statistics to analyse the data garnered. The findings revealed weak institutional framework, incompetence, bad governance and corruption as voter apathy determinants. The study, therefore, recommends inclusive democracy, strong and autonomous institutional frameworks; and liberty of the people to foster sustainable democratic development in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Voter Apathy, Political Malfeasance, Bad Governance, Political Participation, Inclusive Democracy, Corruption

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### **Introduction**

Political participation through the act of voting in election has become a contending area of study as scholars focused on prevailing emergence of modern democracy. Election, therefore, becomes meaningful if government creates level playground for all political parties and their supporters to freely choose candidates of their choice to run the affairs of the state, and where their votes must count to determine the true will of the people. Participatory election is one of the vital ingredients of ensuring true representation of popular will in democracies. Without sufficient and massive voter turnout, there can be no true elections that would reflect accurately the people's preferences. It is absurd for a minority to give credence to an election, while majority of the voters withdraws from participation as an overt expression of distrust, lack of interest, and eloquent vote of no confidence on the political system (Ellis, 2004; Forler, 2013; Nwagwu, 2016; Dahl et al., 2018). This informed why

Dalton (1988) argues that massive voter participation in electoral processes increases essentially the vital recipe of election in a democracy.

Since 1999, Nigeria has witnessed increasing trend of political apathy characterised by overwhelming voter abstention, coupled with vote selling, and emotional detachment of electorates from fundamental civic obligations, and lack of interest in political activities like voters' registration, voter education, collective political protest against election frauds, and indifference in collection of permanent voters' cards and casting votes. Ojetunde (2019) observes that voter turnout determines the percentage of exact figure of registered voters using integer of votes cast (valid and invalid) at the end of vote counting. The manifestation of dwindling trend of voter turnout in the six general elections (1999-2019) held within the Fourth Republic shows the adverse effect of voters' apathy. Voters are seemingly scared to come out and participate in voting during elections due to insecurity scenarios surrounding the entire electoral processes, coupled with uncertainties and unpredictability of politicians and electoral results. Low voter turnout remains a critical factor adversely affecting consolidation of democracy in Nigeria and some other African countries.

Voter apathy, as a response to bad governance, high level of insecurity, and government-driven electoral malfeasance, gives rise to vote-selling by those who distrust the system that creates cloudy political atmosphere around all electoral processes, and casts doubts on the transparency, freeness, fairness, credibility, competitiveness and acceptability of elections' results. Vote-selling in Nigeria has been institutionalised as common perennial phenomenon predominantly utilised by political parties and politicians across divide to disenfranchise eligible and gullible voters. It is a strategic mechanism being used to influence the sense of judgmental reasoning of morally weakened electorates, whom poverty affliction had humbled, to surrender their civic powers in exchange for money and/or other enticing materials. Zhelnina (2019) notes that evidence of decline in civic participation, especially in contemporary traditional forms of politics, such as in voting and party membership, has been a common scene in the advanced democracies. It is therefore a universal phenomenon inherent in democratic politics.

Electoral apathy is not a new phenomenon to the democratic institutions such as electoral umpire that conduct elections at intervals for various political offices. Baogang (n.d.) argues that the degree of voters' involvement greatly determines the value of the election itself; regular intervals of elections embedded in transparency and accountability make up the supportive indicators for credible and competitive exercise. Baogang's argument harps on the parochial perception of politics and political apathy as main factors overwhelmingly

undermining political development and gives credence to tyrannical leadership and defective structures. Espindola et al. (2005) argue that as electoral processes are inevitable aspect of democratisation, the number of participants in elections determines imperfections of procedures, and claims of inclusive participation in the entire democratic exercise.

Voter apathy is a potent protest against outrageous irregularities in electoral processes in Nigeria, which is being perpetrated by delusion of grandeur politicians, political parties, and government agencies as vehicles of destruction. According to Ojetunde (2019), the 2019 presidential election recorded the lowest rate of voter turnout with 34.8% since the beginning of the Fourth Republic. This poorest number of voter turnout ironically reflects also as second to the lowest percentage in the history of election in Africa. For example, in 1999, Zimbabwean presidential election recorded 32.2% voter turnout as the lowest rate. Rwanda's presidential election in 2017 recorded 98.2% of voter turnout. Other African countries with higher voter turnout rates in their last elections include Equatorial Guinea (2016) – 92.7%; Angola (2017) – 90.4%; Seychelles (2015) – 90.1%; Zimbabwe's voter turnout in 2018 improved to 86.8%. Also, in 2018, Sierra Leone recorded 84.2%; Kenya (2017) – 79.5%; Liberia (2017) – 75.2%; and Burundi (2015) – 73.4% respectively. In all, Nigeria, the largest economy in Africa, and the ECOWAS sub-regional power, is ironically the least to foster participatory democracy. The poor turnout of voters is being attributed to inability of government to keep to terms with its social contract with the people; loss of faith in the electioneering process; election related violence; voters' inability to exercise their franchise in tensed environment where their votes would not count; and absolute lack of interest of voters in political activities (Ojetunde, 2019).

In contemporary representative democracy, elections play most vital role as essential factor in sustaining stability and continuity of democratic government. Therefore, absence of election in a democracy is viewed as extinction of democratic government. Competitive, free, fair, transparent, and credible elections are overt potent manifestations of legitimate political growth and development of participatory democracy. These precepts are embedded in equal treatment to all political parties and competing candidates by law enforcement agents and the judiciary through equal access to public media facilities, and respect for oppositions. These precepts would be attainable only where independent electoral management body with complementary competent, impeccable personnel is institutionalised to administer unbiased and uncompromised elections. Nwangwu et al. (2018) observe that the relevance of electoral democracy for advancement of mankind does not imply that all nations experience the

positive traits pertaining to equal opportunities or add value to socio-economic and political wellbeing of the people.

Historically, Nigeria's electoral system is fraught with inefficient and ineffective management at all stages of electoral procedures; consequently it results in acrimonious and invalidated conclusions. The feeble institutionalisation of the principal electoral agency, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and its management deficiency and lack of professionalism, financial autonomy, and frequent political interference portrays democracy in bad light in Nigeria. Besides, inordinate ambition of desperate politicians to secure victory by all means and at all costs, and ineptness of corrupt INEC officials have incredibly undermined election management in the country. The organisational methods for votes counting and collation of results are cloudy and suspicious in nature. This created apathetic response amongst eligible voters not that they are not willing to vote; they generally shared the belief their votes would not count. In addition, the perception of politics as a medium through which sectional interest is aggregated and fierce struggle for acquisition of political power and economic benefits to serve personal interest rather than protection of the interest for the common goods of the electorates make election warfare. Despotism, religious inclination and ethnic chauvinism are fostered as sure path to political power. Therefore, the study interrogates deficits in governance to unveil the critical factors implicated in voter apathy in Nigeria polity.

