



THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL MATERIALISM ON VOTER APATHY IN NIGERIA: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY

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Cite this article:

Mary D. S. I., Chilaka F. C.,
Degi J. M., Yonmo D. P.
(2024), The Impact of Political
Materialism on Voter Apathy
in Nigeria: A Mixed-Methods
Study. African Journal of
Social Sciences and
Humanities Research 7(3),
266-281. DOI:
10.52589/AJSSHR-
ZWZOLVD3

Manuscript History

Received: 18 Jun 2024

Accepted: 14 Aug 2024

Published: 23 Aug 2024

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ABSTRACT: *This paper examines the relationship between materialistic politics and voter apathy in Nigeria's democratic processes. The study explores how the competitive pursuit of wealth and power among political elites, often prioritized over public service, contributes to growing disengagement among voters. Factors investigated include eroding trust in political institutions, widespread corruption, and elected officials' failure to address pressing socioeconomic issues. The influence of material incentives, such as financial inducements and patronage, is also considered. Anchored in Rational Choice theory, which posits that individuals act to maximize self-interest based on available information and potential outcomes, the research employs a mixed-methods approach. Data was collected through literature review and in-depth interviews with adult citizens, including representatives from political parties, civil society organizations, and professional bodies across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. The findings highlight the need for a comprehensive re-evaluation of Nigeria's political landscape, emphasizing a shift from materialistic gains to effective governance and inclusive development. The study recommends addressing the root causes of voter apathy to revitalizing Nigerian democracy, making it more inclusive, responsive, and representative of the people's will.*

KEYWORDS: Materialistic politics, Nigeria, Voter apathy, Democracy, Power.



INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, as one of the largest democracies in Africa, has faced persistent challenges related to voter apathy in its electoral processes. Voter apathy refers to the disinterest, indifference, or reluctance of eligible voters to participate in elections. This phenomenon has significant implications for the health of Nigeria's democracy. One key factor contributing to voter apathy in the country is the politics of materialism, characterized by the widespread exchange of material goods, money, and favors for votes during election campaigns.

The study on the politics of materialism and voter apathy in Nigeria is a crucial exploration of the intersection between political behavior and socioeconomic factors. Materialism explicitly refers to the widespread perception that political officeholders prioritize their personal interests, wealth accumulation, and 'corrupt practices' over the welfare of the general population. The history of Nigeria's political system, according to Adeleke (2017), is one that is grossly laced with the issue of corruption, mismanagement of public resources, and a lack of transparency in governance. This resulted in the notion of political leaders being primarily motivated by material gains rather than a commitment to public service. Nigeria's political system to Agbibo (2019) is characterized with political leaders amassing vast wealth through corrupt practices and using these resources to secure political support; this has contributed to a crisis of trust in the political system especially the protracted political crisis in Nembe Local Government Area of Bayelsa state. This culture of materialism has eroded public confidence in the integrity of elections and governance, leading to a sense of disillusionment among voters (Omotola, 2011).

Historical antecedent is essential to understanding the politics of materialism and voter apathy in Nigeria. Nigeria has experienced a turbulent storm of political instability, military rule and severe economic challenges since gaining her political independence from Great Britain on October 1st, 1960. However transition to full time democracy in 1999 marked a significant turning point in the country's political history. This supposed significant history that was laced with the hope of new and better Nigeria was shattered with issues of corruption and materialism persisted within the political landscape (Okolo, 2016).

In recent years, the country has witnessed a growing trend of materialism within its political landscape, thus leading to a concerning increase in voter apathy among its citizens (Okoli, 2020). The intertwining of materialistic interests and political decision-making has resulted in a deteriorating democratic process, characterized by a lack of faith in the political system and low voter turnout (Adewale, 2019). This complex issue has significant implications for the country's governance, social cohesion, and overall democratic health. Voters' apathy on the other hand also undermines the democratic ideals of representation and accountability. The politics of materialism is the belief that material goods and wealth are the most important things in life. This belief makes voters apathetic towards elections, as they may believe that no matter who wins, they will not be significantly affected.

