Electoral Violence and Political Alienation in Africa

A Survey of the 2019 Nigerian General Elections

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Abstract

The research investigated the impact of electoral violence on voter alienation in Africa using Nigeria as a case. It attempted to ascertain the cause of low turnout of voters in the 2019 general elections and to determine the extent to which violence in elections can affect participation by gender, age and educational status. The aim of the study was to find out the relationship between violence and alienation in the Nigerian electoral process. The study adopted the survey research design and used data elicited from a sample of 1,200 respondents selected from six local government areas representing the six geo-political zones. The simple percentages and Chi- Square statistical techniques were utilized to test and determine the degree of association intrinsic in the stated hypotheses. The findings from the study show a positive relationship between violence and alienation. Thus, electoral violence is responsible for the alienation of voters from the electoral process. Consequently, the following suggestions are made: The federal and state governments should put on modalities to mitigate the incidences of violence during elections; perpetrators of electoral violence should be sanctioned; accordingly, while the African Union should closely monitor the various African States electoral processes to sanction any breach and mitigate incidences of violence in elections.

Keywords: Political Alienation; Electoral Violence; Voter Abstention; Voter Turnout; 2019 General Elections.

Introduction

Democracy the world over is based on the principles of adequate representation and participation. Without the participation of the citizenry in the democratic practice, there would be no democracy or a democratically elected government. This is so because an election that serves as the forum for selecting or electing representatives into a democratic government involves the ardent participation of the citizens. An election thus serves as a contact point between the people and the elected representatives. If this linkage or contact point is weakened by a low- level participation, it could lead to a destabilization of the political system since adequate participation in the voting process signifies voters' confidence, support, and legitimacy of the political and governance system. However, there is global evidence of a continuous and sustained reduction in voter turnout at every election period (International IDEA, 2016). In Africa, violence has become infested with electoral conduct. The Nordic African Institute (2012) stated that a study of over fifty countries data by Kewir et Gabriel in 2018 found that all countries studied at some point had incidences of violent elections. In Nigeria, statistics show a declining percentage of voters in various elections especially from the Fourth Republic (i.e., 1999 to 2019) (International IDEA

database, 2015; 2019). The survey is based on the Nigerian 2019 general elections. The central thesis of the study is that electoral violence is a factor of alienation that is responsible for the low– level of voter turnout during elections in Nigeria and the 2019 general elections. Nigeria was chosen as a case because the country has a history of many incidences of electoral violence. Since the spate of violent elections has similar characteristics in the political trajectory of African states, findings from the study can be generalized to the African continent. Studies conducted on electoral violence in Africa such as in Kewir et Gabriel (2018) and Shenga and Pereira (2019) have focused on the effect, causes and consequences of electoral violence on participation and voters abstention. None of these studies investigated electoral violence as a cause of voter alienation linking them with the variables of gender, age and educational status to determine the degree of alienation by violent elections. Thus, this study is novel and a contribution to extant literature for this initiative.

A Conception of Violence and Electoral Violence

The term violence has been explained from the point of the employment of force illegitimately to enforce decisions or actions on other people against their will (Kolawole, 1988; Hoglund, 2006; Keane, 1996). Subsequently, violence can be construed in terms of the employment of physical force or power deliberately (whether as threats or attempted) against one's self, another person, a group or community that has the likelihood to or results in psychologically harm, deprivation, and an injury or death (WHO 2002). Violence has been pigeonholed into three typologies– physical violence, structural violence, and psychological violence. Physical violence relates to harm or attacks that inflict injury on persons which can lead to death. Structural violence has to do with the unfair and biased treatment of people in society. Psychological violence deals with harm or injury to the mind of the individual such as all forms of threats, harassment, indoctrination, and brainwashing (Jinadu 1980, Galtung 1985, 1991; Schröder & Schmidt 2001).

According to Höglund (2009 in Taylor, 2018: 8),

> …widespread agreement on a clear definition has proven relatively challenging. Broadly speaking, electoral violence can be grouped within one of two more common fields of political analysis … First, electoral violence can be thought of as a subset of political violence and thus conceptually similar to communal violence, rebellion, and civil war… Electoral violence might be thought of as a type of political violence that is defined by four criteria: 1) the motive of the violence, 2) the timing of the violence, 3) the actors perpetrating the violence, and 4) the targets of the violence…

Violence refers to acts inimical to the electoral process, which is carried out by agents that are anti to credible, free, and fair elections. Such acts as perpetrated against the actors in the electoral process include blackmail, coercion, various forms of threats and intimidation as well as inflicting physical injury including assassinations and deaths (Fischer, 2002 and Sisk, 2009). Electoral violence has been differentiated from other types of violence by Höglund (2009), who aver that electoral violence is a type of violence associated with the processes of elections and voting periods, which is intended to influence electoral processes and outcomes.