### **Methodological Approach**

This study is a qualitative research which involved documentary method of gathering data from secondary sources. Documentary method centers on descriptive analysis of all documents with relevant information pertaining to phenomenon under investigation. According to Mogalakwe (2006, p. 221), "the use of documentary methods refers to analysis of documents that contain information about phenomenon under study". This kind of technique has erroneously been viewed as an exclusive class of professional historians, librarians and information science specialists. Burnham et al. (2004, p. 168) argue that "it is somewhat surprising that most social research methods texts fail to give documentary materials more than a passing reference". Some social scientists "often project qualitative methods as a worthless pursuit, incapable of aiding understanding of social phenomena let alone prescribing for its resolution or amelioration" (Umar, 2016, p.127).

Thus, the seeming neglect of its usefulness and apparent under-utilisation does not make qualitative research in social sciences less rigorous as researchers with expression of absolute

confidence and proof demonstrate that the method employs scientific tools and skills which demand essential rigour in research protocol. Qualitative inquiry applies diverse philosophical suppositions; strategic inquiry; and methods of generating data, analysis and interpretation. A qualitative method stresses on the qualities of entities, processes and significance that cannot be experimentally evaluated or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency. The goal of descriptive research is to portray phenomenon under investigation and elaborate its characteristics. In descriptive inquiry, information obtained qualitatively may be analysed quantitatively, making use of frequencies, percentages, averages, or other statistical analysis to establish relationship (Nassaji, 2015; Umar, 2016).

Documentary method of data collection has an inherent flexibility in information generation through use of public or school libraries, government records or reports on events or personal accounts on experiential incidents, retrieval of facts and figures from statistical records on social issues or from the archival sources, books, journals, the media, and internet sources. Therefore, documentary technique was utilised to establish information gaps in literature that required to be filled through review of plethora of existing knowledge. The study exposed the researchers to a wide stream of literature on voters' apathy. Thus, it adopted qualitative descriptive method of data analysis to analyse data garnered. In analysing data generated, the researchers used descriptive statistics. According to Burnham, et al., (2004, p.114):

Descriptive statistics is a range of basic statistical tools for describing data. The main appeal of descriptive statistics is that it is a powerful and economical way of measuring, analysing and presenting political phenomena such as voting behavior, political participation, and social and political attitudes generally.

On the above premise the method of data collection and analysis lean.

### **Theorizing Voter Apathy and Political Participation in Nigeria**

Reciprocal determinism theory was adopted in the study. It holds that a person's behavior influences and is being influenced by social world and personal traits. It is a model made up of three outstanding elements that influence behavior, namely the environment, the individual, and the behavior. The theoretical model explains that the three factors are interdependently interacting with one another to produce reflective responses. As the environment exerts influence on individual behavior, the individual's responses play vital role in influencing the environment. Therefore, the theory explores the role people's behavior plays in the environment. It was first propounded by a psychologist, Albert Bandura.

Bandura's theory has demonstrated a vital paradigm modification from behavioral perspective to a social-cognitive approach to understanding behavior. It was the belief of behaviorists that the environment wholly influences individual behavior, but Bandura appreciated the relevance of the bidirectional relationship between individuals, their behaviors, and the environment. To a reasonable extent, it reveals that while individuals are really affected by their personal experiences in the environment, they as well possess ability to exert modifications on their situations and circumstances through self-determinations and behaviors (Singh, 2018).

Other proponents that expounded on the theory were Judith Rich Harris (1998), Akoul Gregory M. (1998), and Larry J. Siegal (n.d.). Akoul elaborated on the earlier assumptions as it relates to a child who suggests that infants were uninvolved recipients of environmental influences, which portrayed them as being easily shaped or molded in whatever manner the parents or school teachers or other caregivers design to operate. The theory of reciprocal determinism argues that children exhibit more active and interactive role in the environment as the environment influences them. Hardly do they react as the effects of learned associations or reinforcements; considering that their individual traits, feelings, thoughts, and behaviors impact on how they interact with and respond to environment (Cherry, 2018; Singh, 2018).

The central theme of the theory, according to Harris (1998), is the nexus between environment and behavior, whereby the environment influences the human behavior. In other words, the environmental factors which translate to bad conducts of public office holders, activities of government in power to provide good governance, public service delivery capacity, provision of infrastructural facilities and welfare of the public, poor representations of the parliamentarians, ineptitude of government functionaries, and individual experiences of eligible voters informed the basis of their respective dispositions on the political environment. For example, the fairness, trueness, credibility, transparency and accountability in governance and on the electoral processes informed the mindset of electorates on how to respond to the environment. Cherry (2018, p.2) stresses that:

The environment component is made up of the physical surroundings around the individual that contain potentially reinforcing stimuli, including people who are present (or absent). The environment influences the intensity and frequency of the behavior, just as the behavior itself can have an impact on the environment. On the other hand, the individual component includes all the characteristics that have been rewarded in the past. Personality and cognitive factors play an important part in how a person behaves, including all of the individual's expectations, beliefs, and unique personality characteristics.

The cause and effect of fraudulent activities of politicians in Nigeria's election periods such as rigging, under-age voting, ballot box snatching and stuffing, mutilation of elections results, sustainability and flourishing of army of political thugs, purchase of permanent voters' cards from gullible voters, manipulation of biometric voters' accreditation devices, involvement of the military in election matters, etc as stimuli/ environmental influences on the electorates; and abstention from political activities, eligible voters unwillingness to vote, refusal to register, to collect permanent voters card, to attend political rallies, refusal to participate in electoral education awareness programme to sensitise voters, refusal to take part in any political activity are responses to the stimuli.

### **Nigeria Political Environment before 2015 General Elections**

The 1999 elections were generally relatively peaceful because the military organised and superintended the entire exercise; and the electorates were enthusiastically willing to participate in voting to ensure a successful military handover of political power to a democratically elected civilian government. Due to predominant presence of stern-looking combatant-ready soldiers, stationary armored-combat vehicles, heavy machine-guns, and armored personnel carriers in all strategic locations of the country, voter turnout was not impressive as it failed to correspond with the high level of enthusiasms exhibited by the populace having recorded 52.3%. Subsequent, general-election in 2003 registered a higher turnout of voters with an increase of 16.8% as the military was back to barracks; but the exercise was marred by reemergence of electoral malfeasance. There were cases of political intrigues to outwit one another, brazen rigging, ballot-box snatching and stuffing, multiple voting, overt manipulation and mutilation of election results, violent conflicts, non-issue based campaign, interparty bloody clashes, loss of lives and litigations against elections outcomes (Bekoe, 2011; Yoroms, 2017).

Freeness, fairness, transparency are the genuine recipe for reliable election procedures in which eligible voters would have the liberty to decide who governs them. Organised political parties are essential ingredients in contemporary democracy, and the vehicle through which candidates seeking for elective public offices contest for elections; and the electorates, through the same medium, are afforded the opportunity to choose who governs them. They play crucial roles in electoral processes, such as mobilization of voters, elite formation and recruitment of new entrants, political education, uniting and stabilising the political process, organisation of government, agenda setting, aggregation of opinion, socialisation, link between government and the people, goal formation, simplifying choices for voters, and

fundamentally, providing alternative public policy. Political parties select candidates to contest for elections through intraparty processes (Nwanegbo and Nwangbo, 2014).

