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## **Psychosocial Correlates as Predictors of Voting Behaviour in Ogun State, Nigeria** (Pp 232-243)

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### **Abstract**

*The study examines the influence of some psychosocial factors (age, gender, perceived benefit, self-esteem, personality, and personal attributes of the candidate, religious and ethnic affiliation) on the voting behaviour of Nigerians. The participants were 3276 (male=112, female=1164) selected within the age range of 18 to 45 years. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected using some psychological scales and self-designed questionnaire. Analysis of data shows that some psychosocial correlates were found prominent in predicting the voting behaviour of Nigerians. Among them were perceived benefit, self-esteem, personality, religious affiliation and ethnic affiliation. The implications of the study were also discussed.*

**Key Words:** Voting behaviour, Psychosocial, Personality.

### **Introduction**

Since gaining independence in 1960, Nigerians have participated in six national elections. Critical examination of these elections will reveal that Nigerians have had to consider some factors in the course of choosing political leaders to represent their views. Some of these factors appear to be ethnicity, geographical location and other desired benefits. This occurrence may be related to the foundations of the parties which were based on the

discretion of the regional leaders in the 1960s. Consequently, voters have had to cast their votes for political leaders who share their geographical traits in some elections particularly with the division of Nigeria into three regions. Recent division has resulted in six geo-political zones. This trend however appears to have raised a fundamental question of national identity as against regional and ethnic loyalty which seems not to facilitate good leadership and even development of the Nigerian nation. Attempt was made on one occasion to have two national political parties that are not based on ethnic or regional divide. During the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida from 1985 to 1993, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Party (NRC) were created, but this attempt was later scuttled because the national election held on June 12, 1993 was annulled, an interim government was installed and consequently a military government came into power in 1993 headed by General Sanni Abacha which later scrapped the parties.

Voters have become the basic units of political power especially in modern democratic regime across the globe. Voting behaviour as reported by Ranney(1971) is perceived as having two dominant categories, the voter's preference and the voter's activity. The preference includes the degree of approval and disapproval a voter has for a political party and the candidates vying for political offices. The voter's activity is perceived as the activities of people who are either directly or indirectly involved in the political systems. Some scholars have considered the issue of the result of voting as a principal aspect of voting behaviour, that is, the number of people who vote in a particular election and what pattern the voting takes. In this study, voting behaviour is viewed as casting of votes in any national elections such as presidential, legislative, gubernatorial and local council elections. Scholars have also investigated and reported certain factors that predict the pattern of voting. For example, Grafstein (2005) examines the impact of employment status on voting among Americans by formally modeling the effect of partisan government on workers economic interests. It was reported that, relative to the employed, the higher the education level, the income, and the unemployment benefits of the unemployed, the less likely they are to vote for the party associated with higher growth. The unemployment rate has the same impact. Also, Booth (2005) assesses the effects of non-traditional media on contemporary voting. The preliminary findings support the hypothesis that voters who utilize these sources rely less on party identification than other factors.

Moreover, studies have been conducted on the cognitive component of voting behaviour. For example, Bartle (2005) examines evidence from the 2001 British Election Study, which suggests that some voters place more weight on leaders than others. Glasgow (2005) investigates the importance of the location of a polling place to voters' perceptions of political issues. The study conducted some experiments and also based its analysis on precinct-level data. The result showed that voters who cast their votes in a church were less supportive of gay marriage than voters who cast their votes elsewhere. Singh (2005) explores the impact of perceived discrimination on voting and participation beyond voting. It was found that perceived discrimination has a significant effect on voting, signing petitions, and contributing money.

Paolino (2005) examines the consideration that voters' attitudes toward the dominant party and their uncertainty about the consequences of opposition government. Using data from both Mexico and Taiwan, the author concluded that voters in nations with hegemonic parties give greater weight to the public policies of the dominant party than the two-step model argues. These findings have important implications for the opposition's behavior in trying to complete a transition from a one-party dominant government to a multi-party democracy. Langer & Cohen (2005) explore the presumed rising electoral importance of moral values and the conservative Christians who overwhelmingly selected this item. Using national exit poll data from 1980 through 2004 and other national surveys, they found that the moral values item on the issues list cannot properly be viewed as a discrete issue or set of closely related issues; that its importance to voters has not grown over time; and that when controlled for other variables, it ranks low on the issues list in predicting 2004 American election.