Consequently, there is a high level of voter apathy, with only 35.6% of eligible voters turning out to vote in the 2019 general elections. This is due to a number of factors, including poverty, corruption, and a lack of trust in the electoral system. The politics of materialism can exacerbate this problem, as it can lead voters to believe that voting is not worth their time, as no candidate will be able to significantly improve their material conditions. A study by Etido-Inyang (2020) found that voter apathy in Nigeria is more common among young people, the



poor, and those who live in rural areas. The study also linked voter apathy to the erroneous conception by people that elections are not fair and that politicians are corrupt. Politics of materialism, another powerful tool that has weakened Nigeria's political development unceremoniously manifested itself in the forms of vote buying and the distribution of material goods, and is also identified as a major contributing factor to voters' apathy.

Despite these submissions, there remains a lack of comprehensive empirical studies that examine the extent of the relationship between voter apathy and politics of materials and its implications for the country's democracy. Understanding the dynamics of the politics of materialism and its impact on voter apathy is crucial for devising effective strategies to enhance civic engagement and strengthen democracy in Nigeria.

Drawing from the above narratives, the study seeks to investigate how the politics of materialism, often associated with the pursuit of personal gain and wealth, influences voter apathy in Nigeria, identifying potential strategies to address this issue while delving into deeper complex relationship between materialism in Nigerian politics and rising voter apathy. Understanding this relationship is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it sheds light on the underlying causes of voter apathy in Nigeria, offering insights into the factors that deter citizens from participating in the democratic process (Iloh&Eme, 2018). Secondly, it underscores the need for electoral reforms and anti-corruption measures to address the issue of materialism in politics and restore faith in the electoral system (Obi &Adebanwi, 2011).

Furthermore, this research is timely in the context of Nigeria's evolving political landscape, with ongoing debates on governance, corruption, and democratic consolidation (Adigun, 2020). By examining the politics of materialism and its impact on voter apathy, this study contributes to the scholarly discourse on Nigerian politics while offering practical insights for policymakers, civil society organizations, and international stakeholders working towards strengthening democracy in Nigeria. In the light of the above narration, this study is saddled with the following research questions:

- i. What are the primary factors behind low voter turnout in specific regions or demographics within Nigeria?
- ii. To what extent do financial incentives (e.g. cash distribution or promises of employment) influence voter behavior in Nigerian elections?
- iii. How does the use of material inducements by political candidates affect voter turnout in Nigerian elections?



CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

To appreciate the dynamism of a particular phenomenon/topic according to Chilaka and Yonmo (2023), it is very necessary to first clarify the keywords surrounding the topic. As such, this unit is concerned with providing an overview of the concepts of political materialism, highlighting the meaning of politics, materialism, political apathy and the nexus between materialism and political apathy, and its implication for Nigerian politics.

Political Materialism

It is important to firstly debunk the meaning of politics and materialism before collapsing the two and interpreting their implications to the study. Confusion exists on the actual meaning of politics, this arises from the question amongst political scholars on what actually constitutes politics and/or what politics ought to be. This is further complicated by the difficulty in annexing the actual play of politics on the field by 'politicians' as taught in the classroom by political scientists. Hence, many different conflicting definitions abound. However, we shall take a few of these numerous definitions. Laswell (1936, p 3) defines "Politics as the process of determining 'who gets what, when, and how.'" This definition emphasizes the allocation of resources and power in society, highlighting the fundamental role of politics in decision-making and the distribution of benefits and burdens among individuals and groups. Heywood (2013, p. 2) added that politics is "the activities, actions, and policies used to gain and hold power in a government or to influence the government".

Politics can also be defined as the authoritative allocation of values for a society (Easton 1953). Easton's definition underscores the role of authority and the allocation of values, which can include not only material resources but also rights, privileges, and recognition within a society. These definitions, among others, provide insight into the complex and multifaceted nature of politics as a field of study and as a fundamental aspect of human societies. Politics involves the exercise of power, decision-making, and the allocation of resources and values, and it plays a crucial role in shaping the organization and functioning of communities, states, and nations. The central crux of these definitions underscore politics as the life wire of a nation's existence.

