

VOTER EDUCATION AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE 2015 AND 2019 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Richard Chidi Nwali¹; David M.E. Nwogbaga²

E-mails: nwalirichardchidi@gmail.com; dnwogbaga504@gmail.com
Department of Political Science, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

Abstract

This comparative study on voter education and political participation in Nigeria with focus on the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections constitutes a serious issue of contention in our contemporary democratic governance; such contentions have led to the questions challenging the achievements of Nigeria's democratic efforts since independence till date. The objective is to find out how voter education affected the political participation of Nigerians especially on voter registration, voter turnout and vote validity. In the light of field theory of voting framework adopted for its high pedigree of attitudinal orientations; the study used ex-post facto design of political inquiry justified for its comparative techniques with secondary and primary data collection while descriptive statistical tool, specifically simple percentage was used for analysis. The results showed that the 2019 voter registration in the zones improved with 16.4% more than the outcome of the 2015 voter registration, the voter turnout dropped to 17% compared to the turnout of the 2015 while the total per cent impact of voter education on the votes' validity improved with 1.4% from the outcome of the 2015. The study recommended that Nigerians should register and obtain voter's cards in mass in the next voter registration exercise seeing voter's card as instrument of positive change not just for identification; election is an opportunity to vote-out unpopular candidate or party and vote-in credible candidates or party while the relevant institutions should make voter education a daily activity to eradicate the negative orientations of Nigerians towards politics. The findings of this study showed that if nothing serious is done today to change the perceptions of Nigerians towards politics, then their passion may die to the detriment of the practice of democracy as the government of the majority which implies that the leading elites will no longer be accountable to the people.

Keyword: Voter Education, Political Participation, Elections, Democracy and Violence

Introduction

Since independence, there have been several elections conducted in Nigeria. These include; 1963, 1964, 1979, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 general elections. In these various election years, there have been controversies over voter registration, voter turnout and vote validity which are the critical components of political participation. The controversies stem from voter registration, voter turnout and vote validity is all dependent and determined by the degree of voter education. In other words, voter registration, voter turnout, vote validity is predicated on the efficacy of voter education. Hence, prior to the investigation of the identified variables in 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria, there is need for retrospect into past elections in Nigeria. Historical antecedence has shown that the issue of voter education has been at its lower ebbs, hence the challenges experienced in our electoral process.

In the 1963 and 1964 general elections, voter education was markedly low and that affected voter registration, voter turnout and vote validity in the country. Nohlen (1999), posited that out of the 15million eligible voters in the 1964 general elections, it was 5,761,483 that voted. The election

which was the first national election in the independent Nigeria that was contested by two political alliances: Nigerian National Alliance (NNA), led by Sir Ahmadu Bello, premier of the Northern Region, and the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA), led by Michael Okpara, premier of the Eastern Region was marred by monumental ethno-religious sentiment owing to lack of proper voter education that reflects true federalism. And also noted that the 1979 Nigeria's general elections that had Shehu Shagari as the winner recorded the total of 48,633,782 registered voters where only the total of 16,846,633 votes cast was valid. Ibeanu and Orji (2014), gave an instance where Plateau State recorded 48,279 rejected votes in the 1979 presidential election as a result of little or no effective and efficient voter education across the shore of Nigerian states while 1983 Presidential Election recorded 25,430,096 valid votes out of 65,304,818 registered voters. The controversy that trailed the electoral register later surfaced with renewed strength as FEDECO released the list less than 15 days to the election which contained the total of 65, 304, 818 registered voters, greater than the country's population as at 1963 with an increase of eighteen million from the 1979 registered voters which requires no statistical or mathematical skills to suspect serious inflation of the 1983 electoral register (Diamond, 2002).

