
**POLITICAL MANIPULATION AS A DETERMINANT OF
VOTERS' APATHY AMONG THE ELECTORATES IN
ABEOKUTA METROPOLIS, OGUN STATE**

A. Oladimeji **SOTOYINBO**

School of General Education, Federal College of Education Abeokuta

Abstract

This study sets out to investigate political manipulation as a determinant of voters' apathy among the electorates in Abeokuta metropolis, Ogun State Nigeria. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The target population for this study comprised of all adults of voting age in the metropolis. The simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting a sample size of 150 respondents of both gender – 70 males and 80 females. Three research questions were raised and answered for the study while two research hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire tagged "Political Manipulation and Voters' Apathy Questionnaire (PMVAQ). The face and content validity of the instrument was carried out by experts in test and measurement from the school of General Education, Federal College of Education, Abeokuta. A pilot test on the study was carried out at Ijebu – Ode and its environs a different locate from the locality used for this study. The set of scores obtained were correlated using Cronbach Alpha and a reliability index of 0.81 was obtained. The data obtained were analyzed using mean rating and t-test. The research questions were answered using mean at an agreeable decision

level of 2.50. T- test was utilized to test the hypotheses formulated at 0.05 level of significance. Findings from the study show that grand mean is 3.16 while the bench mark is 2.5 so multiplicity of factors account for voters apathy among dwellers of Abeokuta metropolis. Also, the grand mean is 2.59 while the bench mark is 2.5 so, the culture of poor assessment of the significance of election and voting promotes apathy in prospective voters. Thus, it was recommended that people should seek knowledge about the political process so as to reduce voters and general political apathy.

Key words: *Voters, Apathy, Politics, Manipulation*

Introduction

The modern world functions within the purview of institutional framework. The political institution is one of these institutions and there are different types of political systems, notably among these political systems is democracy which has been assumed to be best globally. The assumption is leverage on the pedestal of execution of governance and the philosophy of political inclusiveness. Without delivering any form of verdict, democracy tend to give every individual citizen of voting age and who are interested in doing so the opportunity and right to participate actively in government.

The implication is that, democracy affords the citizens the opportunity to exercise their civic responsibilities in matters of political leadership recruitments leadership selection and leadership succession processes of the state through registered political association (Owode, Soberekon and Daniel, 2017). The underlying assumption of democracy is that, every representative in all political structures should be elected and must be accountable to the people (the electorates). Hence, any representative not elected by the majority of the electorates (the people) is actually an indirect means of orchestrating pseudo-democratic practice (Nnamdi, 2020). It's a known fact that the idea of direct democracy as practiced in ancient Greek states of

Athens and probably Sparta is impossible in the modern day world, hence the option of indirect democracy that is governance through the elected representative of the people. This position was aptly corroborated by Nuka, Kia and Nwibor (2015) who collectively expressed the notion that, the strength of democracy lies not in the numerical strength of officially registered political associations in the society but rather strictly and most importantly on the extent of popular participation in the entire democratic experiment. Genuine democracy ensures that sovereignty and supreme controlling power in the last resort is actually vested in the entire aggregate of the people. The thrusts of this argument is that, every citizen should not only have a voice in the exercise of the expected ultimate sovereignty and at the same time actively participate in actual governance (Nuka, Kia & Nwibor, 2015).

Lots of variables account for the success of democracy in every human societies notably among which is an independent judiciary, free press an independent electoral commission rule of law and many others. On the other hand, the essentials of democracy in the submission of Idike (2014) include the existence of rule of law, responsibility of government to the people, involvement of the people in socio-economic and political activities. Others include, enjoyment of fundamental human rights by all and sundry, periodic free and fair elections, freedom of expression, respect for political opposition, independent judiciary, press freedom, existence of viable and ideologically oriented political associations, regular consultation of the citizens by their elected representatives, existence of basic democratic equality among the citizens and many more.

However, in spite of all these laudable qualities of democracy, certain development in the society tends to truncate democratic experiment and practices in the society and promotes voters apathy. Voters apathy is an integral part of political apathy. Political apathy in the submission of Agaiibe (2018) deals with the lack of psychological involvement in public affairs, emotional detachment from civic obligations and outright detestation for political activities. In most cases this results into voters' apathy,

which is often exhibited through systemic voters' turnout during real elections.