Materialism: Materialism in the Nigerian context refers to a cultural and societal phenomenon characterized by a strong emphasis on the pursuit of material wealth, possessions, and consumerism as a primary measure of success and social status. It is the accumulation of material possessions, such as flashy cars, designer clothing, and large houses (Ekeh, 1975). It also connotes the pervasive influence of financial gain, personal wealth accumulation, and other material possessions as primary motivations and driving forces behind the actions and decisions of political actors within the Nigerian political landscape. Omotola (2016, p. 25) defines materialism as "the belief that the possession of material goods is the most important thing in life". He argues that materialism can lead to voter apathy. That it is often associated with a focus on wealth, possessions, and status. In Nigerian politics, materialism can be seen in the way that politicians often use material inducements to win votes, such as providing money, food, or other gifts to voters. It can also be seen in the way that politicians are often seen as corrupt and interested only in enriching themselves (Adeola, 2018).



Having underscored the meanings of politics and materialism, the research can now delve into the concept of political materialism as it applies into the study. Now, collapsing the two concepts, Adeleke (2017) sees political materialism occurring when political officeholders prioritize their personal interests, wealth accumulation and corrupt practices over the welfare of the general population. Nigeria's political system has since been laced with the history of corruption, mismanagement of public funds for self-aggrandizement, lack of transparency in governance (Adeleke, 2017). The consequence of this is the erosion of trust between the electorate, politicians and the electoral process. According to Aiyede (2013), political materialism leads to the erroneous misconception of electorates that political leaders are primarily motivated by material gain rather than a commitment to public service. The system connotes the pervasive influence of wealth, patronage and corruption on political decision and electoral process. Agbiboa (2019) also describes the Nigeria political system as one characterized with political leaders amassing vast wealth through corrupt practices and using these resources to secure political support during election campaigns. Another consequence of these is the erosion of confidence in the integrity of elections and governance, leading to a sense of disillusionment amongst voters (Omotola, 2011).

Voter Apathy in Nigeria: Voter apathy generally does not occur in a vacuum but in a political system which may be a consequence many of factors such as political materialism (using of wealth to lure voters and not representing their interests afterwards), electoral malpractices and failed campaign promises as in the case of Nigeria. This phenomenon has eaten deep into Nigeria's political system with gross ripple effects on the country's political development. The concept can be defined as a situation where eligible voters disengage from the electoral process, leading to low voter turnout during elections. Nigeria has faced challenges related to voter apathy, as citizens often feel disillusioned (lost confidence) with the political system due to the perceived corruption and ineffectiveness of political leaders (Ogunyemi, 2019). It is disengagement from the electoral process due to various factors, including a lack of faith in the political system, perceived futility of voting, and a sense of powerlessness (Ibeanu, 2005). In Nigeria, this phenomenon has become particularly pronounced in recent years, with declining voter turnout rates in national elections (INEC, 2019). The increasing apathy among voters raises fundamental questions about the sustainability of democracy in Nigeria.

Adeola (2018) found that voter apathy in Nigeria is a complex issue that is caused by a variety of factors, including:

- (i) Lack of trust in the political system: Many Nigerians believe that the political system is corrupt and that their votes do not matter.
- (ii) Dissatisfaction with the candidates: The two major political parties in Nigeria, the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), are both seen as corrupt and ineffective.
- (iii) Insecurity: Many Nigerians are afraid to vote because of the threat of violence.
- (iv) Lack of education: Many Nigerians are not educated about the political process and do not understand the importance of voting.



The Nexus between Materialism and Voter Apathy in Nigeria Political System

The nexus between materialism and politics is a complex and multifaceted one, and there is a growing body of literature that suggests a strong link between materialism in politics and voter apathy. The perception that politicians prioritize personal enrichment over public welfare erode trust in the electoral process (Ojo, 2018), and when voters believe that their participation in politics does not lead to meaningful change, they are more likely to abstain from voting (Idowu, 2020).