Howbeit, it is imperative that internal democracy in political parties remains sacrosanct in selection of candidates. In most developing countries, including Nigeria, internal democracy in political parties suffers suffocation. Candidates are selected on the basis of godfather/godson; patron/client relationships; political entrepreneurs invest in sponsoring political parties and their candidates and the investors are conventionally empowered by party stalwarts to decide who contests what elective position in political parties. Individuals become stronger and powerful in all the electoral processes than established institutional frameworks. There were overt cases of corruption, bribery, and marginalisation of the financially weak candidates. Only wealthier elements, those with resources, connections, and power were given the opportunity to contest for elections. At the end, hoodlums, puppets and stooges were forcefully placed on positions of authority as conduit-pipes through which state resources were siphoned, while credible and saleable candidates were denied the chances to showcase their prowess in governance (Ake, 1996; Bekoe, 2011; Nwagwu, 2011; Yoroms, 2017). This runs counter to Baldwin et al. (1997, p. 86) dictum which sees democracy “as a political system in which there is free and open competition for power among various individuals and groups, with significant degree of accountability to the people by those who hold formal positions of power”. Transparency and accountability elude the people because they are not involved. The system is incompatible with democracy because it does not present the electorates with a real choice between candidates. Voting without restrictions is the best option through which a people can exercise their rights to express opinion of their own (Dahl et al., 2017). This experience is potent in inducing one to develop apathetic behavior towards political activities.

Plato (cited in Mukherijee and Ramaswamy, 2013, p.60) decried the flaws of democracy and attributed “bad governance to the incompetence and ignorance of politicians, for such deficiencies gives rise to factionalism, extreme violence, and partisan politics, which are the major causes of political instability”. This kind of crude scenario discourages voters not to exercise their civic rights to vote not because they are not keen; they have lost confidence in the system. Table 1 depicts some cases of political parties’ forceful imposition of unpopular candidates on the electorates as parties’ flag-bearers in some states in Nigeria in 2007 general elections.



**Table 1: Cases of Political Parties Imposition of Candidates on Electorates in 2007  
General Elections in Nigeria**

State	Contestants and Events in 2007	Verdict of the Judiciary
Rivers	Rotimi Amaechi vs. Celestine Omeha. Amaechi won the gubernatorial primary election, but Omeha was imposed as PDP flag bearer. Amaechi challenged party action in court.	Appeal Court ruled in favor of Amaechi, and he won the election.
Imo	Ifeanyi Araraume vs. Engr. Charles Ugwuh. Araraume won the PDP primary election, but Ugwuh was imposed as party flag bearer. Araraume challenged action of the party in court.	Appeal Court declared Araraume winner of the election, but he lost the governorship election.
Edo	Adams Oshiomhole vs. Oserheimen Osunbor. Osunbor was returned elected in the governorship election under PDP. Oshiomhole (Labour Party) challenged the election result in court.	Appeal Court declared Oshiomhole winner of the election.
Ondo	Segun Mimiko vs. Agagu Segun. Agagu was reelected as governor under PDP. Mimiko (Labour Party) challenged the election result in court.	Appeal Court declared Mimiko winner of the election.
Ekiti	Kayode Fayemi vs. Segun Oni. Oni was reelected as governor under PDP. Fayemi challenged the election result in court.	Appeal Court declared Fayemi winner of the election.
Delta	Great Ogboru vs. Emmanuel Uduaghan. Uduaghan was reelected as governor under PDP. Ogboru (ACN) challenged the election result in court.	Appeal Court nullified the election and ordered a rerun within 90 days. Uduaghan was returned elected.
Osun	Olagunsoye Oyinlola vs. Rauf Aregbesola. Oyinlola was reelected under PDP. Aregbesola (ACN) challenged the election result in court.	Appeal Court declared Aregbesola the winner.
Anambra	Chris Ngige vs. Peter Obi. Ngige was declared winner of governorship election under PDP. Peter Obi (APGA) challenged the election result in court.	Appeal Court declared Peter Obi the winner.

Source: Nwagwu, E. J. (2011) Elections and party politics in Nigeria: Lesson after fifty years. In *Nigeria at fifty: issues, challenges and agenda*, ed. Ezeudu, S. A., Ezeani, E. O., Onuoha, J. and Nwizu, S., 130 - 147. Enugu: Timex Enterprises.

These indices highlighted informed why voter turnout in 2007 general elections decreased by 11.4%. Voters became apprehensive about insecurity of lives and properties and intolerable electoral irregularities orchestrated by bad governance and poor leadership. Voters seemingly lost hope in obtaining credible election results in non-free and fair exercise; and general lack of interest in political activities was exhibited. Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was very ineffective, incompetently weak in administering elections and quite incapable of regulating the unbridled activities of political parties and politicians as the body enjoyed no administrative independence or financial autonomy. The Chairman of INEC in 2007 elections, Maurice Iwu aptly asserts that:

Here is a system in which individuals primitively acquired such enormity of resources that embolden them to challenge the state and become laws into themselves with their own army and all; a system in which political parties brazenly deny their members who won primaries the ticket they won and allocate same to others for one reason or another; a system in which some individuals solely pick candidates for a political party in an election; a setting in which majority of the political aspirants do not believe there is any benefit in campaigning and convincing the electorates, but that with money and massive arsenal of coercion the electorates will be subdued...this is the environment of Nigeria's electoral democracy from where elections without flaws are expected (Iwu, 2009, p.5).

The winner of 2007 presidential election, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua condemned the processes through which he became the President and acknowledged that the exercise was full of flaws, and promised to reform the electoral processes. Accordingly, in August 28, 2007 he constituted a 23-member Electoral Review Committee with Justice Muhammadu Uwais as the chairman, to look into means of enhancing election administration in Nigeria. The Committee's Report and Recommendations submitted to the Presidency on December 11, 2008 were considered by the National Assembly and the outcome of the exercise is the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended).

Some gubernatorial aspirants and other political contenders who felt that political parties' hierarchies shortchanged or denied them their rights to contest and the parties' failure to observe the provisions of the respective party constitutions in intraparty business, and others who were convinced that they were rigged out of the contest by opposition political parties, Independent National Electoral Commission officials, and sponsored thugs, instituted legal actions against the outcomes of the elections in their respective designated Election Tribunals. The aggrieved contestants filed in 1, 282 election petitions in 2007 (Daily Trust, Friday, January 3, 2020). As Ake (1996, p.16) succinctly notes, "the premium on power is exceptionally high and the institutional mechanisms for moderating political competition are lacking thus political competition assumes the character of warfare in Nigeria and other Third World countries".

The intra-party contentious issues in People's Democratic Party (PDP) before the 2011 election was a conventional unwritten zoning agreement which provided for rotation of presidency between north and south of Nigeria. Olusegun Obasanjo from south-west of Nigeria won the party primaries and was nominated the presidential candidate in 1999; and was elected with Atiku Abubakar as running mate from north-east for two terms. Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, a northerner from north-west won PDP primaries to become the presidential candidate of the party in 2007 elections with Goodluck Jonathan, the then Governor of

Bayelsa State in south-south, the running mate. The duo emerged victoriously in an election tainted by massive irregularities. However, Yar'Adua died of sickness in 2010 after three years in office. His Vice, Jonathan was sworn-in to replace the deceased. After a year, as the first term was approaching to an end, serious tussle erupted within PDP over Jonathan's justification to contest the presidency in 2011 election. A splinter-group contended in favour of Jonathan's right as former Vice-President and incumbent President to contest; the other splinter-group sustained upholding PDP's conventional rotation-agreement that north should be given an opportunity for another four years to fill the lacuna created by Yar'Adua's death, but Jonathan's supporters won (FGN Report, 2011).

