

Electoral Violence and Voter Apathy in North-East Nigeria

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Abstract

North-East Nigeria is one of the regions of the country that has witnessed electoral violence in the form of killing, kidnapping, rigging, manipulation, and ballot snatching and has equally experienced voter apathy, resulting into low voter turnout during General Elections. In the light of this, this paper examines the causes and nature of electoral violence and voter apathy in the region from 1999 to 2019. Using survey design through the instrumentality of questionnaire with a sample size of 400 respondents including the rational choice theory propounded by Downs (1957) that justifies electoral actions on the premise that all decisions taken by voters are moral, self-interest-driven and applied in compliance with the concept of maximizing the utility of action. The paper discovered that, the causes of electoral violence in the region among others are; provocative utterances by politicians, poverty and illiteracy among the populace, ethnic and religious politics. Also, the causes of voter apathy in the region, among others, are the fear of violence, the feeling that votes do not count, and unfulfilled political promises. Therefore, the work recommends that, inflammatory rhetoric, harassment, and intimidation of opponents by politicians during elections should be criminalized. Politicians as key actors in the political space should fulfil their obligations in a manner that will promote voter participation. Political campaigns should be based on the policies and issues that a party or candidate represents rather than biased identity politics or the attacking of individuals.

Keywords: Electoral Violence, Voter Apathy, North-East Nigeria, Rational Choice Theory, General Elections

Introduction

Democracy is underpinned by three essential components; healthy competition among political parties, political participation by the populace in electing their leaders, and a credible electoral process. In civilized societies, the electoral process allows different sections; tribes, nations, and various political ideologies and religious beliefs to coexist in peace and harmony by affirming their rights to the people they have elected to govern and manage their resources for a given period of time. Thus, election is an irreducible feature of democratic governance; however, democracy in Nigeria has faced numerous challenges since the First Republic. For instance, electoral violence such as thuggery, bombings, kidnapping, massive fraud, intimidation and harassment and lack of citizenry zeal to participate in election; making it difficult for the entrenchment of the true principles of democracy.

North-East Nigeria has witnessed electoral

violence and state interference and has equally experienced voter apathy, especially low turnout during general elections. For example, between 1999 and 2015, there were over 319 political and electoral fatalities in the North East as a result of violence (Yahaya and Bello, 2019). Equally, there was a decline in the level of participation in the region from 56% of turnout in the 2011 General Elections to 45.22% of voters turning out in 2015 (INEC, 2019); hence, this situation of violence and apathy motivate scientific investigation. The central problem investigated in this paper therefore is the causes, nature, and relationship between electoral violence and voter apathy in the North-East region from 1999 to 2019.

Conceptual Clarifications

The key terms or concepts to clarify in this work among others are election, electoral violence and voter apathy.

Election

Ujo (2004) defines election as one procedure of aggregating preferences of a particular kind that has two features which are procedure and preferences. While procedure describes a way of doing something, preferences on the other hand connote choice among alternatives. Election according to Tunde (2010, p.59), is “the process of choosing or selecting people for an office. It is a mechanism by which public questions are resolved and public contests determined”. According to the African Union (2010), elections are the hallmark of representative democracy, allowing the peoples input in choices about leaders and policy. It is an act of choosing, selecting or electing political office holders to represent people of a country in the executive and legislative arms of government.

Electoral Violence

Electoral violence is any harm or threat of harm to any person or property involved in the electoral process or to the electoral process itself. Nwolise (2007), defines electoral violence as all forms of organized acts of threats – physical, psychological and structural aimed at intimidating, harming and blackmailing a political stakeholder before, during and after an election with a view to determining, delaying or otherwise influencing an electoral process. Any action that hinders the electoral process from producing a free, fair and credible election constitutes electoral violence. According to Kurfi (2005), rigging and the manipulation of the electoral process to the advantage of a particular candidate or political party, perpetrated at any level of the electoral process from the delimitation of the constituencies to the adjudication of election disputes constitute electoral violence.