Materialism is the belief that the possession of material goods is the most important thing in life. Politics is the process by which people make decisions about how to organize their society. The two concepts are interrelated in a number of ways. In fact, political materialism and voter apathy are sides of a coin, whereby the existence of one is the essence of the other. These relationships are often knitted on their impacts on each other. One way in which materialism can impact politics is by leading to a decline in civic engagement. When people are more focused on acquiring material possessions, they are less likely to be interested in participating in the political process. This is because they believe that their votes do not matter or that they cannot make a difference. For example, a study by Adeola (2018) found that materialism was a significant predictor of voter apathy in Nigeria.

Another way in which materialism affects politics is by contributing to corruption. Politicians who are motivated by the desire for material possessions are more likely to use their positions to enrich themselves at the expense of the public good. This undermines the legitimacy of the political system and makes it difficult to address social problems. For example, a study by Omotola (2016) found that materialism was a significant predictor of corruption in Nigeria. Finally, materialism can also lead to a widening gap between the rich and the poor. When people are focused on acquiring material possessions, they become less likely to care about the well-being of others. These acts lead to a situation where the wealthy have access to more resources and opportunities than the poor. This was supported by Sen (1977), who found that materialism was a significant predictor of income inequality in India. The nexus between materialism and politics is a complex issue, and there is no easy solution. However, by understanding the relationship between these two concepts, we can begin to develop strategies to address the problems that they can cause.

Theoretical Perspective

The study adopts the rational choice theory (RCT) which is a political science theory that assumes voters are rational actors who make decisions based on their own self-interest. This means that voters will only vote for a candidate if they believe that the candidate will provide them with the greatest benefits. The theory posits further that individuals make decisions by carefully weighing the costs and benefits of different options and choosing the one that maximizes their utility or welfare. It also assumes that individuals are rational actors who pursue their self-interest. This notion has since been influential in political science because it provides a systematic way to understand political behavior.

Application of the Theory to the Study

By application, Downs (1957) argues that voters are rational actors who choose the political party that is closest to their own preferences because it maximizes their utility. The theory is also frequently applied to the study of voting behavior. In this context, individuals are viewed



as rational actors who decide whether to vote and which candidate to support based on a cost-benefit analysis. Riker and Ordeshook (1968) introduced the concept of the "paradox of voting," which suggests that rational individuals should not vote because the probability of their vote influencing the election outcome is extremely low.

The politics of materialism is the belief that material goods and wealth are the most important things in life. This belief can lead voters to be apathetic towards elections, as they may believe that no matter who wins, they will not be significantly affected. In Nigeria, there is a high level of voter apathy. This is due to a number of factors, including poverty, corruption, and a lack of trust in the electoral system. RCT suggests that voter apathy in Nigeria can be explained by the politics of materialism. Voters in Nigeria are often poor and struggling to make ends meet. They may believe that voting will not change their material conditions, so they may choose not to vote. Additionally, corruption is widespread in Nigeria, and voters may believe that their vote will not make a difference, as the election will be rigged. Finally, a lack of trust in the electoral system can also lead to voter apathy. Voters may believe that the election will not be fair, so they may choose not to vote.

Contending Perspectives of Politics of Materialism and Voter Apathy in Nigeria

The politics of materialism and voter apathy in Nigeria have been the subject of much debate. Three contending perspectives have been put forward to explain this phenomenon: the materialist perspective, the institutional perspective, and the socio-cultural perspective.