Adeola (2019), recorded that 12th June 1993 Presidential Election registered 39,000,000 voters while the total valid votes cast was 14,293,396 which was a show of inadequate and improper voter orientation by the electoral umpire and other relevant agencies. Siollun (1998), said although the voting pattern of 1993 has subsequently been cast as unprecedented cutting across ethnic, religious and geographical patterns; the true picture is a little subtler, while the 1999 Nigeria's presidential election had 57,938,945 registered voters, 30,280,052 voter turnout and 431,611 invalid votes while valid votes totaled 29,848,441 which was an indication of inadequate voter education. The 2003 Presidential Election had 60,823,022 registered voters, the voter turnout was 42,018,735 and invalid votes totaled 2,538,246 while the valid votes totaled 39,480,489. The election was markedly different as INEC was confronted with irregularities in the voter registration review while the 2007 Presidential Election had 61,567,036 registered voters and the total valid votes of 35,397,517. However, nothing better gave credence to this position than the tardiness that characterized the voter registration exercise as the 2011 presidential election in Nigeria had 73,528,040 registered voters, the votes cast totaled 39,469,484 and 38,209,978 valid votes while 1,259,506 votes were invalid. The election which had Gen Muhammadu Buhari of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) as the principal contender adjudged to be the most peaceful and credible poll in the democratic history of Nigeria later had the highest bloodshed (Adeola, 2019).

Statement of the Problems

One of the issues that have critically remained as the front burner of academic discourse in Nigeria is the low level of political participation which has been blamed on poor voter education (Ibeanu and Orji 2014). This challenge of low voter education has resulted in low voter registration, low voter turnout, high invalid votes and other negative electoral outcomes. It is on record that over one million votes cast in the Nigerian presidential election of April 2011 were rejected during counting, mainly because the ballots were wrongly marked (Ibeanu and Orji 2014). Although, the rejected votes constituted 3.2% of all votes cast in that election, the several observers noted that the number was rather high and could have been markedly lower if voters had received adequate voter education (Ibeanu and Orji 2014). Ibeanu and Orji (2014),

postulated that the situation was more serious in some States like Niger, Jigawa, Sokoto and Yobe where rejected votes were over six percent of all votes cast as shown below; Jigawa had 1,214,774 votes cast, 74,008 (6.1%) were rejected; Niger had 1,090,540 votes cast, 71,373(6.5%) were rejected; Sokoto recorded 973,242 votes cast, 63,434 (6.5%) were rejected while Yobe had 662,913 votes cast, 40,798 (6.2%) were rejected. At the same time, elections since independence have been witnessing decline in the turnout of voters across Nigerian states. Some of the elections have seen declines in voter turnout as high as 70%. For instance, the voter turnout in the Presidential election in Anambra State in 2011 declined around 90% (Ibeanu and Orji, 2014). The same declining voter turnout was reported in the Edo and Ondo Governorship elections in 2012 (Ibeanu and Orji, 2014). These twin problems of rejected ballots and declining voter turnout at elections are widely attributed both directly and indirectly to inadequate voter education. Thus, numerous reports on the general elections called on INEC to strengthen voter education in order to dissipate other issues linked to voter education in Nigeria such as poor voter turnout and poor participation in voter registration, lack of understanding of voting procedures, underage voting and election violence. In fact, it had been noted that the violence that Nigerians experienced in the aftermath of the 2011 general elections was partly due to negative mobilization by political actors and by implication inadequate voter education (Ibeanu and Orji, 2014). Though several scholars like Ibeanu and Orji (2014), Agu, Okeke et al (2013), International IDEA (2002), Mulyata (2011), Falade (2014), Ushie (2005), Omotola (2004), Nwankwo (2005) and (Iyayi, 2007), have all carried out studies in relation to voter education, voter registration, voter turnout and vote validity in different places and years yet none of them made a comparative analysis of the identified variables especially as it concerned the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections. Hence, this study is therefore an attempt to make a comparative analysis of the improvement of voter registration, analysis of relative difference between voter turnout in the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections of Nigeria and the impact of low voter education on votes validity in the 2015 and 2019 Nigeria's presidential elections.

Theoretical Framework: The field theory of voting

The theory was used first in 1948 by Michigan as the proponent who conducted a survey on public policy issues which included one question on voting intentions for the presidential election of that year. Campbell et al. (1960), stated that the central thesis of this model is that attitudes, defined as orientations to the elements of national politics, could be viewed by the voters as negative or positive. This implies that the citizens' participation in the political activities, programmes, issues, etc is a function of positive or negative perception they have about the entire political system and its processes which has to do with the legitimacy of the constituted authority, etc. In other words, the positive or negative attitude of the citizens towards participation in the political affairs is influenced by their perception about the entire political system.