"Alternatively, electoral violence can be thought of as a type of election malfeasance, and therefore more similar to election rigging, vote–buying, and other forms of electoral fraud. Violence is then one element of the menu of manipulation that can be used to manipulate election results" (Schedler 2002 in Taylor, 2018: 8). According to (Nwolise 2007), electoral violence epitomizes any type of planned action that is tantamount to physical, psychological, and structural threats directed at either to intimidate, harm, blackmail, or pressure a candidate for political office. This

action could be before, during, or after the conduct of an election intended at influencing and subverting the otherwise fairness of the electoral process.

"In terms of motivation, violence is usually intended to influence the outcome of an election. The specific type of violence employed can take a variety of forms, but it is temporally close to Election-Day. The perpetrators of violence are generally actors who have a vested interest in the election outcome, such as members of the state security apparatus (police, military, etc.), militias that are loyal to particular parties, and rank-and-file party supporters. For this subject, electoral violence can be "understood as a coercive force, directed towards electoral actors and/ or objects that occur in the context of electoral competition... [It] can occur before, during, or after elections and it can target a variety of actors, including candidates, activists, poll workers, election observers, journalists and voters" (Birch & Muchlinski forthcoming, in Taylor, 2018: 8). Electoral violence has also been seen as any action that overtly threatens the physical and psychological structure of the human being resulting in any form of damage or harm directed at political events, electoral materials, and electoral actors including, the destruction of property (IFES, 2011). From the foregoing, violence associated with electoral activities can be construed as acts directed overtly or covertly, directly or indirectly aimed at undermining the actors in the electoral process. The objective of agents of electoral violence is to influence the processes of elections unduly and to gain an advantage over other political rivals or opponents.

The Concept of Political Alienation

The term political alienation can be construed as the relative continuing sense of estrangement from or rejection of the prevailing political system by the individual citizen. The politically alienated desires to vote, but their feeling of insignificance to the system restricts them. They feel that their interests are not regarded and represented by political leaders (Glasberg & Shannon, 2010). The alienated are of the view that political leaders who hold offices are incompetent, self-seeking, and corrupt; thus, they are suspicious, hostile, distrustful, and skeptical of these leaders. They believe that the political process as a whole is fraudulent; a betrayal of public trust and a charade (Campbell et al, 1954). Alienation has been given several connotations but the overriding notion which best describes the term is that of 'powerlessness' i.e. erosion of the individual's freedom and control (Seeman 1959; Roberts 1987). Thus, "alienation can be conceived as the expectancy or probability held by the individual that his behavior cannot determine the occurrence of the outcomes, or reinforcement, he seeks" (Seeman 1959: 784). Roberts (1987) described 'powerlessness' as a result of a sense of the loss of self-worth. Powerlessness and self-estrangement have been identified as the fundamental features of alienation (Seeman 1959; Korzeniowski, 1994; Dalton, 2007). Further discourse by scholars described political alienation as a blend of a feeling of inefficacy and a lack of confidence in political institutions (Kim, 2005; Catterberg & Moreno 2006).

An analysis of Alienation as the Cause of Voter Abstention

The concept of political alienation as popularized by Seeman (1959), Roberts (1987) and Finifter (1970) can be construed as the relative continuing sense of estrangement from or rejection of the prevailing political system by the individual citizen. The politically alienated desires to vote, but their feeling of insignificance to the system restricts them. They feel that their interests are not regarded and represented by political leaders. The alienated are of the view that political leaders who hold offices are incompetent, self-seeking, and corrupt; thus, they are suspicious, hostile, distrustful, and skeptical of these leaders. They believe that the political process as a whole is fraudulent; a betrayal of public trust and a charade (Seeman 1959: 784). Seeman (1959)

and Finifter (1970) identified five alternative meanings of political alienation- powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness isolation, and self–estrangement. Political powerlessness, normlessness, and self–estrangement are the main factors that may account for the abstention of eligible voters from the electoral process in Nigeria. Closely linked to these variables is political disappointment indicated by Finifter (1970) (an individual's disinterest in a political decision or participation because of bad governance and corruption by political leaders). These variables speak of the individual's own perceived incapacity to affect electoral and political outcomes. Also, there is the issue of distrust of government by the electorates which could result from unfulfilled electoral promises. There is also the case of corruption by political elites and leaders and the belief by the electorates that their interests are not taken into account by the Nigerian government. Thus, citizens and eligible voters become alienated from the electoral process and the entire political system.