i. The materialist perspective

It argues that voter apathy in Nigeria is attributable to the fact that people are more interested in material goods and wealth than in politics. This is supported by the fact that Nigeria is a very poor country, and many people struggle to make ends meet. As a result, they see voting as a waste of time, as they do not believe that it will make a difference in their lives. Omotola (2016, p. 25) in an article titled "The Impact of Materialism on Voter Apathy in Nigeria" demonstrates that materialism has a significant impact on voter apathy in Nigeria. Omotola defining materialism as "the belief that the possession of material goods is the most important thing in life" argues that materialism metamorphosed into voter apathy in three ways which are:

i. Materialism to decline in civic engagement: The argument here is that when people are more focused on acquiring material possessions, they are less likely to be interested in participating in the political process. This is because they may believe that their votes do not matter or that they cannot make a difference.

ii. Materialism to a distrust of politicians: When people believe that politicians are only interested in enriching themselves, they are less likely to believe that their vote can make a difference. This is because they may believe that politicians are not working in their best interests.

iii. Materialism to a sense of hopelessness: When people believe that they cannot change their circumstances, they are less likely to vote. This is because they may believe that their vote is not worth the effort.



Omotola's study is based on a survey of 1,000 randomly selected voters in Nigeria. The survey found that materialism was a significant predictor of voter apathy. This means that people who were more materialistic were more likely to be apathetic about voting. The study also found that materialism was more likely to lead to voter apathy among young people and people who were less educated. Omotola concludes by arguing that materialism is a major challenge to democracy in Nigeria. He suggests that the government should take steps to promote civic education and to reduce poverty and inequality. He also suggests that the media should play a role in raising awareness of the negative consequences of materialism.

Akinola (2017, p. 2) argues that "the high level of poverty and inequality in Nigeria has led to a situation where people are more concerned with their immediate material needs than with abstract political concepts such as democracy and good governance Collaborating Akinola (2017, p. 25), Omotola (2019, p. 32) submits that "voters in Nigeria are more likely to vote for candidates who can provide them with material benefits, such as jobs or financial assistance."

ii. **The institutional perspective**

This perspective argues that voter apathy in Nigeria is attributed to the fact that the electoral system is not seen as fair or credible. This is supported by the fact that there have been many cases of electoral fraud and rigging in Nigeria. As a result, people may believe that their votes do not matter and that they are wasting their time by voting. Adetula (2018) examines the causes and consequences of voter apathy in Nigeria. He argues that voter apathy is a major problem in Nigeria and that it undermines democracy in the country. He added that "the lack of trust in the electoral system is a major factor contributing to voter apathy in Nigeria." (Adetula, 2018, p. 35). Onuoha (2019, p. 42) also finds that "many Nigerians believe that the electoral system is rigged and that their vote will not make a difference."

Adetula (2018) considering how pervasive voter apathy is to the Nigeria political system therefore suggests a number of strategies that can curtail its excesses which include: making the electoral system more transparent and accountable; promoting civic education; and addressing the root causes of poverty and inequality.

iii. **The socio-cultural perspective**

To the proponents of this perspective, voter apathy in Nigeria is attributed to the fact that people are not interested in politics. This is supported by the fact that Nigeria has a long history of military rule, and that people have become accustomed to not having a say in their government. As a result, they may not see the point in voting, as they believe that the government will do whatever it wants regardless of who is elected.

Uche (2016) in his article titled "The Role of Culture in Voter Apathy in Nigeria" identified cultural factors as playing significant roles in voter apathy in Nigeria. He identifies four cultural factors that contribute to voter apathy which are the culture of clientelism, the culture of apathy, the culture of fear, and the culture of indifference. Uche argues that these cultural factors can be overcome by promoting a culture of civic engagement and political participation. This, according to him, could be done by educating people about the political process, making it easier to register to vote, and providing security at the polls. Adebayo (2020, p. 15) also collaborating with Uche, argues that "the culture of political apathy in Nigeria is deeply rooted in the country's history." Adewale (2021, p. 28) also finds that



“many Nigerians are simply not interested in politics, and see it as a dirty game that is not worth their time.”