Therefore, the field theory of voting is relevant in addressing voter education and the associated dwindling political participation that continued to threaten Nigeria's overall democratic development. The participation of an individual or group of individuals in the political process is an act of attitudinal perception which could be positive or on the other way negative. The orientation of an individual towards a political party, candidates of a party, electoral umpire even the administration of the entire government determines his attitude towards the system. For instance, if the orientation is negative, definitely the attitude towards the political system must be

negative as the case of Nigeria that have been experiencing low turnout of voters, high level of wrongly marked votes and even political violence since the democratic history of the country. The theory is very relevant to this study because high pedigree of voter education is required to change the negative orientations of the Nigerian electorates to positive attitudes towards political participation.

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Review

Voter Education

Ibeanu and Orji (2014), noted that voter education is considered as a subset of civil education focusing more specifically on the role of the citizens as a voter. This include knowledge around several issues like the duties and obligations of a voter, voting procedure, political parties and candidates, electoral offences, counting procedures, the responsibilities of the electoral management body and mandate protection. Indeed, voter education is designed to equip the citizens with knowledge about the entire gamut of the electoral process. From the foregoing conceptualization, the study viewed voter education as a medium of inculcating into the prospective and the eligible voters the new and positive orientation of voting ideas and information for increasing political participation and awareness.

Voter Registration

This is an enrollment into voter register which constitutes the eligibility requirement of a person to be entitled or permitted to vote. Such enrollment may be automatic or may require application being made by the eligible voter. The rules governing registration vary between jurisdictions. Some jurisdictions have "election day registration" and others do not require registration, or may require production of evidence of entitlement to vote at the time of voting. In some jurisdictions, registration by those of voting age is compulsory while in most, it is optional. In jurisdictions where registration is voluntary, an effort may be made to encourage persons otherwise eligible to vote to register in what is called voter registration drive (Carroll et al, 1995).The study deduced from the conceptualization above that voter registration is a medium of integrating the prospective voters into the official voter register their country for political participation.

Voter Turnout

Voter turnout is the percentage of the eligible voters who passed through voting accreditation and or cast a ballot in an election. International IDEA (1997), posited that it is the percentage of eligible voters who passed through accreditation and, or cast a ballot in an election. Eligibility varies from country to country and the voting eligible population should not be confused with the total adult population. Age and citizenship status were often among the criteria used to determine eligibility but some countries further restrict eligibility based on sex, race, or religion. From the above conceptualization, voter turnout refers to the gross total of eligible voters who participated either through accreditation or voted in an election with the aim of choosing the suitable candidate for a particular office in a given season. It is also viewed as the gross total of eligible members of a particular place who are mobilized to vote in a particular decision making process.

Vote Validity

Terri (2003), argued that if electronic voting system requires that the elector cast a vote by marking or stamping a predefined area on the ballot, the vote shall not be considered valid unless

there is a mark or stamp within the predefined area and it is clearly evident that the intent of the voter was to cast a vote. In determining intent of the voter, the board of canvassers or election official shall compare the mark or stamp subject to recount with other marks or stamps appearing on the ballot. Therefore, from the foregoing, Vote validity is viewed as the accurate adherence to the stipulated electoral guidelines especially as it concerns eligibility of voter, proper coordination of the exercise by the umpire, proper thumb printing or marking of the ballots, etc. by voters. In other words, it means a voter conducting him or herself orderly according to the rules and regulations guiding the elections and also the voter thumb printing and casting the ballot properly.

Vote Buying

Owasa, (2014), said that vote buying can be defined as the phenomenon in the Nigeria electoral process whereby contenders for elective positions use money or money is used on their behalf as an inducement to sway their support which is not based on persuading the electorates to vote according to their wish and conviction but on the force of money that has changed hands. From the views above, the researcher adduced that the concept of vote buying is a situation where a voter sells his or her vote to a political party candidate or political party on itself for either socio-economic, political, material or other gains which could be outside his or her normal wish in a particular election. In other words, it is selling and buying of one's vote in election for which ever purpose best known to the seller and the buyer in an election.