Pertinent to the issue of alienation is of violence either before, during or after the electoral activities. Electoral violence has become a phenomenon experience in Nigerian elections and is capable not only in alienating the voters from the electoral process but also, in instigating them to attack the political system. Apart from abstaining from the electoral and political process, the alienated may engage in other acts that are adverse to the political system and the respective government; since they do not share the view that the system is just and responsive to their feelings. Given the fact that the alienated do not share the values operative in the political system, they may choose to attack those values and support civil disorders, protests, revolution, electoral violence, etc. against the political process and the state. It can thus be hypothesized that those who distrust the existing political process are an ideal audience for extremist appeals; and an explosive potential for radical–revolutionary programmes. For instance, among the reasons given by the Boko Haram terrorist group for taking up arms against the Nigerian State was bad governance resulting in corruption, poverty, and failure to meet the socio–economic needs of Nigerians especially, in the Northern States (Walker, 2012; Forest, 2012). Thus, it is likely that the alienated may support or even be recruited by such sects to subvert the state. From the foregoing, it is clear that alienation takes place in two forms, passively (i.e. withdrawal from participation) and actively (i.e. participating in acts that may disrupt the political process). Since the resultant effect of alienation has its dangers both passively and actively, it should be given adequate attention.

Elections and Violence in Africa: A Brief Analysis

Violence in the electoral circle has been rampant in Africa and studies by scholars are a pointer. Bleck and van de Walle (2019), Fisher (2002) and Straus and Taylor (2012) stated that hundreds of general elections have recorded about 25 per cent violence since 1990. For instance, elections have been violent in Nigeria, Sudan (Bratton, 2013; Sisk, 2012), Kenya (Burchard, 2015; Mueller, 2012), Cote d' Ivoire, Zimbabwe (Boone and Kriger, 2012), Uganda (Blattman, 2009), Togo (Bocker, 2012), Zambia in 2016 (Bleck and van de Walle, 2019), and Mozambique in 2019 (Shenga and Howe, forthcoming, in Shenga and Pereira, 2019). Thus, electoral violence has resulted in the death of thousands of people with hundreds of thousands others displaced such as in Zimbabwe (2000 2008), Kenya (2007–2008) and Cote d' Ivoire (2010–2011) (International Peace Institute, 2011). The causes of violent related activities before, during and after elections are multifaceted. The Nordic Africa Institute (2012) broadly categorized these causes into two broad divisions– structural factors and electoral process factors. The structural factors include the subsisting power configuration in an emerging democracy such as political exclusion, poor governance, informal patronage practices and poor economy. The electoral process factors include flawed or failed elections, electoral fraud and a weak or manipulable Electoral Management Body. Thus,

electoral violence is closely associated with some costs. Aside the deaths recorded and the harm to the processes of elections, electoral violence could lead to a crisis of legitimacy, political stability and consolidation of the democratic process. It could also, lead to humanitarian crisis due to displacements. In serious situations, it could exacerbate armed conflict, insurgencies, terrorism and a general breakdown of law and order that could result in military coup d'état truncating the democratic process The Nordic Africa Institute (2012).

Electoral participation and the 2019 general elections in Nigeria

The consolidation and sustenance of the democratic structure through a free, fair, credible and periodic election is the most fundamental challenge of most African countries including Nigeria (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1997; CDD, 2019). Abiding by the rules of the game in ensuring a credible electoral outcome has posed a serious challenge to the Nigerian state since the birth of the Fourth Republic (199– 2019). Since 1999, six civilian administrations have been installed, while five general elections have been organized by civilian governments (till 2019) in the quest for democratic consolidation. That is, the elections conducted between 2003 and 2019 have witnessed the transfer of political power from one civilian administration to another. For example, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (the incumbent president in 1999) was reelected president in 2003 on the platform of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). Also, the Late Alhaji UmaruYar'Adua of the PDP won the 2007 general election and was sworn in as president. In April 2011, the Acting President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan (who became president following the death of President UmaruYar'Adua) won the 2011 elections and was sworn in as president on the platform of the PDP (Aniekwe and Kushie, 2011). Furthermore, Muhammadu Buhari, the candidate of the All Progressive Congress (APC), an opposition party, won the March 28, 2015, presidential election (BBC (April, 2015). President Buhari was re-elected as president on the platform of the APC, on February 23, 2019 (Ojetunde, 2019).