Adeola (2000), in *Materialism and Political Fragmentation in Nigeria*, gave an historical analysis of political materialism and traced the roots of materialism in Nigeria to the colonial period when the British introduced their own materialistic values to the country. The culture of materialism was further reinforced by the oil boom of the 1970s, which led to a dramatic increase in wealth inequality in Nigeria. Adeola (2000) further argues that materialism has had a number of negative consequences for Nigerian politics. First, it has led to a decline in civic engagement, as people become more focused on acquiring material possessions than on participating in the political process. Second, it has contributed to corruption, as politicians are more likely to be motivated by the desire for personal gain than by the desire to serve the public good. Third, it has made it difficult to address important social problems such as poverty and inequality. Adeola concludes by submitting that the only way to overcome the negative consequences of materialism is to change the values that are dominant in Nigerian society. This could be done by promoting values such as civic engagement, social justice, and environmental sustainability.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

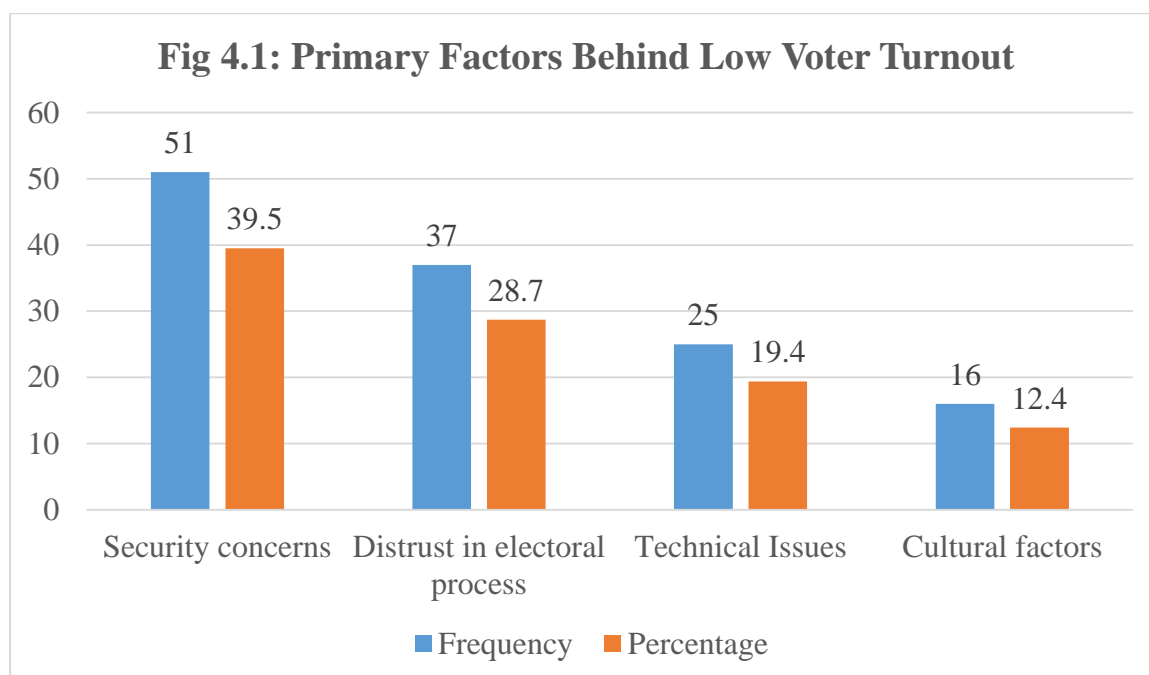
The method adopted in this study is pragmatism, a methodological framework within the ambit of research which allows for the combination of multiple approaches. Following this, the study employs the mixed research design which is a combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches in collecting and analyzing data. The population of the study comprises eligible voters selected across the six geo-political zones of the country. The sample size for this study is 196. In addition to this, 36 Key Persons Informant (KPI), made up of political experts such as civil society organizations, professional bodies and politicians are drawn across the six geo-political zones for the purpose of the qualitative (thematic) data analysis section. Thus, bringing the total population of the study to 232. The data analysis was done using descriptive methods for the quantitative data and a careful in-depth literature/thematic analysis for the qualitative data

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings from Questionnaires

Findings from the [closed ended] questionnaires shall be done based on the research questions as clearly shown below. It is pertinent to note here that out of the 196 survey questionnaires distributed, 129 were duly completed, collated and analyzed.