Political Participation:

Milbrath (1965), wrote that political participation derives from the freedom to speak out, assemble and associate; the ability to take part in the conduct of public affairs and the opportunity to register as a candidate, to campaign, to be elected and to hold office at all levels of government. Under international standards, men and women have an equal right to participate fully in all aspects of the political process. However, it is often harder for women to exercise this right. In post-conflict countries, there are frequently extra barriers to women participation and special care is required to ensure their rights are respected in this regard. Therefore, it is deduced that political participation is the right of the eligible citizens or members of a particular area to partake in the political processes of their area without undue restrictions having attained certain constitutional certifications.

Theoretical Review

Voting and Vote Buying in Nigerian Democracy

The phenomenon of vote buying became prominent in the post-independence Nigeria. Dudley (1982), argued that even then, the influence was very minimal in the first republic between 1960– 1966. During the first republic, it appeared as if ethnic and religious sentiments were the most important weapons the political actors and tribal heroes deployed to ensure electoral victories. This was possible because the strength and popularity of the major political parties and their allies were essentially enhanced by the primordial ties they had with the people in their regions. The parliamentary system that was being practiced then, also made it possible for the political parties to exercise considerable control over the candidates to be fielded for elections. Davies (2006), wrote that there was so much display of affluence and use of money by the wealthy contractors and the mercantile class that those who emerged victorious in the

conventions and the primaries of some of the political parties, notably the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Nigerian People's Party (NPP) and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) belonged to the business-managerial group. The situation was even worst in 1993 as the act of vote buying took very firm roots in the political activities of contestants.

Factors Responsible for Vote Buying in Nigeria

So many reasons can be adduced as being responsible for the persistent and escalating level of vote buying in Nigeria. Some of these factors include ignorance on the parts of the electorates, apathy, poverty, inadequate information especially lack of awareness and inadequate sensitization, willingness on the part of the voters and deceit by the politicians. There is also attitudinal problem on the side of the people involved in both buying and selling of votes. Our attitude toward politics is not good because most politicians view it as a call to investment from which huge benefits is expected and not a call to serve humanity. Ovwasa (2014), established that the electorates on their parts sees politics especially during elections as an opportunity to sell their votes to represent their own share of national cake since they do not have access to where the national cake is being shared. From the above, the study deduced that the major factors are lack of love, lack of moral standard, lack of confidence on the government institutions, party or its candidates and institutional decay. In other words, there is no trust and passion between the electorates and the elect even among the institutions involved in the elections.

Implications of Vote Buying on Nigerian Democracy

The implications of vote buying are not apparent because they attack the heart of democratic governance and unnoticeably erode its essence (Lucky, 2013). Vote buying affects policy outcomes from the source because policies emanate from an adverse selection of unsuitable politicians with lower qualities who are the products of vote buying (Leight et al., 2015). Vote buying has been found to diminish and corrode democratic essence of elections and governmental accountability (Gonzalez and Ocantos et al., 2014). Khemani (2015), noted that political economists have argued that elite capture caused underinvestment in public services that are beneficial to the poor. The misconduct of electoral processes and activities by the electoral umpire motivated crises that have brought instability in Nigeria socio-political and economic sectors. Politically, this syndrome has caused a lot of harm than good in Nigeria's polity owing to the fact that our democracy is no longer on the basis of the right candidate on the right position to deliver the dividends of democracy to the entire country and not to a particular people or a particular group of people but now, it is only for those who can pay the money.

Empirical Review:

Voter Education and Voter Registration in Elections

Ibeanu and Orji (2014), wrote on the approaches to civic and voter education: Nigeria's experience in comparative perspective with the cardinal objective of formulating and implementing a formidable voter education. The study which adopted analytical theory with survey research method argued that the twin problems of rejected ballots and declining turnout of voters in elections are widely attributed both indirectly and directly to inadequate civic and voter education. However, the authors recommended strengthening voter education as a panacea to rejected ballots and declining turnout of voters in Nigerian general elections. The study like other studies in the social discourse has its shortcomings especially its less attention to voter

registration not minding the significant role in the Nigerian political participation. Though, the authors emphasized much on the rejected votes and low turnout of voters as the major challenges of political participation in Nigeria without recourse to voter registration which is the foundational basis of participation in Nigerian politics.