Though democracy (transition of government) was consolidated in the period between 2003 and 2019, various elections conducted during these periods were infested with electoral frauds leading to several electoral and violent conflicts resulting in loss of lives, displacements, and destruction of property worth billions of naira. For example, For example, the 1999 general election witnessed a presumably more peaceful atmosphere with minimal violent incidences arguably because it was midwifed and supervised by the military. Subsequent elections especially those of 2003 and 2007 conducted under the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo were marred by serious irregularities and violence and were adjudged as the most fraudulent and corrupt elections conducted in the history of the Nigerian State (Kurfi, 2005; Animashaun, 2010; Aniekwe and Kushie, 2011). The 2003 general elections were bedeviled with numerous irregularities and malpractices such as fraudulent electoral practices, ballot box stuffing, intimidation of voters, assassinations, killings, etc. It has thus been contended by political analysts that the election of 2003 was a charade and a mockery of voters and the electoral process because it was a process of merely selecting pre– determined winners by political elites and their caucuses (IFES, 2011; Abimbola & Adesote, 2012). Human Rights Watch (HRW) (2004) for instance, reported that about one hundred persons lost their lives and with many sustaining various degrees of injuries during the election period (between April and May 2003) in Nigeria.

The general election of 2007 was adjudged the worst election yet, in post– independent Nigeria (HRW, 2007). The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES– Nigeria) stated that there were nine hundred and sixty– seven (967) incidences of "pre- and post–election violence" (Omotosho, 2007; HRW, 2007; IFES–Nigeria, 2007). An interview conducted by HRW prelude to the 2007 elections showed that some eligible voters indicated their unwillingness to participate

in the election. For instance, a retiree from Oye- Ekiti indicated the resolve of some elderly men and women not to participate in the 2007 elections for fear of electoral violence. During the April 2007 elections, close to three hundred (300) persons reportedly lost their lives. The resultant turnout level of eligible voters was very low as many registered voters were discouraged by the spate of violence across the country (HRW, 2007; Asemota, 2011; Binniyat, 2011). The election of 2011 was generally accepted as partially fair by observers from the local and foreign divide. Although also marred by irregularities such as the intimidation of voters, snatching of ballot boxes, vote- buying, etc., it was a marked improvement from previous elections such as in the 1999, 2003, and 2007 elections (Yusuf 2011; Bekoe, 2011). "…Unfortunately, the election adjudged as one of the most credible in the history of Nigeria was dented by the escalation of an unprecedented level of post-electoral violence in which unquantifiable lives and property were lost/ destroyed…" (CDD (2019: 29).

> Nigeria's 2011 elections were the most violent in the country's modern history as more than 800 people were killed in just three days following the presidential election … The 2011 elections represented the greatest bloodshed in the country since the 1967-70 civil war. This violence was largely triggered by the loss of Muhammadu Buhari (now running under the banner of the Congress for Progressive Change [CPC]) to PDP incumbent Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian from the South who had assumed the presidency after the death in office of President Yar'Adua. As with the re-election of Shagari in 1983, Jonathan's decision to run and subsequent victory was seen violating the unwritten agreement between North and South to share power by alternating presidential representation every two terms. Many Northerners felt that as Yar'Adua had died in office during his first term, the North was still owed another full term of the Presidency and were therefore aggrieved by Jonathan's candidacy (The Fund for Peace, 2018: 14).

The general elections of 2015 (March 28th and April 11th) have been adjudged the best election ever conducted in Nigeria (Gabriel 2015). Election monitors from both domestic and foreign divide scored the election high. The election was relatively peaceful. The technological innovation by INEC- that is the introduction of biometric voters' registration and use of the Smart Card Reader improved efficiency and standard of the election. Also, sensitive electoral materials such as the result sheets and ballot papers were customized and possessed high- security features and codes. However, despite these great improvements in the electoral process, the 2015 election was not without flaws. Some of the anomalies identified in respect to the election include "late arrival of election materials, overcrowding, failure of the card reader, result manipulation and voting of under-aged in some units in the Northern part of the country" (Udu 2015, p. 102).