Voter Apathy

Faguwa (2016) have espoused that voter apathy in actuality is a subset of political apathy. Hence, political apathy conceptually they maintained, is the decline in political participation of the citizens of a given country. In other words, it is the decline in the involvement of the citizens of a given country in the political system. Scholars have acknowledged the existence of political apathy,

religious apathy and cultural apathy. Nevertheless, the focus here is on voter apathy for it overtly has a direct link with the electioneering process. Thus, voter apathy ensues when eligible electorates failed to vote in public elections basically on purpose. On a more general note, it has been ruminated over by several electoral institutions that voter apathy more than often stems from voters' total disappointment with either the political process, which encompass the electioneering process or with the politicians.

Research Methodology

This paper utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods and the use of survey research design. The population of the study is the total number of registered voters during the 2019 election in the various states that make up the North-East geo-political zone in Nigeria, which are Adamawa 1,973,083, Bauchi 2,462,843, Borno 2,315,956, Gombe 1,394,393, Taraba 1,777,105, and Yobe 1,365,913. Totalling 11,289,293 (INEC, 2019). Taro Yamane (1973) formula for determining sample size was adopted and produced a sample of 400 respondents. Bourley's proportional allocation formula was used to distribute the sample of 400 respondents across the six states in the region as indicated below;

$$Nb = \frac{n(n)}{N}$$

N

Where:

nb = Bourley's formula

n = Element within the sample frame i.e number allocated to respondent groups

(n) = Sample or proportion of the universe used in the study (total sample size)

N = Population of the study.

Therefore, the determination of each of the sample state is shown below:

Adamawa State

$$1,973,083 = \frac{1,973,083 \times 400}{11,289,293} = 70$$

Bauchi State

$$2,462,843 = \frac{2,462,843 \times 400}{11,289,293} = 87$$

Borno State

$$2,315,956 = \frac{2,315,956 \times 400}{11,289,293} = 82$$

Gombe State		
1,394,393	$= \frac{1,394,393 \times 400}{11,289,293}$	= 50
Taraba State		
1,777,105	$= \frac{1,777,105 \times 400}{11,289,293}$	= 63
Yobe State		
1,365,913	$= \frac{1,365,913 \times 400}{11,289,293}$	= 48
Total	11,289,293	400

Theoretical Framework

Rational choice theory, also known as choice theory or rational action theory, is this paper's theoretical framework. It is a theory for understanding and modelling social and economic as well as individual behaviour. For rational choice theorists, history and culture are irrelevant to understanding political behaviour; instead, it is sufficient to know the actors' interests and to assume that they pursue them rationally.

Rational choice theory emerged in America in the 1950s and 1960s as part of the behavioural movement that aimed to analyse how individuals acted using analytical methods. Downs (1957) was the first to apply rational choice theory to electoral behaviour and party competition. His work, reviewed in Hinich and Munger (1997), went further to revolutionise the study of elections. In his dissertation on "An Economic Theory of Democracy," Downs (1957) propounded an economic interpretation of voting behaviour, usually referred to as the theory of rational choice. This reflects an attempt to justify electoral actions on the premise that all decisions taken by voters are moral, self-interest-driven, and applied in compliance with the concept of maximising the utility of action. Rational choice is defined by Levin and Milgrom (2004, p. 1) as "the process of determining what options are available and then choosing the most preferred one according to some consistent criterion".

Deducing from the postulates of this theory, one can say that what matters to voters in an election are the concrete actions that governments take and not the ideology of political parties. As explained by the theory, the likelihood of citizens voting is higher if their expectations regarding the critical importance

of their vote and the expected benefits from voting are greater than the costs. That is, voters are more likely to vote if they believe their vote will make a difference and they will be safe exercising their franchise. In other words, voters vote because they believe their vote will be decisive and their lives will be safe. Doubts over their safety and the decisive potential of their votes result in apathy. Hence, the theory is relevant to achieving the aim and objectives of this work.

In Nigeria, the cost of voting in an election may include the risk of being killed or hurt before, during, or after the election through sporadic shooting by military personnel, political thugs, militants, or bomb targets, as well as general insecurity during the electioneering process. As a result, electorates must determine the profitability or otherwise of participating in the political electoral process, which may result in either political participation or voter apathy. Also, even in the situation of mobilizing thugs to disrupt the political process either before, during or after elections (electoral violence), the thugs which are mostly youth, have to weigh the profitability or otherwise of their actions before they comply with the mobilizer. If they are in terms with the reality that they have nothing to gain in the process, they may not be involved.