Recent observation has shown that election of political leaders in Nigeria may not after all follow the assumed position that Nigerian voters are basically or primarily dependent on the availability of money or other incentives in deciding who and what party to vote for in any general elections. Since this observation appears not to have been investigated empirically as literatures revealed then, it may not be confirmed that Nigerian voters are motivated primarily by monetary incentives.. It may also be said that there may be other factors inherent in the Nigerian political system which may not have been examined. Scholars have come up with various explanations on the determinants of voting pattern in many developed countries of the world. Generally, they have emphasized the role played by factors such as social class, race, religion and party ideology. Close

examinations of their findings suggest that the democracies they investigated have developed overtime and therefore parties have had distinct image and philosophies. However, the Nigerian democracy is still at its infancy and therefore could not be said to follow a pattern as in the case of the developed countries of the world. It is however regarded as one of the emerging democracies of the world with features that are likely to be different from the developed democracies as motivators of voters. Based on this assumption, thus, the present study sought to examine this issue and then provide answers to these research questions, what factors would motivate voters to vote in national elections? Would psychosocial factors such as age, sex, ethnic affiliation, religious affiliation, perceived benefit, self-esteem, personality, personal attributes of the candidate influence voting among Nigerians?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study is based on the theory of Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Human needs. Maslow (1970) proposed five hierarchies and these are the physiological needs, the needs for safety and security, the needs for love and belonging, the needs for esteem, and the needs for self-actualisation.

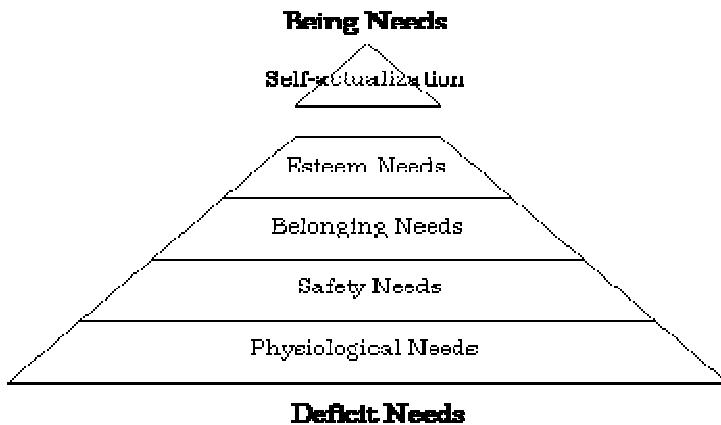


Figure 1: Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The lowest level of needs is referred to as the *physiological needs*. These include the needs for water, protein, oxygen, minerals and vitamins. The next level of needs is *safety and security needs*. This level of needs includes

needs for protection, safe neighbourhood and jobs with long-term security. Nigerians will also appreciate a good housing policy and affordable health care. This level of need is expected to feature once the physiological needs have been consciously provided for. This is followed by ***love and belonging needs***. These needs manifest as an individual desires to marry and have a stable family, join social or professional associations, or become a notable member of a religious body or a community leader. This level of needs is expected to become prominent after the physiological needs and the safety and security needs have been met. A higher order level of needs is the ***esteem need***. The esteem needs include the needs to be respected by others and to have self-respect. Issues of recognition and acceptance for one's competence and expertise may feature as a need for an adult. An individual will, need to take care of the three lower level needs before making an attempt to meet these needs. The highest level of needs is called the need for ***self-actualization***. The need for self-actualisation is manifest when an individual is interested in attaining his or her full potentials whether in politics or in other career. It is assumed by Maslow that this need has the power to motivate an individual unlike the lower order needs which must be taken care of but do not motivate. Maslow refers to this distinction by identifying the self-actualisation need as the being needs and others as deficit needs.