The 2011 general elections, particularly the presidential election on 16<sup>th</sup> April, were widely adjudged by domestic and international observers as one of the best elections Nigeria had ever conducted, and the worst bloodiest ever experienced in the history of election in the country. INEC was broadly acclaimed to have significantly improved in administration of the election. Essentially, new voters' register was created, and there was tremendous improvement in reporting results transparently with a public pledge to hold accountable individuals who contravened the electoral rules. In spite of the improvements, there were incidents of electoral malfeasance – politically motivated bloody-violence, vote-buying, mutilations, inflations, and manipulations of election results in the incumbent's strong holds where official results in some areas recorded 100 percent voters' turnout, partisanship of law enforcement agents, seizure of ballot-boxes and stuffing by party thugs mostly in southeast and Niger Delta region. Eruption of violence was linked to grievances of unresolved party issues, underlying issues of inter and intra-party tensions, mudslinging, inconsistencies and controversies in party primaries and other hangover issues on campaigns. The pre-election violent incidents recorded 165 casualties, excluding the assassination of All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) governorship candidate, Alhaji Modu Fanammi Gubio, a leading governorship aspirant in Borno State in January 2011. Bomb blast occurred in Bayelsa, Borno, Kaduna, and Niger States with trailing casualties. There were also bloody clashes between rival parties' supporters in some parts of Nigeria (Diallo, 2011; EU-EOM, 2011; WANEP, 2019; Sahara Reporters, 2011).

An official pronouncement of the presidential election results and the declaration of the incumbent President as the winner of the contest triggered off violent protest in the northern states. The Hausa/Fulani Muslim youths, supporters of Buhari, the opposition candidate from the Northern region, took over streets in northern towns and cities of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara States

with crude and dangerous weapons like axes, machetes, sticks, knives, and bows-and-arrows in three-day rioting and sectarian killings, INEC offices and other public buildings were destroyed. Human Rights Watch (cited in Diallo, 2011, p.1) notes that “the protest claimed 800 lives of innocent citizens”. On April 18, 2011 violence erupted in Kano, Kaduna, Gombe, Bauchi, Adamawa and Taraba States against rigging of the presidential election. Churches and Mosques, government and PDP members’ properties, religious leaders perceived to be PDP supporters, INEC buildings were destroyed. Some INEC personnel and ten ad hoc staff from NYSC were killed in Bauchi State. The stronghold of Sultan of Sokoto, the supreme Muslim power in the country was assaulted. The demonstrators confronted security forces and many lives were lost (European Union Election Observation Mission, 2011).

Subsequently, a 22-member Investigation Panel superintended by retired Grand Qadi Sheikh Dr Ahmed Lemu, known as ‘Lemu Panel’, was constituted to look into 2011 Election Violence and Civil Disturbances. The Panel identified the remote roots of the savagery to include “a widespread desire for change following failed promises of government to fix infrastructures, corruption, zoning policies that turned the election into an ethno-religious contest, rumour-mongering and negative campaigning, and individual actions of some candidates” (FRN, 2011, p.5). Table 2 illustrates the degree of fatalities, injuries, and destruction of properties in Northern states.

**Table 2: Number of persons killed, injured, displaced and properties destroyed in 2011 post-election violence in Northern Nigeria**

Location	Fatalities	Persons Injured	Displaced Persons	Properties destroyed	Suspects arrested
Kaduna	827	71	65,000	1) 350 Churches 2) 224 houses 3) 837 market Shops 4) Numerous vehicles and motor-cycles 5) 6 Mosques	500
Bauchi	36	200			
Adamawa	26	158			
Gombe	20	147			
Niger	9	27			
Kano	8	22			
Katsina	7	59			
Borno	3	10			
Jigawa	1	38			
Yobe	1	3			
<b>Total</b>	<b>938</b>	<b>735</b>	<b>65,000</b>	<b>1,417</b>	<b>500</b>

**Sources:** Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (2011) The 2011 elections in northern Nigeria post-electoral violence: Origins and response”. <http://www.nsrp-nigeria.org>. Accessed 16 March 2020.

Diallo, Seyllou. 2011. Nigeria: Post-election violence killed 800".  
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/05/16/nigeria-post-election-violence-killed-800>.  
Accessed 21 January 2020.

The report remarkably identified the inflammatory public statements of the presidential candidate of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), which stated that “voters should protect their votes” was misunderstood by party supporters in northern states to mean recourse to violence. The high magnitude of insecurity in a volatile political environment was sufficient to heighten fears and negatively influence the behavior of voters not to participate in political activities, particularly in voting. Numerous inadequacies affected the worth and integrity of the election results, including 4.36% decrease in voter turnout if compared with last general elections voter turnout which was a reflection of electorates’ unfavorable dispositions.

#### **Voter Turnout and Political Environment in 2015 General Elections**

The 2015 general elections was a continuum of party wrangling, politically motivated violence in an unstable terrain. There was intra and interparty ‘war’ of supremacy raging within the two major contending and overbearing political parties: PDP and APC. PDP had experienced terrible internal crisis that structurally threatened its fabrics, between those who earlier supported the reelection bid of President Jonathan in 2011 and others against the ambition. Some strong pillars of PDP from northern extraction that were not in support of the reelection plan in 2011 and 2015 defected to the opposition party, APC. The argument was that presidency should rotate according to the internal zoning policy of the party; in this case, it should be the turn of the north to produce the presidential candidate for 2015 election. This was hinged on the argument that the demise of former President Umaru Musa Yar‘Adua, truncated their turn to three years instead of eight. The faction argued that it was wrong for Jonathan to re-feature in 2015 to contest for the presidency. The northern elites vowed with serious threat that if President Jonathan insisted on contesting the 2015 election, they would make Nigeria ungovernable for him. As aptly observed by WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS) (2019, p.1), “... There are already concerns regarding election security and consolidation of the democratic structure in Nigeria. Recent reports generated by WANEP suggest underlying issues of inter and intraparty tensions, mudslinging, politically motivated violence and reoccurrences of carpet crossing of prominent politicians”.

The controversially unresolved problems destroyed the foundation of the party and rendered it hollow. There was uncertainty as PDP, in spite of its seeming weakness and desertion, was vehemently against the use of the newly introduced technological innovations

for 2015 elections, arguing that the utilisation of the devices was too sudden and close to election dates; rather such experiment should be carried out in future elections when voters must have been used to its applications. The new electronic mechanisms were meant to curb electoral malpractices. They included Smart Card Reader (SCR) device being utilised to scrutinise the genuineness of the Permanent Voters' Card (PVC); a biometric PVC by which intending voters were being verified by cross-checking biometrics generated instantly from voters in comparison with those contained in embedded chip of the PVC; and Automated Fingerprint Identification System was capable of detecting multiple registration of persons to reduce multiple voting (Orji, 2017).