According to the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) (2019; 29):

> …The 2015 general election did not witness much electoral violence largely because of the spirit of sportsmanship demonstrated by the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan, who conceded defeat and willingly handed over power to the opposition that emerged victorious at the polls.

The 2019 general elections were violence infested. The European Union Observer Mission stated that:

> The election became increasingly marred by violence and intimidation of voters and INEC officials, primarily by party supporters. This harmed the integrity of the electoral process and may deter future voter participation. Party leaderships did not take sufficient steps to rein in their supporters but accused opponents of using violence to disrupt the process and/or selectively depress turnout. Based on updated

information available from media and other sources, during the campaign and the three election days observed, approximately 145 people were killed in election-related violence (European Union, 2019: 33).

In the same vein, the African Union Election Observer Mission to the 2019 general elections in Nigeria reported that generally, the election was peaceful; however, the reports of bomb blasts and violence in some regions (South South, Middle Belt and Northeast) affected the general peaceful atmosphere of the elections adversely. Furthermore, electoral materials were destroyed such as ballot boxes, voter registers and over four thousand smart card readers. The fire that gutted the Independent Electoral Commission's Warehouses in Plateau and Anambra States significantly impacted the Election-Day process (AUEOM, 2019).. Despite the general atmosphere of peace, there were significant instances of violence during the elections capable of affecting participation. Thus, the violence that marred the February 23, 2019, presidential and national assembly elections in Nigeria led to the arrest of one hundred and twenty- eight (128) people for various electoral offenses which include ballot box snatching, malicious damage of items, vote trading and homicide; while several explosives were recovered (Yahay, 2019).

Stating the Problem

The electoral or voting statistics in Nigeria especially from 1999 to 2019 show a gradual and continuous decline. For example, the 1999 general elections recorded a 52.3% turnout of registered voters. In 2003 it was 69.1%; 58% in 2007; 53.7% in 2011; 43.6% in 2015, and 34.7% in 2019 (International IDEA database, 2015; 2019; Ojetunde, 2019). These statistics show a decline in the turnout of registered voters aside from the voting-age population who did not even register. This trend can harm the country's level of democratic development. Low turnout levels in Nigeria can be associated with several factors closely linked to socio- political and economic development. These factors may include the perceived inability of the citizens to influence the political and electoral mandate of the ruling elites; the loss of confidence in the political parties, and candidates as a result of bad governance; electoral violence; poor management of elections by the Electoral Management Bodies; poor electoral procedures, and electoral malpractices. Any of these factors or their combination could adversely affect turnout significantly resulting in alienation.

The research was guided by the following questions: what is the impact of electoral violence on political alienation?; what is the impact of electoral violence on political alienation by respondents' gender?; what is the impact of electoral violence on political alienation by respondents' age?; and what is the impact of electoral violence on political alienation by respondents' educational status?

Generally, the study aimed to determine the effect of violence on low voter turnout in the Nigerian electoral process and to identify the degree by gender, age, and educational status. Specifically, the objectives of the study were: to find out the relationship between electoral violence and political alienation in the electoral process of Nigeria; to determine the degree of relationship between political alienation and electoral violence by respondents' gender; to determine the degree of relationship between political alienation and electoral violence by respondents' age; and to find out the degree of relationship between political alienation and electoral violence by respondents' educational status.

1. There is no relationship between electoral violence and the alienation of voters from the electoral process of Nigeria by the respondents' gender.
1. **Interpretation**: This means that the alienation of voter by electoral violence has nothing to do with gender.

2. There is no relationship between electoral violence and the alienation of voters from the electoral process of Nigeria by the respondents' age.

2. **Interpretation**: This means that the alienation of voter by electoral violence has nothing to do with age.

3. There is no relationship between electoral violence and the alienation of voters from the electoral process of Nigeria by the respondents' educational status.

3. **Interpretation**: This means that the alienation of voter by electoral violence has nothing to do with educational status.