The North-East in Nigerian politics

The North-East geo-political zone consists of six states, including Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe State. However, it was established as a region in 1967, and by 1976, Bauchi, Borno, and the Gongola States were created. In 1991, Yobe State was separated from Borno State, and Adamawa and Taraba States were created from the defunct Gongola State, bringing the total number of states in the North East to five. ~~But~~In 1996, Gombe State was created from Bauchi State, bringing the total number of states to six. The 2006 population census figure estimated the region's population at 18,984,299 (13.52%) of Nigeria's total population of 140,431,790 and a population of about 26 million people, or around 12% of the total population of the country in 2020 (Mayomi & Manu, 2014).

The region occupies an estimated landmass of about 272,395 km², or 29.45 percent of

Nigeria's total landmass, with a distinct socio-cultural and historical background. The region shares an international boundary with Niger, Chad, and Cameroon along the states of Borno, Adamawa, Taraba, and Yobe. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics (2020) show that about 87.72% of the population of Taraba State lives in poverty, compared to 75.41% in Adamawa, 72.34% in Yobe, 62.31% in Gombe, and 61.53% in Bauchi, these statistics show the existence of wide inequalities in the region. In spite of these, the zone is faced with other challenges, among which is conflict, occasioned by the activities of the dreaded Boko Haram sect and, more recently, its splinter group known as the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP). The activities of these groups have exacerbated the insecurity situation and jeopardised the zone's development, and there appears to be no end in sight (Dauda, 2021).

The North-East region is also going through a complex mix of security challenges, including armed banditry, kidnapping, different shades of communal violence (ethnic and religious in Bauchi, Taraba, Gombe, and Adamawa states), and a ferocious Boko Haram insurgency, especially in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states, which has in many other ways affected each of the states in the region. The zone has produced militant youth groups in the fourth republic, with Boko Haram being the

most extreme one; others are ECOMOG in Borno State, Yan'Kalare, and Sara-Suka in Gombe and Bauchi states, respectively.

Some incidences of Electoral Violence in the North-East in the Fourth Republic

Since the rebirth of Nigeria's democracy in 1999, violence of varying levels has been an unfortunate staple of Nigerian elections not least the North-East geo-political zone. Whether sponsored or spontaneous, election-related conflicts are distinctive, signifying discontent around tightly interwoven social and economic concerns. In Nigeria, these concerns include dissatisfaction with government performance, competition for resources, inter- and intragroup distrust, joblessness, and anger at an abundance of unscrupulous politicians with little respect for due process or rule of law. During election periods, underlying social and economic concerns collide with hopes and fears of change, raising tensions and the likelihood of violent competition. This is particularly true in the North-East where chronic poverty, communal disputes, gang-related fighting, and violence sponsored by power brokers fosters long-standing grievances. The table below shows some selected cases of electoral violence in the North-East geopolitical zone in the fourth republic.

Table 1: Some Selected Cases of Electoral Fatalities in the North-East from 1999 to 2019

Names of Victim (s)	Date of Incidence	State	Remarks
Adamu Waziri	18/1/2003	Yobe	He was killed during inter-party conflict between ANPP and PDP militant groups in Damaturu
Mallam Inuwa Kabo	23/2/2003	Borno	Assassination attempt on the life of the speaker, Borno State of Assembly
Modu Fannami Gubio	28/1/2011	Borno	He was assassinated by some thugs alone side six other political associates immediate after jummat prayer. He was a governorship aspirant of ANPP in Borno state
Joshua Kalla	11/7/2002	Jalingo	He was assassinated by political thugs in Jalingo metropolis after he was kidnapped for number of days
No names	16/4/2011 to 17/4/2011	Bauchi state	At least 32 Christians were killed by Hausa thugs, including 11 corps members. A total of 72 churches were burnt in the state over presidential elections results
Aliyu S. Bello	25/1/2007	Bauchi	Thugs killed a schoolteacher during rivalries between PDP Governorship candidate Alhaji Nadada Umar and his ANPP counterpart Malam Isa Yuguda

No names	17/1/2019	Wukari	Assassination attempt at APC Gubernatorial candidate resulting in five (5) deaths.
Mohammed Isa Kambari	24/2/2019	Karim/Lamido	He was assassinated on his way to Jalingo from Karim/lamido
Jack Gynako Gumpy	17/4/2011	Gombe	He and his family members were killed by youth militias who invaded their residence at Checheniya quarters, behind police barrack Gombe
Khamis Muhammed	17/4/2011	Gombe	He was assassinated by youth militias at his residence in Gombe
Moses Audu Balanga	18/4/2011	Jemita	He was killed and burnt by some hoodlums alone bank road in Jemita, Yola

Sources: Compiled by the authors (2023).