The environment was highly tensed as INEC insisted on applying the technology in screening, authenticating and accrediting eligible voters in the exercise, while government was allegedly poised to send the INEC Chairman on compulsory leave to thwart the arrangement. This scenario created doubts as voters were perplexed on whether the looming danger would explode to crisis. Although the fear of PDP came to reality as it was observed that millions of eligible voters were allegedly frustrated and disenfranchised by the dysfunctional SCR in some parts of the country. Other voters apparently did not vote because of incongruent nature and character of political parties and desperate politicians whose impudent mindset was to win by all means and at all costs, as they see politics as "a-do-or-die affair". Their incoherence adversely influenced voters' behavior as a response to the volatile environment.

The emergence of demeaning strategy to woo unwilling electorates with such dreadful verbal war against opponents, threat of physical war, pre-election politically motivated killings and destruction of public and private properties, religious bigotry, hate speeches and inflammatory statements during campaigns between the two major contending dominant parties; the herdsmen extremism, Boko Haram insurgency and political instability heightened apprehensiveness of eligible voters and fear debarred them from coming out to participate in political activities. CLEEN Foundation (2014, p.1) observed that:

Preparation for the February 2015 General Elections is amidst increasing concern of high levels of insecurity and violence in the election days and the days immediately after. The concerns are that the current security situation such as continued insurgent's attacks in the North East, increased activities of militants and/or cult groups in the South-South, incursion by Cattle Herdsmen openly armed with AK47 rifles in the South East, political killings and proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs), would fuel an outbreak of violence.

Besides, electioneering campaigns were devoid of issues and ideologies, lack of decency in approach and poor management of language skill, and absence of articulation of problem solving policies and programmes to address pressing national issues bordering on corruption, high rate of poverty, unemployment, free and accessible functional education, healthcare delivery system, transportation system and other infrastructural deficits in Nigeria. The imminent danger looming in some flashpoints or danger-zones of the country was highlighted by West Africa Early Warning and Early Response Network to the effect that:

The relatively peaceful elections and political transition in 2015 have elicited public discussions with high expectations on INEC and security agencies to conduct a credible electoral process. In the findings of a recent risk assessment study in Nigeria conducted by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) as well as a baseline assessment by WANEP, there are indications of high risk of political violence in Kaduna, Ekiti, Rivers, and Kano, Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo, Akwa Ibom, Delta, Lagos, Benue, Kwara, Plateau, Sokoto, and Adamawa States (WANEP, 2019, p.4).

Consequently, voters' turnout in 2015 general elections was 43.6 percent with 10.1 percent decline from 53.7 percent in 2011 general elections' record.

### **Bad Governance, Voters' Turnout and Political Environment in 2019 General Elections**

The 2019 general elections were keenly competitive even though during the periods of campaigns, the competitors such as opposition political parties – People's Democratic Party, Accord Party, etc- did not enjoy equal rights and privileges in accessing public facilities (e.g. Nigeria Television Authority, Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria and public stadia for political rallies) exhibited by power of incumbency. Private media organizations were being censored on what they should not air in favour of any opposition political party or clients perceived to be in opposition. For instance, the controversial withdrawal of operational license of Daar Communications Plc by Nigeria Broadcasting Commission (NBC) for allegedly airing on issues pertaining to presidential election petition matters was considered illegal. Justice Inyang Ekwo of the Federal High Court, Abuja, nullified the purported deferral of working authorisation of Daar Communications Plc, affording African Independent Television/Ray Power temporary reprieve to operate. The Court urged the Federal Government and NBC to exhibit reason why a relapse to 30<sup>th</sup> May, 2019 status quo *ante bellum* sought by Daar Communications Plc should not be consented (Nigerian Democratic Report, 2019). Table 3 depicts incidences of NBC's alleged commission of infractions by AIT/RP.

**Table 3: Incidences of Nigeria Broadcasting Commission's (NBC) alleged infractions by African Independent Television/Ray Power (AIT/RP)**

Date	Alleged Controversial Programmes of AIT/RP and responses of the Organization	NBC Reactive Measures against AIT/RP
6/6/2019	"Nigerian Judiciary on Trial: The Kenyan Example". AIT highlighted that the Supreme Court of Kenya cancelled the presidential elections and ordered a repeat of the exercise because server of Kenyan Electoral Management Body compromised. AIT argued that it aired the programme because the organisation found similarities in the situations of Nigeria and Kenya. Buttressing its submission over debates on INEC servers during 2019 General Elections and negative impact on Nigeria in comity of nations, AIT claimed that the petition was already before tribunal.	NBC, on 6 <sup>th</sup> June, suspended license of Daar Communications Plc for not abiding by its extant code.
19/8/2019	"Who is a Nigerian?" A programme of AIT on the territoriality of former Northern Cameroun provinces and Atiku's national identity case. Contributors to the programme highlighted, "Atiku is indeed a Nigerian". AIT queried the eligibility of non-Nigerians that participate in Nigerian elections.	The programme was misconstrued by NBC as referring to Niger nationals residing in Daura Emirate and for promoting the course of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) agitations for self determination. NBC alleged that the documentary was inciting and capable of erupting violence among the people. AIT was cautioned to eschew continuous breach of the extant broadcasting code.
20/8/2019	"Many Troubles of INEC: A programme of AIT on Mahmood Yakubu and Road to 2019". The documentary alleged infractions like partisanship of INEC, results manipulations, and intimidation of voters, which cast doubts on the credibility of the presidential election and necessitated the call for nullification of the election.	The three programmes were seen by NBC as contravening sections 1.3.4, 3.3.1a, 3.11.1, 3.11.2, 5.1.2 and section 5.1.2 of the Nigeria Broadcasting Code and section 1.16.1(f) relating to law of contempt. AIT was threatened with sanction for breaching extant broadcasting codes
24/8/2019	"INEC and Agony of a Nation". A programme of AIT on manipulations of 2019 presidential election results and the implications on vote-count and the neutrality of INEC in Nigeria elections.	



25/8/2019	“INEC and Qualification Requirements: Facts, and Issues”. A programme of AIT, urging Supreme Court to correct an alleged dereliction of duty on the part of INEC in allowing an individual who is not eligible to contest an election to do so in Nigeria.	
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Source: Nigerian Democratic Report (2019) AIT/Ray power gets reprieve from clampdown. <https://www.ndr.org.ng/ait-ray-power-gets-reprieve-from-clampdown>. Accessed 15 March 2020.

Observing the ethics of the media profession, the rules and guidelines as regulated by NBC code during electoral processes was not the issue. Rather, prevalence of petty politics, witch-hunting, and blackmailing were predominantly championed. Daar Communication Plc accused government of being highhanded in using every instrument of power to threaten, intimidate and harass Daar Media Organisation. It was alleged that any broadcast perceived to give a dissenting perspective to the position of government on any contending issue is misconstrued as a threat to national interest. The government appears to be haunted by its shadow because all discourse, reference and reports emanating from various quarters of Nigeria concerning injustice, inequality, iniquity, nepotism, despotism, impunity or highhandedness were perceived as threats to national security (Nigerian Democratic Report, 2019).