Agu, Okeke et al (2013) analyzed voter apathy and revival of genuine political participation in Nigeria with major focus on investigating the causes of voter apathy with the help of class theory, and the content analytical research method. The authors argued that the age of voters, the occupation and gender are all significantly the major precipitators of voter apathy. The study that covered from 1999 to 2007 general elections in Nigeria mutually maintained that voters' apathy is orchestrated by incompetence of INEC, unemployment (c) political environment and (d) electoral violence and therefore call on the government of Nigeria to ensure the engagement of capable hands into INEC assignment and also disengagement of those who are not proactive as well as ensuring that those issues raised above are resolved.

Therefore, the study showed much accusation on INEC as if the commission alone can ensure credible election in a country like Nigeria with over 250 different ethnic nationalities with divergent historical background and different mentality. Although, the study acknowledged voter registration as one of the major variables of a credible election which civic and voter education should strengthen yet, they still call on INEC without recourse to other voter education agencies such as media, NGOs, etc. that have the accolade required to change the negative mindset of Nigerians over voter registration especially the voting age population.

This study is considered to be more elaborate in the sense that it captured so many variables that can make a smooth and successful voter registration in Nigeria especially with emphasis on the human capital requirements, the institutional consensus, financial requirements, etc. But faulted its inability to make comparative analysis of voter registration exercise in the previous electioneering periods knowing too well that the present and future socio-economic and political challenges cannot be surmounted in isolation of the past situations. The study has its merits and demerits like other studies in the social discourse.

Voters' Education and Voters Turnout in Elections:

International IDEA (2002), wrote on voter turnout since 1945 to 1997: A global report with focus on franchise through voter turnout stated that the key characteristic of elections in Indonesia has been high voter turnout. This can be attributed to high voter expectation of elections as a solution to existing or past political turmoil, as was the case with the general elections of 1955 and 1999. However, this conclusion can hardly be applied to the elections during the New Order period. International IDEA (2002), noted that high voter turnout during the New Order period can be attributed to "political mobilization" combined with intimidation by the government to move voters to the polling stations. In some cases, government officials or party officials often transported voters to polling centres to ensure that they cast their votes. This method is suspected because there was a tendency to only provide transportation to voters for the GOLKAR Party. International IDEA (2002), unfortunately discovered that government did not publish data on voter turnout, let alone turnout based on gender, residence, or other social and political groupings. The only data available on voter turnout is the data on voter registration and on valid votes cast during the elections. International IDEA (2002), pointed out that in the 1997 election, out of almost 125 million registered voters, 113 million (90.5 percent) of registered voters cast their votes. In the 1999 election, out of 118 million registered voters, 105.5 million

(89 percent) cast their votes. Indonesia experienced a slight decline in the total number of registered voters by 5 percent. The biggest slump occurred in the province of Aceh, which suffered a downturn in the number of registered voters from 2.2 to 1.4 million, a decline of 35 percent. International IDEA (2002), reported that Aceh region experienced a bigger decline in the number of valid votes, from 2.1 million voters (95.2percent) to only one million (69.3 percent). East Timor which during the 1999 general election was preparing to hold its own referendum to determine its independence from Indonesia only experienced a slight downturn in the total number of registered voters (7 percent).

Therefore, the study frowned at the above scholars' inability to incorporate the relative difference of voter turnout of one electoral period and the other. Hence, our focus on the relative difference on voter turnout in the 2015 and 2019 Nigeria's presidential elections as one of the major ways to experiment the efficacy of voter education in terms of political participation in Nigeria.

Voter Education and Votes Validity in Elections

Mulyata (2011), the author through the study, the impact of voter education on voter participation: The case of Kaduna square stage (1) compound in Luska: The study has its objective as to determine the impact of voter education on voter participation in Kaduna square stage (1) compound of Luska with democratic theoretical framework and descriptive, non-experimental qualitative research method raised argument that there is generally lack of sufficiently co-ordinated practice of effective delivery of voter education at the district level. The author found that these factors hinder informed decision making and risk reducing the participation in the electoral process which could include low voter turnout in elections and high number of spoiled ballot papers while the scholar recommended that the government of the Republic of Zambia should come up with a deliberate policy to train voter education facilitators whose work should regularly provide voter education all year round.