The Table 1 depict the fact that all states of the North-East geopolitical zone, has experienced one form of electoral violence or the other right from the rebirth of democracy in 1999 to 2019. Yahaya and Bello (2019) posits that, between 1999 and 2015 general elections, there were a total of 319 political/electoral fatalities in the North-east with Borno State having 84, Bauchi State 63, Taraba State 61, Adamawa State 49, Gombe State with 33 and Yobe State 29.

Political Participation in the North-East from 1999 to 2019

It is a generally accepted notion that democracy is a legitimate form of government because it is a game of numbers and derives power from the populace. Thus, from this notion, it can be deduced that it is only right when a government

records majority backing through elections. This majority backing must, as a matter of fact, be commensurate with the increasing total population of the electorate in the country because this is a sine qua non for the growth of democracy. In Nigeria over the years, the electioneering process has been characterized by several untoward tendencies ranging from massive frauds, rigging, intimidation of both opponents and potential voters, state interference, lack of ideological conviction of the ruling class, lack of continuity, violence, to mention a few, hence apathy naturally sets in as earlier discussed.

The following section is a tabular compilation of the level of participation (voter turnout) in the North-East, particularly during the presidential elections from 1999 to 2019.

Table 2: Participation Per State in the North-East during the 1999 Presidential Election

State	Registered voters	Turn out	Total vote in Nig	
Adamawa	1,260,956	848,979	30,280,052	
Bauchi	1,941,913	1,209,443		
Borno	1,822,987	946,832	“	
Gombe	1,106,171	855,636	“	
Taraba	983,227	876,908	“	
Yobe	874,957	321,737	“	
Total	7,990,211	5,059,535	30,280,052	16.7%

Source: INEC/compiled by the authors (2023).

The Table 2 depicts the fact that, at the rebirth of democracy in 1999, the North-East geopolitical zone had a total of 7,990,211 registered voters which represent 13.7% of the 57,938,945 total registered voters in Nigeria. From the total registered voters of 7,990,211 in the North-east, only 5,059,535 votes were cast. It therefore

shows that, having registered to vote, a total of 2,930,676 voters did not participate in the presidential election of 1999. However, the 5,059,535 total votes of the North-East represent 16.7% of the 30,280,052 total votes cast during the 1999 presidential election.

Table 3 Participation Per State in the North-East during the 2003 Presidential Election

State	Registered voters	Turn out	Total vote in Nig	
Adamawa	1,280,204	994,033	42,018,735	
Bauchi	2,130,557	1,739,506	42,018,735	
Borno	2,156,019	1,336,480	“	
Gombe	1,263,287	1,010,175	“	
Taraba	1,026,950	923,603	“	
Yobe	966,749	643,388	“	
Total	8,823,766	6,647,185	42,018,735	15.8%

Source: INEC/compiled by the authors (2023).

As shown in Table 3, out of the 8,823,766 registered voters in the North-East that indicated interest before the election to participate, only 6,647,185 voters were accredited to vote in the 2003 presidential election. The vote cast (6,647,185) represent 15.8% of the total vote cast during the presidential election which was 42,018,735. The table also shows that; the 8,823,766 registered voters represent 14.5% of the total 60,823,022 registered voters in Nigeria. This implies that, even after they had registered to vote, about 2,176,581 voters refused to turn out for the election.

Worthy of note in this table is the fact that, even though there was a marginal increase in the level of registered voters from 13.7% in the 1999 presidential election to 14.5% in 2003, the turn out on the other hand witnessed a marginal decline from 16.7% to 15.8%. With the decline in voter turnout in the 2003 Presidential election, it was therefore evident that, a large section of Nigerians from the North-East were already exhibiting electoral apathy.