The abysmal rate of voters' turnout was an overwhelming manifestation of feelings of dissatisfaction amongst eligible voters in casting their votes. The extreme poor performance of the government in terms of militarisation of electoral processes, insecurity of lives and properties, an illusion of job creation, high rate of poverty, fuel price increases, infrastructural decay, ethnic politics, favoritism or prebendal politics, lopsided appointment of key public officers, and economic hardship seem to have divided the country along ethnic cum religious lines more than ever before (Oluwole, 2019). Table 4 and figure 1 illustrate integer of registered voters and percentage of voters' turnout from 1999 to 2019 presidential elections.

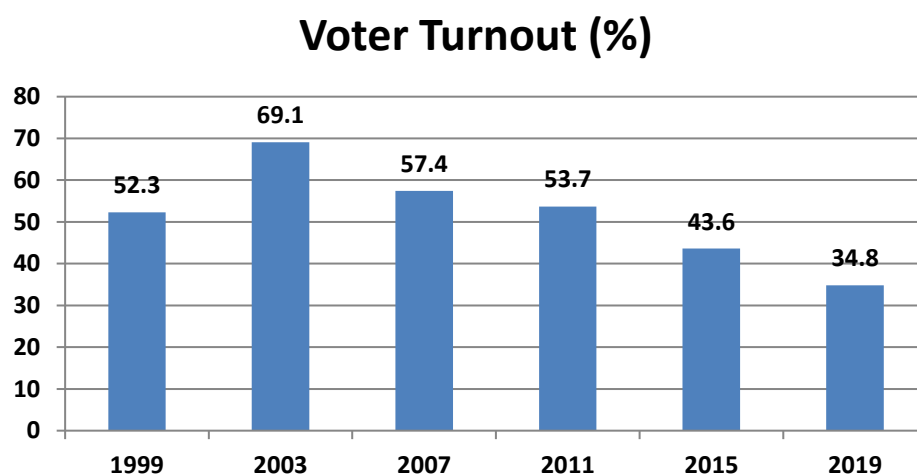
**Table 4: Registered Voters and Voter Turnout in the Presidential Elections, 1999-2019**

S/No	Year of Election	Registered Voters	Total Number of Voter Turnout	Valid Votes	Invalid Votes	Voter Turnout (%)	Voter Turnout Increase Rate (%)	Voter Turnout Decrease Rate (%)
1.	1999	57,938,94	30,280,05	29,848,44	431,611	52.3	-	-

		5	2	1				
2.	2003	60,823,022	42,018,735	39,480,489	2,538,246	69.1	16.8	-
3.	2007	61,566,648	35,419,262	35,397,517	-	57.4	-	11.04
4.	2011	73,528,040	39,469,484	38,209,978	1,259,506	53.7	-	4.36
5.	2015	67,422,005	29,432,083	28,587,564	844,519	43.6	-	10.1
6.	2019	84,004,084	28,614,190	27,324,683	1,289,607	34.8	-	8

Source: Abdallah, Nuruddeen . M. & Krishi, Musa A. (2019) How voter turnout shapes Nigeria's elections. <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/how-voter-turnout-shapes-nigerias-elections.html>. Accessed 26 March 2020.

**Figure 1: Summary of Voter Turnout (%) in Presidential Elections in Nigeria, 1999-2019**

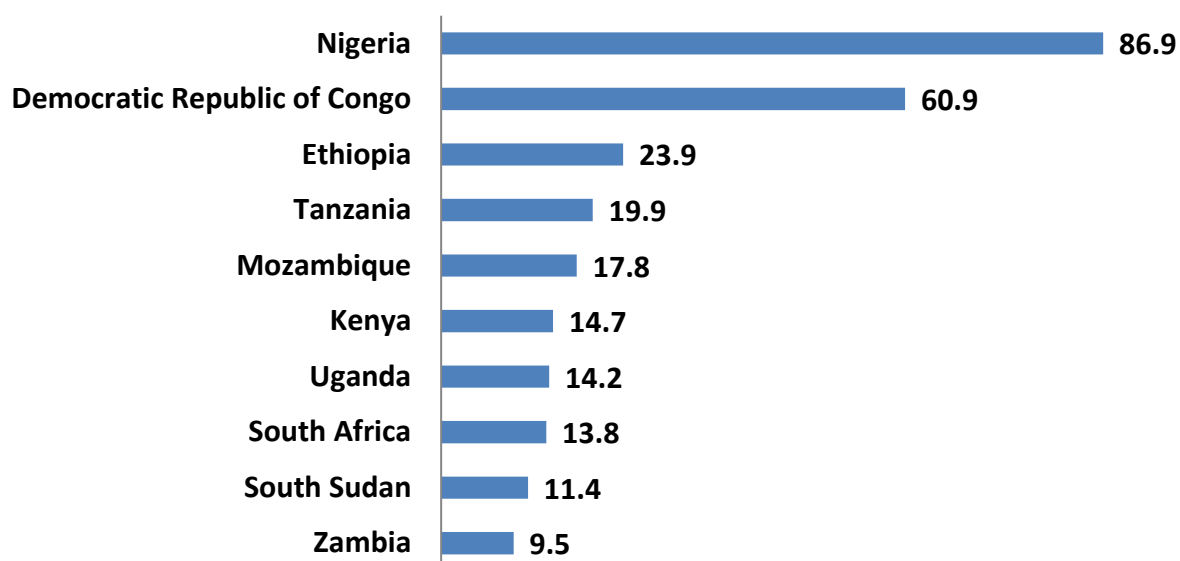


Source: Adapted from table 4 by the author

One of the motivating factors that persuade massive voters to participate in political activities is good governance, whereby the government is accountable to the electorates and the welfare of the people is paramount on a functional and realistic agenda. Poor performance of government embedded in incompetence, corruption, faulty and anti-people economic policies undermine the high aspirations of the governed to receive dividend of democracy. Poor governance is a facilitator of impoverishment in the sense that it reduces the value, dignity and integrity of mankind. The abysmal performance of government in power in security of lives and properties, socio-economic development, and ethnic incitement adversely influenced the voters' behavior in 2019 presidential election as illustrated above.

Out of the estimated 180 million people, 86.9 million Nigerians (representing 50% of the populace) live in excessive poverty. Kazeem (2018) observes that Nigeria's poverty level has exceeded that of India with larger proportion of the population living in extreme poverty. Although India's population is seven times bigger, the slothful efforts of Nigeria to move more people out of extreme poverty seem to be indictments on past governments that have ineptly and corruptly managed massive proportion of national wealth. A larger number of people living in extreme poverty are not peculiar to Nigeria; it is a universal phenomenon in developing countries. For instance, some African countries are located within the bracket of top ten with higher percentage of their population living in extreme poverty (*figure 2*), which depicts that they maintain the status of 'poverty rising' having been adjudged with the parameter of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) – Nigeria is located at 46.7%, Democratic Republic of Congo 77%, South Sudan 93%, Zambia 57.2%, and Mozambique 61.8% are in the bracket of poverty rising. Other countries with lower percent are Tanzania 35%, Kenya 30%, Uganda 34.2%, and South Africa 24.6% are considered to be off track to achieve the SDGs. Ethiopia, Ghana, and Mauritania are on pathway to achieve the UNs SDGs objectives in ending extreme poverty by 2030. In fact, Africa is presently housing 13 countries out of 15 in the world where extreme poverty is escalating (World Poverty Clock cited in Sahara Reporters, 2019). The World Poverty Clock record indicated that 91,885, 874 Nigerians are living in abject poverty (Adebayo, 2018; Kazeem, 2018; Sahara Reporters, 2019). The environment stimulates hostility in political and economic dimensions towards the electorates and the corresponding response in behavior is voters' apathy. Figure 2 depicts people living in extreme poverty in Nigeria and other selected African countries.