Lots of factors tend to be responsible for voters apathy hence the contributions of such cannot be underestimated especially its capacity to undermine of the democratic process. However, the summary is that, voter apathy has to do with the electorates indifference and lackadaisical attitude towards the electoral process especially vote casting. It simply implies total absence of interest in or concern about voting and the entire electoral process. Voters' apathy generally occurs when eligible voters choose not to vote in general elections. However voters' apathy is an indirect political manipulation and remains an innocuous issue in the democratic process in Nigeria (Idike, 2014). Voters' apathy had led to series of consequences as those in position of authority face little accountability for their actions or have a low risk of getting voted out of power, hence they have the tendency to cling to political power, while the general populace they preside over hardly see any improvement in their living conditions. Lot of studies have been executed on voters' apathy in Nigeria and its gross implications. As an illustration, Idike (2014) examined political parties, political apathy and democracy in Nigeria; contending issues and the way forward, Agaiibe (2018) investigated voter apathy and voter turnout in the 2015 general elections: the Benue state experience, Fagunwa (2015) examined voters' apathy and Nigeria's electioneering process: a synopsis on the 2015 general elections. However to the best of the knowledge of this researcher, none of the previous studies have delved into the roles deliberate political manipulation plays in voters' apathy. Hence this is the gap this study has bridged.

Multi-party political system and the number of registered political associations is not what strengthened democracy and make it a beauty to behold, rather it is the quality and quantity of participation of the electorates in the entire democratic process. This has been the practice in most societies and most importantly in large democracies outside the shores of Africa. However, the situation in Nigeria is rather more critical given the negative development in democratic practice in the country exemplified in

voter's apathy. This probably was borne out of many factors, but the bottom line is that, eligible voters tend to have a lethargic approach towards the entire electioneering process most importantly vote casting and all development during and after election. This ugly development tend to foster bad leadership on the society with its attendant consequences.

Objectives of the Study

This study examined political manipulation and its roles in voters' apathy. The specific objectives are to:

- i. examine the processes of democratic practice exhibited by the people in Abeokuta;
- ii. examine those variable that strengthen the political culture process among the electorates; and
- iii. determine the process of political manipulation and the resultant voters' apathy

Research Questions

The following questions were answered in this study:

- i. What are democratic processes exhibited by the people in Abeokuta?
- ii. What are the factors that can influence the political culture of a community?
- iii. How does political manipulation promotes voters' apathy?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study:

H₀1: There is no significant relationship between political culture and voters' apathy.

H₀2: There is no significant relationship between political manipulation and voters' apathy.

Methods

The descriptive survey research was adopted in collecting data for this study; the population for this study are all residing in Abeokuta and its environs. The simple random sampling

technique was adopted to select a sample size of 70 males and 80 females adults of voting age who are inhabitants of Abeokuta and its environs. Three research questions were raised and answered for the study. In the same manner, two research hypothesis were also formulated and tested in the study. A 15 item self-structured questionnaire designed by the researcher was used for the study. The research instrument was tagged Political Manipulation and Voters Apathy Questionnaire (PMVAQ). The instrument was compartmentalized into two sections. Section A comprises of the bio-data of the respondents while section B comprises of the variable measured in the study. The instrument was patterned alongside the 4 – point likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The face and content validity of the instrument was carried out by experts in test and measurement from the School of General Education, Federal College of Education, Abeokuta. A pilot test on the study was carried out and the split-half method was used to ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument. The scores obtained were correlated using Cronbach Alpha and a reliability index of 0.81 was obtained. For analysis of the data collected, the research questions raised for the study was answered using mean at an agreeable decision level, while t-test was utilized to test the hypotheses formulated all at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One: What are democratic processes exhibited by people in Abeokuta?

Table 1: Democratic Processes exhibited by the people in Abeokuta

| S/N | Statement | Agreed (%) | Disagreed (%) | Mean |
|-------------------|---|------------|---------------|-------------|
| 1 | Democracy is a form of political life | 70(70%) | 30(30%) | 3.15 |
| 2. | In democracy power of state is not constitutionally reserved for any particular class of people | 60(60%) | 40 (40%) | 3.22 |
| 3. | In democracy the people exercise their power through their elected representatives. | 40 (40%) | 60 (60%) | 2.94 |
| 4 | Periodic free and fair election is the hallmark of democracy | 53 (53%) | 47 (47%) | 3.27 |
| 5. | Existence of basic democratic equality among citizens is one of the major tenets of democracy | 63 (63%) | 37 (37%) | 3.23 |
| Grand mean | | | | 3.16 |

Table 1 indicates that the mean of 3.15 shows that democracy is a form of political life. The table also shows that, mean of 3.22 reveals that, in democracy power of state is not constitutionally reserved for any particular class of people. The table above also reveals that, the mean of 2.94 shows that, in democracy the people exercise their power through their elected representatives. From the analyzed data above the mean of 3.27 indicate periodic free and fair election is the hallmark of democracy. The table shows the mean of 3.23 indicate that the existence of basic democratic equality among citizens is one of the major tenets of democracy. This shows from the analysis above that, the grand mean is 3.16 while the bench mark is 2.5 so, it can be concluded that democratic processes is functional in the land.