The next election was conducted in 2007, this election as noted earlier, was in the words of the then President Olusegun Obasanjo 'a do or

die affair'. Hence, in Adamawa State, a total of 1,315,950 voters were registered to participate in the 2007 elections, in Bauchi State a total of 2,211,463 voters were registered while Borno State registered a total of 2,159,515 voters. In Gombe State, a total of 1,410,234 voters were registered and in Taraba state, a total of 1,173,514 while Yobe registered 994,380 voters. From the number of the registered voters in each of the states of the North-East, it therefore shows that a total of 9,265,056 voters were registered in the North-East which represent 12.9% of the total 61, 567,036 total registered voters in Nigeria. Even though, INEC recorded a total of 35,397,517 as the turnout of voters during the presidential election of 2007, the breakdown per state was not provided. Meanwhile, from the explanation above, it shows that there was a decline in the level of zeal to register for the 2007 elections in the North-East when compare to the preceding election of 2003.

Another set of elections was conducted in 2011 marking the fourth consecutive election in the fourth republic. Below is the level of participation of the North-East geopolitical zone during the presidential election.

Table 4: Participation Per State in the North-East during the 2011 Presidential Election

State	Registered Voters	Turn out	Total vote in Nig	
Adamawa	1,816,094	950,936	39,469,484	
Bauchi	2,523,614	1,650,495	39,469,484	
Borno	2,380,957	1,222,890	“	
Gombe	1,318,377	798,683	“	
Taraba	1,336,221	770,690	“	
Yobe	1,373,796	662,913	“	
Total	10,749,059	6,056,607	39,469,484	15%

Source: INEC/compiled by the authors (2023).

The presidential election of 2011 as shown in Table 4 indicates that, a total of 10,749,059 people actually registered to participate which represent 14.6% of 73,528,040 total registered voters in Nigeria. In respect to the number of registered voters, we have a total of 6,056,607 who turnout for the presidential election in 2011 representing 15% of 39,469,484 overall turnout in Nigeria. However, worthy of note from the table above is the fact that, though there were more people that registered to vote in the election, but ironically, many people did not turn out to vote during the election as a total of 4,692,452 registered voters representing 43% of the total registered voters in the North-East actually did not turn out to vote.

Again in 2015 there was another presidential election in Nigeria. This election

witnessed the use of two new technologies; a new Permanent Voters Card (PVC) and the Card Reader. The PVCs contain voters' biometric information in an embedded microchip which replaced the Temporary Voters' Card that was used in the previous elections. The electronic card reader on the other hand, verifies that the presented PVC is legitimate and that the voter presenting the card actually registered at that particular polling unit. The card reader also displaces the picture of the voter so that poll workers can visually confirm the identity of the voter against the card and allow for scanning of fingerprints. However, the level of participation of the North-East in this new era of development in the electioneering process of Nigeria in 2015 was as shown in the table below.

Table 5: Participation Per State in the North-East during the 2015 Presidential Election

State	Total Population	Reg. Voters	PVCs Collected	Accredited Voters	Vote Cast	Total vote in Nig.
Adamawa	3,168,101	1,559,021	1,381,571	709,993	661,210	29,432,083
Bauchi	4,676,465	2,054,125	1,967,081	1,094,069	1,039,775	29,432,083
Borno	4,151,193	1,934,079	1,407,777	544,759	515,008	“
Gombe	2,353,879	1,120,023	1,070,725	515,828	473,444	“
Taraba	2,300,736	1,340,652	1,270,889	638,578	602,716	“
Yobe	2,321,591	1,099,970	824,401	520,127	491,767	“
Total	18,971,965	9,107,870	7,922,444	4,023,354	3,783,920	29,432,083

Source: INEC/compiled by the authors (2023).

From the Table 5, it shows that during the 2015 presidential election, the North-East had a total population of 18,971,965 out of which only 9,107,870 registered to participate in the election. Having registered to vote in the election, only a total of 7,922,444 PVCs were collected which indicates that, 1,185,426 PVCs were not collected from INEC. However, from the collected PVCs, only a total of 4,023,354 voters came out to be accredited to participate in the election which shows that, even after collecting the PVCs a total of 3,899,090 could not turn out for accreditation in line with the new technology that was introduced. Again, the table shows that, from the accredited 4,023,354 voters, only 3,783,920 voters actually casted their vote. This shows that, in every inch of the process there was a marginal decrease in the level of participation. The 3,783,920 voters that

casts their vote, represent only 41.5% of the total registered voters in the North-East during the 2015 election. What this means is the fact that, even after been registered to participate, about 58.5% of the registered voters did not turn out for the election.