Based on this theoretical formulations, it is predicted that voters will be interested in casting their votes at any national elections provided their participation will guarantee food on their table, housing that will provide minimum comfort in a safe environment, economic opportunities that will create room for marital and family relationships as at when desired, job opportunities and appropriate reward for brilliant performance and other opportunities to develop the individuals full potentials at will. In other words, the levels of needs are translated into factors such as perceived benefits, self-esteem, personality and associated demographic factors such as age, sex, ethnic affiliation and religious affiliation. It is therefore predicted that:

H. 1: Psychosocial factors (age, sex, perceived benefit, self-esteem, and personality) will predict voting.

### **Method**

The study is descriptive and adopted a survey cross-sectional design in achieving the objectives of the study as well as answering the research questions. This design allows for data to be collected at a time among different

age groups as well as other characteristics that are of importance to this study.

The sample was chosen from residents of the Redemption city including students and members of staff of Redeemer's University (RUN), and members of staff of Redeemer's High School. The sample size was 276 Nigerians between the age limit of 18 and 46 years. The mean age was 22.95 and standard deviation of 6.72. Convenient sampling techniques was adopted in selecting the sample. There were 112 males and 164 females. The participants comprised different ethnic nationalities (Yoruba = 200, Ibo = 37, Hausa = 2,

The research instruments for the collection of data are the Big-Five Personality Scale (B5), Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale and Voting Behaviour Questionnaire. The questionnaire is a self-designed instrument specifically designed for this study. It has four sections. Section A has items on personal data, section B consists of items measuring leader characteristics, section C consists of items measuring voting behaviour. The items in this section C measure cognitive, affective, knowledge and behavioural aspects of voting. Voting Behaviour Inventory reliability Coefficient was found to be Cronbach's Alpha .56. The Big-Five Personality Scale has 44 items and five subscales such as Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness. The reliability coefficients for the B5 were provided by John, Donahue and Kentle, (1991). They are Cronbach Alpha, .80 and test-retest of .85. The B5 has convergent validity of .75 and .85 as reported by Costa & McCrae (1992) and Goldberg (1992) respectively. Umeh (2004) provided the divergent validity coefficients of .05, .13, .11, .39 and .24 respectively for the five subscales administered on Nigerian sample. The Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale has a reliability coefficients of Cronbach Alpha of .78 and validity of .60 when correlated with Coopersmith Self-esteem Inventory.

The participants were contacted by the researchers and their assistants at their different locations such as Redeemer's University and Redeemer's High School at Redemption City, Ogun State. The purpose of the research was explained to them and their consent was sought for before the research questionnaire and the scales were administered to them. All the sets of the instrument were administered at once which took the each participant 60 minutes to fill.

The research instruments yielded quantitative data which were subjected to descriptive and inferential analyses. The statistical methods that were used for the analysis of the data are percentage counts, Pearson Product Moment correlation, t-test, analysis of variance and multiple regression analysis. The Statistical Package for Social Scientist (SPSS) version 11.0 was utilized.

### **Results**

The hypothesis predicted that psychosocial factors would predict voting. The results of the multiple regression analysis were presented below:

Tables I shows the Model Summary which gives the adjusted r square 0.16. That is, the predictor variables explain 16 percent of the variance in the criterion variable. (see appendix 1 )

Table II shows the ANOVA result of the regression analysis which reveals that the regression equation is significant.( see appendix 2)

Table III shows the strength of each particular relationship between the predictor variables and the criterion variable. (see appendix 3)

Based on simultaneous entry multiple regression we found a significant model ( $F = 5.143$ ,  $df = 9$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) of the relationships between psychosocial factors and voting. There were two significant variables, age ( $B = .277$ ,  $t = 4.563$ ,  $p = .001$ ) and sex ( $B = -.174$ ,  $t = -2.856$ ,  $p = .005$ ) which was negatively related to voting

### **Discussion**

The research study investigated voting behaviour among Nigerians who could be regarded as young and old adults who are between 18 and 45 years of age. One of the goals of the research was also to examine some psychological and sociological variables which could influence the contents of voting behaviour. Specifically, the study was an attempt to provide valid answers to the question of what perception do Nigerians have about of voting behaviour and what psychosocial variables would influence their perceptions?

The analysis of the data that would provide answer to these research questions was done primarily with the aid of multiple regression analysis. The major findings of the study as presented in tables I, II and III are further discussed in this section.