Falade (2014), wrote on political participation in Nigerian Democracy: A study of some selected local government areas in Ondo State, Nigeria. The objective of the study was to examine the level of political participation in some selected local government areas in Ondo State, Nigeria. A focus group guide on political participation was used while survey research design was applied. The author argued that the way politics and governance are practiced in Nigeria discourages some people from political participation and also recommended urgent need for formal and informal approaches to political education in Nigeria. Ushie (2005), observed that the absence of a viable civic political culture has made Nigerians imbibe negative voting behaviour predicated on electoral malpractices and violence. This development has further brought about the political underdevelopment of the country. He further argued that the political culture in the country which is ethnically based and reflected undemocratic vices manifested in party formation, party representatives and elected political leaders who lacked the foresight to emphasize the tenets of good democratic governance. In this regard, Omotola (2004), posited that for democratic governance to succeed in Nigeria, consolidated culture of ethno-religious politics must be addressed and corrected. In a bid to overcome the problem created by lack of shared national democratic political culture in party formation, and the existence of negative voting behaviour based on sectional or ethnic sentiments, the Federal Military Government in 1978 under the leadership of General Olusegun Obasanjo introduced into Nigeria's political history, the registration of political parties for elections. According to Nwankwo(2005), the entire legal

requirements for registration of political parties were aimed at ensuring that only nationally oriented political parties have the opportunity to operate in Nigeria. This development was to avoid the formation of sectional or ethnically based political parties in Nigeria. Further studies have shown that one of the greatest problems militating against proper voting behaviour amongst Nigerians is the negative mindset towards acquisition of political power in one's region or ethnic domain as a basis for acceptance of government and its policies (Iyayi, 2007).

Therefore, the literature above could not acknowledge the impact of voter education on: voters' registration, voters' turnout, and vote validity in the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections in Nigeria. That is to say that the literature paid no attention on the negative effects of low voter education on the identified variables which are the major concerns of voter education in terms of political participation.

Analysis of the Political Participation in the 2015 and 2019 Presidential Elections in Nigeria
Table 1: Voters Registration in the 2015 and 2019 Presidential Elections in Nigeria

States	2015	2019	2006 population	% Improvement
Northwest	17,570,066	19,999,916	35,915,467	6.8
Northcentral	9,620,455	11,742,050	18,963,717	11.2
Northeast	8,933,630	11,260,477	18,984,299	12.2
Southsouth	9,413,630	12,640,537	21,044,081	15.4
Southeast	7,513,031	9,548,861	16,395,555	12.4
Southwest	13,484,620	15,834,151	27,772,432	8.5
Total	66,535,432	81,025,992	139,075,551	66.5

Source: NPC, 2006; INEC, 2015; Monjola (2015)

$$\frac{2015 \text{ Zone's Registered Voters}}{2006 \text{ Zone's Population Census}} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

$$\frac{2019 \text{ Zone's Registered Voters}}{2006 \text{ Zone's Population Census}} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

Therefore, the percentage value of 2015 outcome subtracted from the 2019 outcome, gave the percentage value of the comparative improvement of voter registration in the geopolitical zones of Nigeria in the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections.

However, to determine the overall % improvement value of the six geopolitical zones voter registration, we divided the gross total of the zones % improvement value by six zones.

That is, $\frac{66.5}{6} = 11.1\%$

The analysis of table 1 showed that there was improvement in the 2019 voter registration compared to 2015 voter registration in Nigeria where south-south has recorded the highest improvement with 15.4% followed by southeast, northeast and north-central with 12.4%, 12.2% and 11.2% respectively while southwest and northwest have 8.5% and 6.8% respectively. To this effect, the total per cent improvement of voter registration in the zones of Nigeria in the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections is 11.1%

Table 2: Voter Turnout in the 2015 and 2019 Presidential Elections in Nigeria

States	2015	2019	% Difference
Northwest	9,449,304	8,966,457	-9.3
Northcentral	4,294,232	4,446,050	-6.7
Northeast	4,023,354	4,898,950	-1.5
Southsouth	5,552,925	3,675,676	-29.9
Southeast	3,060,093	2,467,087	-14.9
Southwest	4,927,526	4,442,205	-8.4
Total	31,307,434	24,896,425	-70.7

Source: Source: INEC, 2015; Opeyemi, 2015 and Vanguard, 2019

$$\frac{\text{2015 zone's Voter Turnout}}{\text{2015 zone's Registered Voters}} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

$$\frac{\text{2019 zone's Voter Turnout}}{\text{2019 zone's Registered Voters}} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

However, we subtracted the % value of 2015 zone's voter turnout from the 2019 zone's voter turnout to get the % difference of the six geopolitical zones' voter turnout. Therefore, to determine the overall % value difference of the six zones' voter turnout, we divided the gross total of the zones %value difference by 6zones.