Worthy of note also is the fact that, the 3,783,920 vote cast in the North-East geopolitical zone during the 2015 presidential election only represented 12.8% of the total votes in Nigeria which was 29,432,083. This development shows that there was a marginal decline from 15% in 2011 to the 12.8% in 2015. The sixth general elections in Nigerians' fourth republic were conducted in 2019. Below is the tabular analysis of the level of participation of the North-East geopolitical zone during the 2019 presidential election.

Table 6: Participation Per State in the North-East during the 2019 Presidential Election

State	Reg. Voters	PVCs Collected	Accredited Voters	Vote Cast	Total Vote in Nig
Adamawa	1,973,083	1,788,706	874,920	860,756	28,614,190
Bauchi	2,462,843	2,335,717	1,075,330	1,061,955	28,614,190
Borno	2,315,956	2,000,228	987,290	955,205	28,614,190
Gombe	1,394,393	1,335,223	604,240	580,649	28,614,190
Taraba	1,777,105	1,729,094	756,111	741,564	28,614,190
Yobe	1,365,913	1,261,914	601,059	586,137	28,614,190
Total	11,289,293	10,450,882	4,898,950	4,786,266	28,614,190

Source: INEC/compiled by the authors (2023).

Deducing from Table 6, it shows that during the 2019 presidential election in Nigeria, a total of 11,289,293 voters were registered in the North-East, which represents only 13% of the total number of registered voters in the country, i.e., 84,004,084. The table also shows that, though a total of 10,450,882 PVCs were collected, only 4,898,950 voters were accredited by the electronic card reader to participate in the election. Despite the number of accredited voters, information from the table above goes to show that only 4,786,266 votes were cast during the presidential election, representing 16.7% of the 28,614,190 total votes cast in the country.

Interestingly, the 4,786,266 votes cast represent only 42% of the total number of registered voters in the North-East who had earlier indicated interest in the electioneering process by registering to have PVC. This also means that 58% of the total number of registered voters refused to turn out on Election

Day. This phenomenon was also recorded in the generality of the country as successive elections witnessed marginal decline in the level of participation in the country. Pine and Yusuf (2020) insist that a democracy is in trouble when two out of three voters don't bother to turn up for a presidential election. When only one in three citizens believes in a system, it is difficult for such a system to maintain its legitimacy.

Electoral Violence and Voter Apathy in the North-East, Causes and Nature

This paper presents the data collected from various respondents from the field work of the researcher; however, the data were collected through the instrumentality of questionnaires. From the 400 questionnaires administered, only 364 were successfully retrieved from respondents, accounting for 100% of the total questionnaire administered in this analysis.

Table 7: Frequency Distribution Tables**Table 7.1:** Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Gender Distribution of Respondents		
Female	119	32.6
Male	245	67.4
Total	364	100
Age distribution of respondents		
18-30	74	20.3
31-40	103	28.2
41-50	119	32.7
51-60	37	10.1
Above 60	31	8.6
Total	364	100
Religious Affiliation of Respondents		
African Traditional Religion	25	6.8
Christianity	160	44.0
Islamic	179	49.2
Total	364	100
Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status		
Single	109	30.0
Married	201	55.2
Divorced/Separated/Widow/Widower	54	14.8
Total	364	100

Distribution of Respondents by Highest Educational Qualification		
No Formal Education	64	17.6
Primary	89	24.4
Secondary	118	32.4
Tertiary	93	25.6
Total	364	100
Occupational Distribution of Respondents		
Farmer/Self Employed	75	20.7
Student/Applicant	186	51.1
Public/Civil Servant	103	28.2
Total	364	100
State of Residence of Respondents		
Adamawa State	64	17.6
Bauchi State	81	22.2
Borno State	76	20.9
Gombe State	44	12.1
Taraba State	57	15.7
Yobe State	42	11.5
Total	364	100
Classification of Respondents		
Electorate	289	79.4
Party Chieftain	54	14.8
INEC Staff	21	5.8
Total	364	100
Are you a registered voter?		
Yes	364	100
No	0	0
Total	364	100

Source: Researcher's fieldwork 2023.