Research Question two: What are the factors that can influence the political culture of a community?

Table 2: Factors that can influence the political culture in the community

| S/N | Statement | Agreed (%) | Disagreed (%) | Mean |
|-----|--|------------|---------------|-------------|
| 1 | Poverty can affect the political culture of a community | 52 (52%) | 48(48%) | 2.13 |
| 2. | Intimidation and harassment of the electorate can affect people's belief about their political system | 47 (47%) | 53(53%) | 2.10 |
| 3. | General violence can affect people's perception of the electoral system | 62 (62%) | 38 (38%) | 2.46 |
| 4 | Tension between various interest groups can influence people's views about the political processes. | 72 (72%) | 28(28%) | 3.02 |
| 5. | Poor knowledge of the political processes can affect the political culture of a community. | 63 (63%) | 37(37%) | 2.94 |
| 6. | Reckless adoption of propaganda as an instrument of political manipulation kills the morale of prospective voters. | 67 (67%) | 33(33%) | 2.89 |
| | Grand mean | | 2.59 | 2.59 |

Table 2 reveals that the mean of 2.13 shows that poverty can affect the political culture of a community. The table also shows that mean of 2.10 reveals that intimidation and harassment of the electorate can affect people's belief about their political system. The table above also reveals that, the mean of 2.46 shows that general violence can affect people's perception of the electoral system. From the analyzed data above the mean of 3.02 indicates that tension between various interest groups can influence people's views about the political processes. The table above shows the mean of 2.94 indicate that poor knowledge of the political processes can affect the political culture of a community. The table also shows that mean of 2.89 reveal that, reckless adoption of propaganda as an instrument of political manipulation kills the morale of prospective voters. This revealed from the analysis that the grand mean is 2.59 while the bench

mark is 2.5 so, it can be concluded that, there are factors that can influence the political culture of a community

Research Question three: How does political manipulation promotes voters' apathy?

Table 3: How political manipulation promotes voters' apathy

| S/N | Statement | Agreed (%) | Disagreed (%) | Mean |
|-----|---|------------|---------------|-------------|
| 1. | Several unfulfil electoral promises tend to strengthen voters indifference to voting exercises | 90 (90%) | 10(10%) | 3.35 |
| 2. | The notion that the votes cast do not always count can promote voters apathy | 51 (51%) | 49 (49%) | 2.95 |
| 3. | Assumed generic personal irresponsibility status ascribed to an average politician by the electorate is a major factor for political apathy | 89 (89%) | 11 (11%) | 2.96 |
| 4. | Poor significance attached to the power of a typical vote by the voters is a major factor promoting voters' apathy | 71(71%) | 29 (29%) | 2.97 |
| | Grand mean | | | 3.06 |

Table 3 indicates that the mean of 3.35 shows that, several unfulfilled electoral promises tend to strengthen voters indifference to voting exercises. The table also shows that mean of 2.95 reveals that, the notion that, the votes cast do not always count can promote voters apathy. The table above also reveals that, the mean of 2.96 shows that assumed generic personal irresponsibility status ascribed to an average politician by the electorate is a major factor for voters' apathy. From the analyzed data the mean of 2.97 indicates that Poor significance attached to the power of a typical vote by the voters is a major factor promoting voters' apathy. This reveals from the analysis that the

grand mean is 3.06 while the bench mark is 2.5 so, it can be concluded that political manipulation affect promotes voters' apathy.

H₀1: There is no significant relationship between political culture and voters' apathy.

Table 4: Relationship between political culture and voters' apathy

| Variable | Mean | SD | r _{cal} | r _{crit} | df | P |
|-------------------|-------|-------|------------------|-------------------|-----|------|
| Political culture | 28.79 | 3.696 | 85.329 | 1.98 | 148 | 0.05 |
| Voters' apathy | 25.78 | 2.687 | | | | |

Table 4 shows that at $\alpha = 0.05$ (5%) with the degree of freedom of 148, the critical value is 1.98, while the calculated value of t-test is 85.329. Since the calculated value (85.329) is greater than the critical value (1.98), we reject the null hypothesis (H₀₁) and conclude there is significant relationship between political culture and voters' apathy.