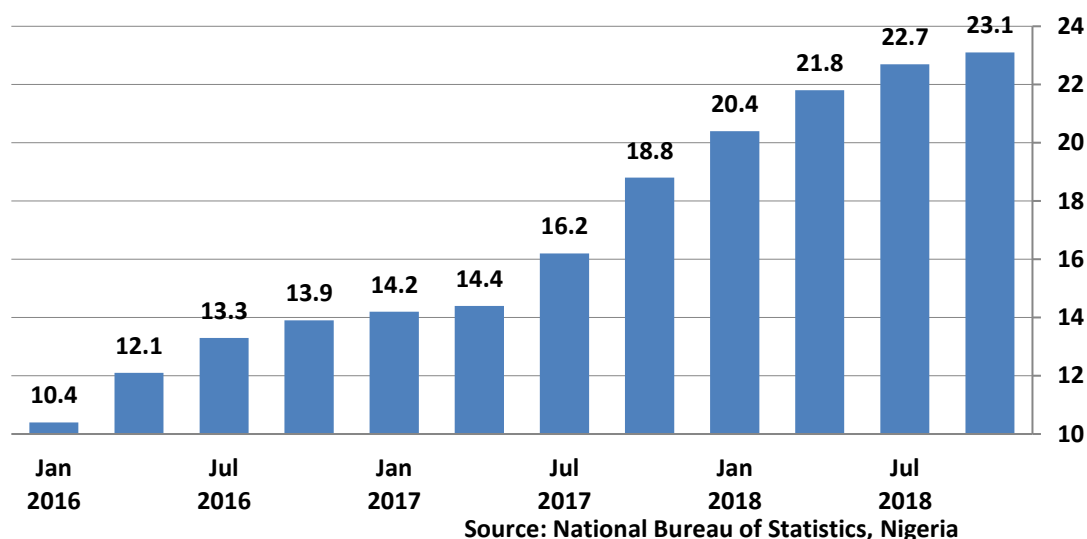
**Figure 2: People living in extreme poverty (million) in Nigeria and other African countries in 2018**



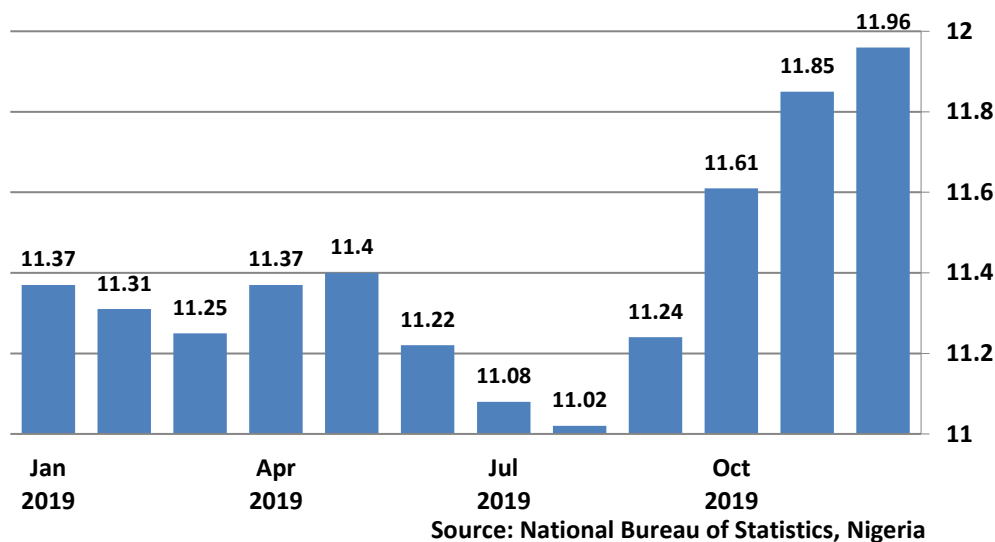
Source: Kazeem, Yomi. 2018. Nigeria has become the poverty capital of the world. <https://www.google.com/search?q=Nigeria+has+become+the+poverty+capital+of+the+world>. Accessed 30 January 2020

The government has been trailed with high rate of inflation worsened by the fuel price increase from ₦87 to ₦145 per liter on May 24, 2016; and unemployment rate since 2015. Nigerian citizens have been traumatised with unprecedented high rate of inflation due to unfriendly economic policies. Inflation rate in 2014 was 8.05%, and rose to 9.01% in 2015. The post-election inflation rate in 2016 was 15.7 percent; in January 2019, 11.37% was recorded, it rose to 11.85% in November and in December 2019 it rose to 11.98%. In 2015, US\$1 is equivalent to US\$1.06 in 2018, recording a difference of US\$0.06 over three consecutive years. The 2015 inflation rate was 0.12%. In 2018, the inflation rate rose to 2.44%. The 2018 inflation rate appears higher in comparison with average inflation rate of 2.17% per annum between 2018 and 2019. Altogether, the average family of five in Nigeria hardly sees food on the table each day. The potent protest of abstention from voting was an indictment on government in power due to deplorable conditions of living (Adebayo, 2018; Sahara Reporters, 2019).

Unemployment rate in Nigeria has astronomically risen. In 2017, it was 18.1%. In third quarter of 2018, it increased to 23.10% from 22.7% in second quarter; while underemployment rate was 20.1% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Figure 3 depicts unemployment rate in Nigeria from 2016 to 2018.

**Figure 3: Unemployment Rate in Nigeria, 2016-2018**

The economic situation in Nigeria was the main thrust of debate in the 2015 electioneering campaigns. President Buhari promised to fix the economy and reduce poverty and unemployment rates if the electorates voted him into power. The first term of his administration was marred by economic recession and its slothful recovery in 2017 exacerbated poverty and unemployment rates. Nigerians are overtly not happy with the situation of things in the country. Generally, there is grudge, apportionment of blames and counter blames amongst political leaders, party supporters, and electorates about poor and irritating performance of past and present administration on the erring economy, insecurity of lives and properties, biased war against corruption, and unlawful use of the military and other national security apparatuses against the masses. Figure 4 depicts inflation rate in Nigeria in 2019

**Figure 4: Inflation Rate in Nigeria, 2019**

### **Militarisation of 2019 Electoral Processes in Nigeria**

The first ugly feature in the Presidential Election Day was the embarrassing predominant presence of the military and other security agents in all strategic points, perceived flashpoints, INEC Offices and subsequent shocking problems encountered by the electorates that were occasioned by the sudden postponement of presidential and national assembly elections in early hours of election-day. Electorates who travelled to their respective native homes to vote where they registered were stranded. Those who travelled back to their stations disappointedly were allegedly unable to pay a return fare back to their villages a second time for the exercise. Also international observers on ground for election monitoring had to reschedule their engagement on extra costs. The spokesperson of the INEC, Fetus Okoye lamented that they were worried about voters' turnout. INEC appealed to Nigerians not to allow the disappointment occasioned by the postponement to defeat their desire to vote (Adebayo, 2019). The incident depleted the number of eligible voters who actually came back home to participate in voting; while most voters who stayed back were scared by the intimidating presence of soldiers on all roads and polling stations.