The voting behaviour which is the focus of this study was measured with four components which are cognitive, affective, knowledge and behavioural. The

results reveal that the knowledge of voting behaviour has the highest mean score compared to other components. This suggests that Nigerians who participated in the study have a good knowledge of voting issues. It may be that the awareness of political issues such as voting could be influenced by such awareness programmes that were on for sometime in preparation for the 2007 national election.

The results of the multiple regression analysis also reveal that age, self-esteem, perceived benefit and party ideology were found to be significant predictors of voting behaviour among the participants. The inclusion of other variables such as sex, family background, religious and ethnic affiliation, personal attributes of the leader and personality yielded a joint effect of 25 percent. Self-esteem, age, perceived benefit and party ideology being significant predictors of voting behaviour suggest that the participants were rational people who would assess what benefits the political parties have for them as individuals through the ideologies and previous campaign promises made by the party leaders. This finding also suggests that since the participants were between the age group of 18 years to 45 years, they also constitute the working population in Nigeria and thus appear to have good knowledge of voting issues probably to ensure that their interests and needs are taken care of as proposed by Maslow's theory of needs (Ferree, 2006; Maslow, 1970).

The results also reveal that some significant relationships were found between some psychological variables and voting behaviour. They are self-esteem, personal attributes of the political candidate and dimensions of Big-Five personality model (agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness). The finding suggest that what Nigerians are in terms of their personality and self-concept appears to determine the perceptions of the political candidates by the electorates as well as whether they would think of, develop a sense of attachment and also take steps to vote for the candidates of their choice. This premise is supported by other studies, for example, Friedman, (2004, 2005).

The study further reveals that some relationships existed between the sex and the voting behaviour of the participants. The mean of the male participants was significantly higher than the mean of the female participants. This suggests that men are more interested in political issues and may explain the notion that Nigerian politics is dominated and controlled by men. This explanation is further supported by the actions of President Olusegun



Obasanjo's administration in appointing women to sensitive ministerial positions such as finance and education.

Finally, the results show that some variables such as family background of the participants, ethnic and religious affiliation did not significantly influence voting behaviour of the participants. This finding becomes interesting because it is contrary to general assumptions that Nigerians would rather vote for political candidates of their ethnic origin. Although, Terkildsen (1993) supports this finding, other studies suggest that racial or ethnic prejudice is an important variable in voting concerns (Johnson & Schlemmer, 1996; Mendelberg, 2001; Ferree, 2006) while the findings of another study on motivations behind voting behaviour in South Africa is relevant to this study (Rule, 2004).

### **Conclusion**

The study on psychosocial correlates as predictors of voting behaviour in Nigeria has some limitations. It is limited in term of the size of the sample which should have included samples from other geopolitical zones of the country. Also, the adoption of interview in addition to the questionnaire administration technique would have revealed the feelings of Nigerians about this research issue. It is expected that further research will be conducted to identify other variables that are predictors of voting pattern in Nigeria.

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Tables I-III Multiple Regression of all the Independent Variables and Voting Behaviour

Table I Model Summary

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.414 <sup>a</sup>	.172	.145	3.36452

- a. Predictors: (Constant), BVP E, Sex, Age, SE Money influencer, BVP D, SB self-esteem, BFP A, BFP B, BVP C

Table II ANOVA

**ANOVA**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	645.787	9	71.754	6.339	.000 <sup>a</sup>
Residual	112.999	275	11.320		
Total	758.786	284			

a. Predictors: (Constant), BVP E, Sex, Age, SE Money influencer, self-esteem, BFP A, BFP B, BVP C

b. Dependent Variable: VOTING

Table III Coefficients

**Coefficients**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.186	2.499		1.675	.095
	Age	.140	.028	.271	4.926	.000
	Sex	-1.079	.403	-.148	-2.673	.008
	SB self-esteem	.64E-02	.034	.132	2.345	.020
	SE Money influ	-.518	.341	-.084	-1.522	.129
	BFP A	.17E-03	.047	.004	.066	.948
	BFP B	.644E-02	.050	.092	1.520	.130
	BVP C	.16E-02	.051	.055	.909	.364
	BVP D	.240E-02	.041	.032	.547	.585
	BVP E	.39E-02	.033	.138	2.341	.020

a. Dependent Variable: VOTING