H₀2: There is no significant relationship between political manipulation and voters' apathy.

Table 5: Relationship between political manipulation and voters' apathy

| Variable | Mean | S.D | r _{cal} | r _{crit} | df | P |
|------------------------|-------|------|------------------|-------------------|-----|------|
| Political manipulation | 24.87 | 3.78 | 80.059 | 1.98 | 148 | 0.05 |
| Voters' apathy | 20.80 | 2.06 | | | | |

Table 5 shows that at $\alpha = 0.05$ (5%) with the degree of freedom of 199, the critical value is 1.98, while the calculated value of t-test is 80.059. Since the calculated value of (80.059) is great than the critical value (1.98), we reject the null hypothesis (H₀₂) and

conclude that there is significant relationship between political manipulation and voters' apathy.

Discussions

Results showed that there is no significant relationship between political culture and voters' apathy was rejected. The finding go in line with Idike (2014) who examined political parties, political apathy and democracy in Nigeria; contending issues, the way forward and Fagunwa (2015) who examined voters' apathy and Nigeria's electioneering process: a synopsis on the 2015 general elections.

Findings revealed that there is no significant relationship between political manipulation and voters' apathy was rejected. The finding agrees with Idike, (2014) who views voter's apathy is an indirect political manipulation and remains an innocuous issue in the democratic process in Nigeria. Similarly, it is in tandem with the submission of Agaibe (2018), Voters apathy had led to series of consequences as those in position of authority face little accountability for their actions or have a low risk of getting voted out of power, hence they have the tendency to cling to political power, while the general populace they preside over hardly see any improvement in their living conditions.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that among other things, a significant portion of the current high level of political sentiment among the residents of Abeokuta Metropolis is due to politically-induced violence before, during, and after elections, insecurity, and the belief that votes don't matter. Therefore, there is proof that voter indifference exists in Nigeria, which is why election turnout has been steadily declining. This study shows that voters' lack of interest in and dedication to electoral procedures is a result of their lack of faith in both the electoral system and Nigeria's political culture. The electorates' refusal to cast their votes is a reflection of a political culture that is characterized by violence, intimidation, manipulation, and dishonesty. It is also made clear that Nigerians

lack faith in their political leaders as a result of their failure to keep campaign promises and disregard for the interests of the people.

Recommendations

There is an urgent need to vigorously undertake a broad informal political education program for both educated and unskilled people. Together with civil society organizations and election management organizations, this can be accomplished. Concerned organizations should make an effort to organize “town hall” gatherings in both urban and rural areas, where individuals would be made aware of the value of actively participating in politics. This can work if the chapters of the various States and institutions regard it as a mission that should be completed through what could be called community service or member social responsibility. Political stakeholders should view politics as a means of service, and as such, there should be healthy competition among them to prevent unscrupulous political gangsters from exploiting an unhealthy rivalry to incite violence prior to, during, and following elections.

References

- Agaiibe, F. M. (2018). *Voter apathy and voter turnout in the 2015 general elections: The Benue state experience*. A draft paper sent to the Electoral Institute, NCE in Abuja. Pp 3 – 6.
- Fagunwa, T. C. (2015). *Voter Apathy and Nigeria’s Electioneering Process: A Synopsis on the 2015 General elections*. Retrieved from <https://www.inecmigeria.org/wp>. pp. 5 - 8
- Idike, A. N. (2014). Political parties, political apathy and democracy in Nigeria: Contending issues and the way forward in Kuwait chapter of Arabia. *Journal of Business and Management Review* 4 (3), 2 – 7.
- Nnamdi, N. (2020). Understanding political apathy in Nigeria’s 20th century elections. Retrieved from <https://www.researchdate.net/publicatio/348001988>. Pp. 3 - 5

- Nuka, S. A Kia, B. & Nwibor, B. L (2015). Electoral violence and political apathy in Nigeria: Issues and challenges. *British Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 13(1), 155 – 173
- Okoye, G. O. (2017). Challenges of electoral insecurity in Nigeria: The Rivers state experience in science. *Journal of Politics and Law* 2(2), 68 – 71
- Owede, V. C Soberekon, S. W & Daniel, A. C (2017). Perceived causes of Political Apathy among Yenagoa Residents in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. *Nigeria Journal of Social Studies* XX (I), 135 – 139