The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, Chapter II, Section 14(2) (b) stipulates that "the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government" (FRN, 1999, p.26). The constitutional obligations of the armed forces of Nigeria is to maintain peace and orderliness, protect lives and properties, protect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the

country, and to ward-off external aggression, and control internal insurgency and other rebellious activities. The armed forces failed to protect lives and properties as Boko Haram insurgency; armed bandits, Fulani herdsmen, cultists, and armed robbers besieged Nigeria, taking people hostage at will and slaughtering human beings under the watch of the military. The polity was heated throughout 2019 general election with high risks of insecurity. WANEP (2019, p.2) notes that:

Socio-political landscape in the existing level of insecurity caused by the activities of Boko Haram and other extremist groups, herder-farmer conflicts, armed banditry, kidnapping, separatists agitations, ethno-religious crisis, proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, youth bulge, economic downturns and wide spread corruption which constitute a high risk to election security across the country.

The repercussions of the obvious threat particularly on the issues of political and social structures' stability and feeble economy are capable of presenting enormous challenges for peaceful political transition and security of lives and properties in 2019 elections. It is extremely difficult to guarantee peaceful electoral processes in a very volatile environment characterized by uncertainties in the face of increasing wave of politically motivated violence and criminalities, exacerbated by the involvement of thugs in political conflicts; and the possibility of law enforcement agencies renegeing in their rules of engagement. Under these hopeless and helpless scenarios, involvement of the non-partisan military at the instance of the INEC to provide election security and maintenance of law and order was apt, only where the situation cannot be controlled by the police whose engagement is to maintain civil law and order. It is outside the terms of engagement for the military to be involved in electoral processes uninvitedly. Oluwole (2019) opines that the negative impact of the military on the collation process in many wards of the federation, where security personnel were seen intimidating INEC officials, disrupting collation activities, chasing parties' agents out of the collation centres at gun points, suspending collation and forcefully taking away all election materials including results being collated at various collation centres by INEC officials. The unwarranted activities of soldiers disenfranchised many eligible voters who were scared out of the election vicinities. International Observers were similarly denied access to collation centres in most parts of the country.

INEC condemned in strong terms the non-professional actions of the military personnel and hired armed gangs which disrupted collation process in various collation centres in the country. INEC confirmed that collation centres were fiercely invaded by military personnel and armed gangs with the trail of intimidation and unlawful arrest of INEC officials in effort

to subvert the will of the electorates. The European Union Election Observation Mission in Nigeria 2019, the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, Centre for Democracy and Development, and Integrity Friends for Truth and Peace Initiative jointly condemned the involvement of military personnel in 2019 general elections in Nigeria (WANEP, 2019; Oyeyipo and Orizu, 2019; Bassey, 2019).

Massive electoral irregularities, explicit disrespect for rule of law and injustices that pervaded all electoral processes from 2007 general elections gave rise to plethora of electoral petitions from aggrieved stakeholders. Pre-election disputes arise due to the high level of injustice and abuse of power in intra-party democracy. The electoral reforms that took place between 2007 and 2011 general elections evidently reduced the number of electoral petitions slightly in subsequent elections as illustrated in table five. The number of petitions in 2007 post-election period was quite unprecedented and the highest so far in our election history. The rise of election petitions in 2019 general elections showed that people were not satisfied with the outcomes as showed in table 5. The number gave credence to the monumental electoral flaws acknowledged by national and international election observers that discredited outcomes of entire exercise.



**Table 5: Analysis of Petitions of the Four General Elections Cycles in Nigeria, 2007 – 2019**

Year	Election	Number per Elective Position	Total Petitions
2007	Presidential	8	1,282
	Governorship	N/A	
	Senatorial Seats	N/A	
	House of Reps Seats	N/A	
	State Assembly	N/A	
2011	Presidential	1	727
	Governorship	53	
	Senatorial Seats	90	
	House of Reps Seats	206	
	State Assembly	377	
2015	Presidential	0	663
	Governorship	41	
	Senatorial Seats	81	
	House of Reps Seats	175	
	State Assembly	366	
2019	Presidential	4	801
	Governorship	66	
	Senatorial Seats	107	
	House of Reps Seats	207	
	House of Assembly	417	
	<b>Total</b>		

Source: Azu, J. (2020) 3,479 petitions filed in 4 election cycles ... Despite reforms. <https://Dailytrust.com.ng/3479-petitions-filed-in-4-election-cycles.html>. Accessed 24 February 2020.

The analysis of election petitions arising from the six geo-political zones of the federation indicates that South-East took the lead, followed by South-South. In South-East, Anambra topped in the zone with 286 petitions; while Delta and Rivers followed with 197 and 186 petitions respectively.

**Table 6: Election Petitions from each Geo-Political Zone in Nigeria, 2007 – 2019**

S/No.	Geographical Location	Total
1.	South-East	819
2.	South-South	772
3.	North-Central	542
4.	South-West	524
5.	North-West	460
6.	North-East	323
7.	Federal Capital Territory	26
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3,466</b>

Source: Azu, J. (2020) 3,479 petitions filed in 4 election cycles ... Despite reforms. <https://Dailytrust.com.ng/3479-petitions-filed-in-4-election-cycles.html>. Accessed 24 February 2020.

Election petitions depict unacceptability of electoral outcomes emanating from intraparty primary elections, general election results, and unruly conduct of electoral umpire officials, political parties and politicians, government agents' performance in the execution of statutory functions relating to the administration of elections. Electoral litigations are the appropriate course of actions to seek redress in legitimate and competent Court of Law than resorting to violence.

### **Conclusion**

The study highlighted perennial nature of political environment in Nigeria and argued that none of the elections in Nigeria has been devoid of electoral malfeasance which is the major determinant of voter apathy. In the last two decades, non-political participation of voters in Nigeria's electoral processes has become its major perennial challenge in election administration. As a vital ingredient of democracy, political participation is being utilised to authenticate and legitimise government for general acceptance. Voters apathy as potent protest against irregularities in electoral process and bad governance is demeaning in modern democracies. It is the character of a post-colonial country where elections have turned into warfare. The findings revealed weak institutional framework, bad-governance and corruption as voter apathy determinants. To rekindle confidence of electorates in the polity, the study recommends radical reforms of subsisting Electoral Act; entrenchment of strong institutional frameworks with absolute autonomy; and legal powers to bite when necessary, inclusive democracy and liberty of the people being guaranteed to foster sustainable democratic development.

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