This study is vital because of the dangers that continuous low voter turnout poses to the democratic system. This trend can adversely affect not only the legitimacy and stability of the electoral process but also impede many eligible voters from taking an active part in the governance and policy decisions of their country. It is also necessary to identify the nature and degree of alienation between or among the variables (gender, age, education) of interest in the electoral process circle as affected by electoral violence. This can help to encourage turnout especially the part of society most affected by alienation.

The approach to the study and analysis

The study adopted the ex-post facto and the descriptive analytical approach in the presentation and analysis of data. The population of the study is the Nigerian State covering the six Geopolitical Zones. The National Population Census of Nigeria in 2006 puts the figures of the Nigerian population at one hundred and forty million, four hundred and thirty- one thousand, seven hundred and ninety (140,431,790), (Nigerian Data Portal, 2006). A sample size of one thousand two hundred (1,200) respondents was sampled from the selected Six (6) Local Government Areas of the Geopolitical zones in Nigeria using the stratified random sampling technique. The geopolitical zones were stratified into 6, and the simple random sampling technique was used to select 3 zones, 6 zones from the 3 states and 6 local government areas from the 6 states. Thereafter, the systematic sampling technique was employed to select 1,200 respondents from the households in the 6 selected local government areas (see table 1&2 below). The sample size of one thousand two hundred (1200) respondents was arrived at by adopting the formula of Taro Yamane, the statistician which he developed in 1967 to calculate sample sizes from a given population (Yamane, 1967). The adoption of a 5% error margin and a 95% level of confidence, in calculating the population of one million, four hundred and ninety- seven thousand, one hundred and fifty- seven (1, 497, 157) yielded a sample size of 400. To account for possible attrition, reduce the level of error, increase sample representativeness, and the confidence level, the number of subjects was increased to 1,200 (that is 400 × 3. This action became imperative since the sample of 400 represents the minimum standard sample required for the study to produce a 95% confidence level in line with Yamane's formula. The questionnaire comprised of closed-ended question sets was utilized for the study. Primary data formed the nuclei of data collection for analysis and contingency tables were the mode of data presentation. Simple percentages and the Chi-Square statistical techniques were used to analyze the data. The simple percentage helped to ascertain the data percentages for easy analysis while the Chi-Square was utilized to test the hypotheses. The choice of the Chi-Square technique hinges on the fact that it measures the direction and degree of relationship of the variables involved in the phenomenon of study. Table 1 and 2 below shows the sample distribution and selection of the Geopolitical zones, states, local government areas and the population of the selected 6 local government areas from where the final selections of 1,200 respondents were made.

Table 1: Tabulation of Sample Distribution–1

Geopolitical Zones	Selected Zones	Selected States	Selected Local Government Areas
North– East			
North– West			
North– Central	North– Central	Plateau	Jos South
		Kogi	Dekina
South– East			
South– West	South– West	Oyo	Ibadan South West
		Ekiti	Ekiti West
South– South	South– South	Rivers	Degema
		Delta	Ughelli South

Source: Compiled by the Researcher

Table 2: Tabulation of Sample Distribution–2

Selected Local Government Areas	Population	Sample Size	Percentage (%)
Jos South	311, 392	250	21
Dekina	260, 968	209	17
Ibadan South West	283, 098	227	19
Ekiti West	179, 600	144	12
Degema	249, 461	200	17
Ughelli South	212, 638	170	14
Total	1, 497, 157	1, 200	100

Source: Nigeria Data Portal, 2006)/Researcher

In table 2 above, the sample size was arrived at by multiplying the population figure of each local government area by the total sample figure divided by the total population of the six selected local government areas. The percentage of the sample size was derived by multiplying each sample size by 100 divided by the total sample size figure.

For this study, a total of one thousand two hundred (1200) questionnaires were administered, out of which one thousand, and sixty (1060) were completed and returned by the respondents. Out of the 1060 respondents, the majority of them were males representing 57.1% while the females represented 42.9 of the sample. The age distribution shows that 66.04% of the respondents were between 18– 39 years old while 33.96% were 40 years old and above. This shows that majority of the respondents who took part in the study constitutes the youthful and virile age necessary for political participation. Also, 25.9% of the sampled respondents were married while 74.1% were single. Moreover, 28.3% of the respondents were secondary school certificate holders and below while 71.7% were OND/NCE/Post– Graduate certificate holders. This distribution shows that the majority of the respondents had basic education and thus were equipped to make informed responses useful to the study.