That is, $\frac{-70.7}{6} = -11.8\%$

The analysis of this table showed that there was higher voter turnout in the 2015 presidential elections compared to 2019 presidential elections in the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The difference is so glaring to the extent that south-south recording the lowest voter turnout with -29.9% which implied that the 2019 voter turnout of the zone decreased up to 29.9% from the voter turnout of the 2015 presidential elections followed by southeast that dropped to 14.9%, northwest 9.3%, southwest 8.4% while north-central dropped to 6.7% and northeast dropped to 1.5%. To this effect, the voters' turnout of the zones in the 2019 presidential elections dropped up to 11.8% compared to the voters' turnout of the 2015 presidential elections.

Table 3: Votes Validity in the 2015 and 2019 Presidential Elections in Nigeria

States	2015	2019	% Impact Value
Northwest	8,405,577	8,423,389	5.4
Northcentral	3,852,178	4,177,172	4.3
Northeast	3,672,348	4,023,354	2.2
Southsouth	5,168,330	3,355,081	-1.8
Southeast	2,719,654	2,220,756	1.1
Southwest	4,362,572	4,142,162	4.7
Total	28,180,656	26,341,914	15.9

Source: INEC, 2015; Opeyemi, 2015 and Vanguard, 2019

$$\frac{2015 \text{ zone's Valid Votes}}{2015 \text{ zone's Accredited Voters}} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

$$\frac{2019 \text{ zone's Valid Votes}}{2019 \text{ zone's Accredited Voters}} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

However, subtracting the % value of 2015 zone's valid votes from the 2019 zone's valid vote gives us the % impact of voter education in the zones of Nigeria.

Therefore, to determine the overall % value impact of voter education in the zones, we divided the gross total of the zones % impact of voter education by 6 zones.

That is, $\frac{15.9}{6} = 2.65\%$

The analysis of this table showed that there is improvement in the impact of voter education in the geopolitical zones of Nigeria during the 2019 presidential elections more than the 2015 presidential elections except in the south-south that had -1.8%. The table showed that northwest had the highest impact of voter education with 5.4%, and southwest recorded 4.7% while the north-central pulled 4.3% as northeast and southeast had 2.2% and 1.1% respectively. To this effect, the total percentage impact of voter education on the votes' validity in the zones of Nigeria improved with 2.65% from the outcome of the 2015 presidential elections.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study provoked the need for an advanced voter education that will pierce into the subconscious minds of Nigerians with a view to eradicate the negative orientations they have about Nigerian Politics via participation as well advocated that political actors and the relevant managers of electoral process should build and maintain high sense of confidence, credibility, transparency and accountability because lack of trust in such institution of government charged with such magnificent responsibility can make the citizens lose interest in any political issue. Hence, the study concluded that there is nexus between the voter education and political participation; indicating that there will be no effective and efficient participation in the political process without a high pedigree of adequate voter education. At this juncture, the study made the following recommendations:

- i. Nigerians should rise to their civic responsibilities to be able to hold political bourgeois accountable for democratic dividends and other constitutional obligations. At such, they should move in mass to register and obtain voter's card in the subsequent voter registration exercise since voter's card is an instrument of positive change not just for identification.
- ii. Nigerians should have the mindset that election is an opportunity to vote-out unpopular candidate or party and vote-in a credible candidate or party. Of course, the time of election is an opportunity of the citizens to make a credible choice of the right leadership. That is, making their votes count as to break the jinx of elitism recycling.
- iii. The government of Nigeria and other relevant agencies should grant adequate priorities to voter education considering the fact that teaming Nigerians are not educationally and technologically advanced. Voter education should be a daily assignment to the people concerned to ensure that every Nigerian person is adequately re-oriented positively.

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