The next table raised various questions on the causes and nature of electoral violence and voter apathy in the Northeast from 1999 to 2019, responses are presented and analysed to achieve the study's objectives. The questions are asked and the answers provided on a 5-point Likert scale, which are, SD (Strongly Disagree), D (Disagree), U (Undecided), A (Agree), SA

(Strongly Agree), strongly agreed as the highest and strongly disagree as the lowest. To further elaborate on the analysis, the researcher resorted to grouping the responses under positive responses, negative responses, and neutral responses. The data collected in the field are presented and analysed below.

Table 8: Respondents' Views on the Causes and Nature of Electoral Violence and Voter Apathy in North-East, Nigeria from 1999-2019

Variables/Questions	SD	D	SD + D	U	A	SA	A + SA	Total
Unsettled political dispute is a cause of electoral violence and voter apathy in the North-East from 1999 to 2019.	40 (10.9)	30 (8.2)	70 (19.2)	14 (3.9)	53 (14.5)	227 (62.3)	280 (76.9)	364 (100)
Unguided utterances among political actors causes electoral violence and voter apathy in the North-East.	43 (11.8)	34 (9.3)	77 (21.1)	15 (4.1)	112 (30.7)	160 (43.9)	272 (74.8)	364 (100)
Ethnic and religious differences (politics) is a cause of electoral violence and voter apathy in the region	48 (13.1)	36 (9.8)	84 (23.2)	20 (5.4)	79 (21.7)	181 (49.7)	260 (71.4)	364 (100)
Electoral violence and voter apathy in the North -East occur when votes don't count.	87 (23.9)	24 (6.5)	111 (30.5)	21 (5.8)	57 (15.6)	175 (48.1)	232 (63.7)	364 (100)
Killing, maiming and destruction of lives and properties is a nature of electoral violence in the North-East	39 (10.7)	28 (7.8)	67 (18.5)	18 (4.9)	158 (43.4)	121 (33.2)	279 (76.6)	364 (100)
Low voter turn-out is a nature of voter apathy in the North - East.	47 (12.9)	44 (12.1)	91 (25.0)	26 (7.2)	115 (31.6)	132 (36.2)	247 (67.8)	364 (100)

Source: Author's fieldwork 2023.

The first item on Table 8 presents and analyses responses to unsettled political disputes as a cause of electoral violence and voter apathy in the North-East from 1999 to 2019. 70 respondents, which translates into 19.2%, were of the opinion that unsettled political disputes don't cause electoral violence and voter apathy. While 280 respondents or 76.9% of the total believed, only 14 respondents, or 3.9% of the total were undecided. When respondents were asked their opinion on unguarded utterances among political actors as a cause of electoral violence and voter apathy, the following findings (results) were obtained: 77 (21.1%) of the respondents did not agree while 272 respondents, representing 74.8% agreed and 15 representing 4.1% were undecided.

When respondents were asked their take on the role of ethnic and religious politics in the Northeast as a cause of electoral violence and political apathy, the results obtained from the field indicates that 84 (23.2%) respondents were of the view that religion and ethnic difference (politics) are inconsequential in the causes of electoral violence and political apathy in the Northeast from 1999 to 2019. On the other hand, 260 (71.4%) of the respondents believed that ethnicity and religious differences as well as politics, is also a cause of electoral violence and voter apathy in the North-East.

The respondents were also asked if electoral violence and voter apathy can be caused by the perception that their votes will not count even when it remains an unconfirmed position that votes will not count. From the report that was gathered from the field, it simply shows that 111 respondents representing 30.5% did not agree. Looking at the other side of the coin, it was discovered that 232 representing (63.7%) of the respondents affirmed that the notion. But, 21 representing 5.8 respondents were neutral.

Again, the respondents were asked if killing, maiming and destruction of lives and property is a nature of electoral violence in the North east from 1999 to 2019. 67 (18.5%) of the respondents did not agree, 279 respondents which represented 76.6% believes and 18 respondents were neutral. Looking at the nature of voter apathy in the North-East sub-region, respondents were asked if low voter turnout is a nature of voter apathy. 91 respondents

representing 25.0% said no. However, 247 (67.8%) of the respondents had a contrary opinion. To them low voter turnout is a nature of voter apathy, then, 26 respondents i.e 7.2% were undecided.