The effect of electoral violence on voter alienation in the political and electoral process in Nigeria

The study set out to investigate the effect of electoral violence on voter alienation in the political and electoral process in Nigeria using the 2019 general elections as a case. It also aimed at the determination of the effect of electoral violence on political alienation by the variables of gender, age and educational status. This was meant to identify the section of society most affected by alienation.

The findings of the study are summarized thus:

1. Voter alienation in the Nigerian electoral process is a factor of electoral violence.
2. Electoral violence as perpetrated by political opponents and parties during elections affects electoral participation and therefore, responsible for voter alienation in the Nigerian political system.

In respect to electoral violence:

1. The male respondents are more likely to be alienated from the electoral process than the females
2. The respondents from age 18 to 39 are more likely to be alienated from the electoral process than the respondents from age 40.
3. The respondents who hold secondary school certificates or below are less likely to be alienated from the electoral process than the respondents with OND/HND certificates and above

Conclusion and Recommendations

Citizens' participation in the process of governance is necessary to accomplish an equitable and civilized society. These tenets would not be achieved in Africa and Nigeria, if a majority of eligible voters continue to stay away from voting during elections as a result of recurring violence. It is on record that more than half of the population of eligible voters have not voted since the Fourth Republic in Nigeria and also that about half of registered voters or less have not also voted during elections. This situation calls for concern especially as it is worsening. The need for this study becomes imperative since the level or degree of voter turnout serves as a parameter for measuring popular will, credibility, and legitimacy of elected officials. Besides, they are vital to political socialization and serve as the bedrock for democratic stability. The study set out to examine the effect of violence on voter alienation in Nigeria as well as to determine the degree of alienation among the tested variables. The findings have been exhaustively discussed in the relevant section above. It is hoped that the relevant institutions and stakeholders in Nigeria and Africa would take cognizance of these findings and the recommendations hereafter to positively address the voter alienation challenge. It is also expected that the study would engender more scholarly investigation and interest in the electoral system and voting process in Nigeria and Africa.

Consequent upon the research findings, the following suggestions as solutions to voter alienation in Nigeria are made.

1. The federal and state governments should put on modalities to mitigate the incidences of violence during elections. This should be done to encourage the citizens especially those mostly affected by alienation (from the findings of the research) to actively participation in the electoral process. This could be ensured by designating adequate security personnel to ensure safety during voter registration, political rallies and campaigns and during the voting periods.

2. The security personnel should be charged with the responsibility of forestalling violence and most importantly to prevent any act or actions that negate the electoral regulations which often lead to violent outbreaks during elections.

3. Also, adequate and effective intelligence and monitoring team should be assigned to cover all election centers during elections in Nigeria. This team should also monitor the activities of the security personnel at designated election centres to check their excesses.

4. Furthermore, election regulations should be strictly enforced and violators should be arrested and prosecuted.

5. Finally, on the African continent, the African Union should put up modalities and machineries to closely monitor governance and the electoral process in African states so as to sanction states that breach the electoral regulations. These measures would help to mitigate incidences of violence during elections, alienation of voters and encourage participation.

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APPENDIX 1

Research Hypothesis 1

Are you of the opinion that electoral violence is one of the major problems in the Nigerian electoral process?

Political Alienation and Electoral violence by Respondents' Gender

Bad Governance	Male	Female	Total
Yes	580	410	990
No	25	45	70
Total	605	455	**1060**

Source: Field Survey: 2019"

Research Decision

Calculated X^2 = 13.95

Critical X^2 = 10.83

df = 1

α = .001

Research Hypothesis 2

Do you share the view that majority of the citizens are willing and eager to vote during elections in Nigeria but do not for fear of electoral violence?

Political Alienation and Electoral violence by Respondents' Age

Electoral Violence	18-39 Years	40 Years and above	Total
Yes	681	319	1000
No	19	41	60
Total	780	280	1060

Source: Field Survey: 2019"

Research Decision

Calculated $X2$ = 33.50

Critical $X2$ = 10.83

df = 1

α = .001

Research Hypothesis 3

If you suspect that during certain election period, there will be violence, will you go out and vote?

Political Alienation and Electoral violence by Respondents' Educational Status

Electoral Malpractice	Secondary and Less	OND/HND/Postgraduate	Total
Yes	265	715	980
No	35	45	80
Total	300	760	1060

Source: Field Survey: 2019

Research Decision

Calculated X^2 = 10.18

Critical X^2 = 6.64

df = 1

α = .01