Discussion of Findings

Politics is a game of interests, so in most cases, people do have clashes of interests; sometimes there are cases of betrayal, cheating, and all sorts of backlashes, and in most cases, it leaves the participants or their supporters at loggerheads. Sometimes some of those unsettled disputes are founded on the basis of religion and/or ethnicity and, in most cases, not on ideology. The positions of these respondents agreed with the assertion by Yusuf (2014) that; 'unsettled grievances, weak political institutions, and ethnicity all come together to render almost inevitable the resort to violence as a means of expressing grievances and reconciling social differences during elections'. Secondly, it is believed that politicians and their supporters are prone to making unguarded utterances that are sometimes perceived as an insult to people's sensibilities and also provocative.

However, for fear of the unknown, many will not turn out at the polling unit to exercise their franchise, this is because they believe that the tension is high and there is the likelihood of a breakdown of law and order. Most crises in the world, start with verbal attacks for or against, which sometimes results into very devastating situations that may get out of control. That is why a good number of respondents believed that as long as politicians exercise their right to freedom of expression without caution or throw caution to the wind, especially in the Northeast, it causes electoral violence and voter apathy in the geopolitical zone.

Thirdly, from the opinion of our respondents it shows that ethnic and religion differences which in the North-East translate in to politics usually at the slightest provocation led to electoral violence and voter apathy by a group of people who feel marginalized, oppressed and segregated or neglected in the electoral process. These opinions agrees with the position of Rahanatu (2008), that, the formation of ethnic political parties by the elites, the struggle for power and the forceful

retention of government offices to the detriment of the people, sit-tight syndrome, the rising financing of armed gangs, the lack of political ideology, policy, and strategy on the one hand, and the hardships that the majority of Nigerians have found themselves in, i.e., poverty, insecurity, unemployment, non-functional state institutions, are the causes of electoral violence in Nigeria. These acts of violence have caused unrestrained economic backwardness and stagnation vis-à-vis major setback in the political process in Nigeria, leading some members of the electorate to be politically apathetic.

Fourthly, that lack of votes counting or integrity in the process of electioneering is a major cause of voter apathy this is because it amounts to exercise in futility and it can trigger violence or result to apathy subsequently. The respondents were of the opinion that when people believe that their votes which they suffered to cast were jettison for some obnoxious figures, certainly the reaction can be spontaneous and that could lead to electoral violence and voter apathy, they also believe that sometimes government through its security agencies or other agencies fuel or perpetuate this crisis. These positions however, concur with the position of Ladan (2007) that posits that, electoral violence is caused by electoral abuse, corruption of electoral process, rigging of election and electoral fraud. Akinyemi (2019, p.5) also agrees that:

ack of trust in the election management body, it has become impossible for politicians to rig election without the assistance of INEC officials. This gave some citizens the notion that even when they vote, their votes do not count. Winners and losers of elections have been determined by some political bigwigs and INEC officials before the contest, voters only go to the polls to waste their time, this causes violence and consequently voter apathy.

Finally, the populace lose interest in the system, if their votes did not count, if the rate of insecurity becomes very high and government seems not to be beneficial to them. The

consequence of this indication is that it leads to low voter turnout. This is the nature of voter apathy because at this point the people care less, they don't really think about what is going on politically. Thus, whatever happens within the polity elicits little or no interest therefore low voter turnout is a measure and a feature of voter apathy. The paper also finds out that while the nature of electoral violence in the North-East includes killing, destruction of property, and snatching of election materials, the nature of voter apathy in the region is abstaining from political participation, especially voting.

Conclusion and Recommendations

We argue that elections, which in other climes are processes that bring about peaceful change of government, have not been conducted in Nigeria congruence with international best practices thereby, causing violence and apathy especially in the North-East from 1999 to 2019. The paper elucidated the historical trajectory of participation in presidential elections in the North-East in Nigeria's fourth republic (1999–2019). Therefore, the paper recommends that; politicians and all other election stakeholders must, as a matter of necessity, control their emotions and utterances before, during and after elections.

Political campaigns should be based on the policies and issues that a party or candidate represents rather than on identity politics or attacking of individuals. Inflammatory rhetoric and intimidation of opponents should be criminalized and penalties imposed when breached. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and other democratic institutions must exhibit transparency, openness and honesty in the conduct of elections so as to inspire confidence from the people and be perceived by all the players and actors as providing equitable participation.

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