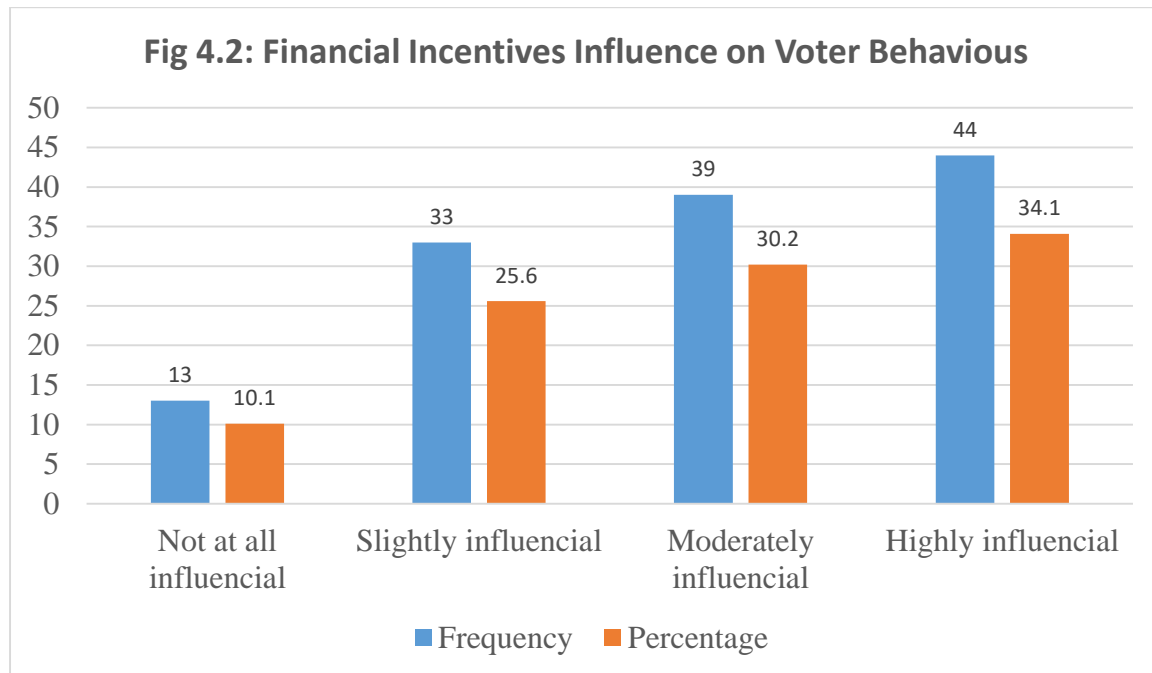
Question 1: What are the primary factors behind low voter turnout in specific regions or demographics within Nigeria?



Sources: Researchers' Field Work (2024)

Fig 4.1 above shows information regarding the major factors behind low voter turnout in specific regions or demographics of the country. It can be deduced from the bar chart as shown above that a significant number of the respondents 51 (39.5%) argued that security concerns is the main factor that causes low voter turnout in parts of the country. A further 37 (28.7%) of the respondents blamed low voter turnout in some parts of Nigeria on distrust in electoral institutions and their process. 29 (19.4%) and 16 (12.4%) respondents blamed the problem of low voter turnout in Nigeria on the issues of technical and cultural factors experienced before and during elections. The outcome of this survey explicitly links low voter turnout which is also known as political apathy to security concerns (fear of attack at pulling units etc.), distrust in political institutions. This finding was supported by Ibeanu (2005), who defines voter apathy as the disengagement from the electoral process due to various factors, including a lack of faith in the political system, perceived futility of voting, and a sense of powerlessness

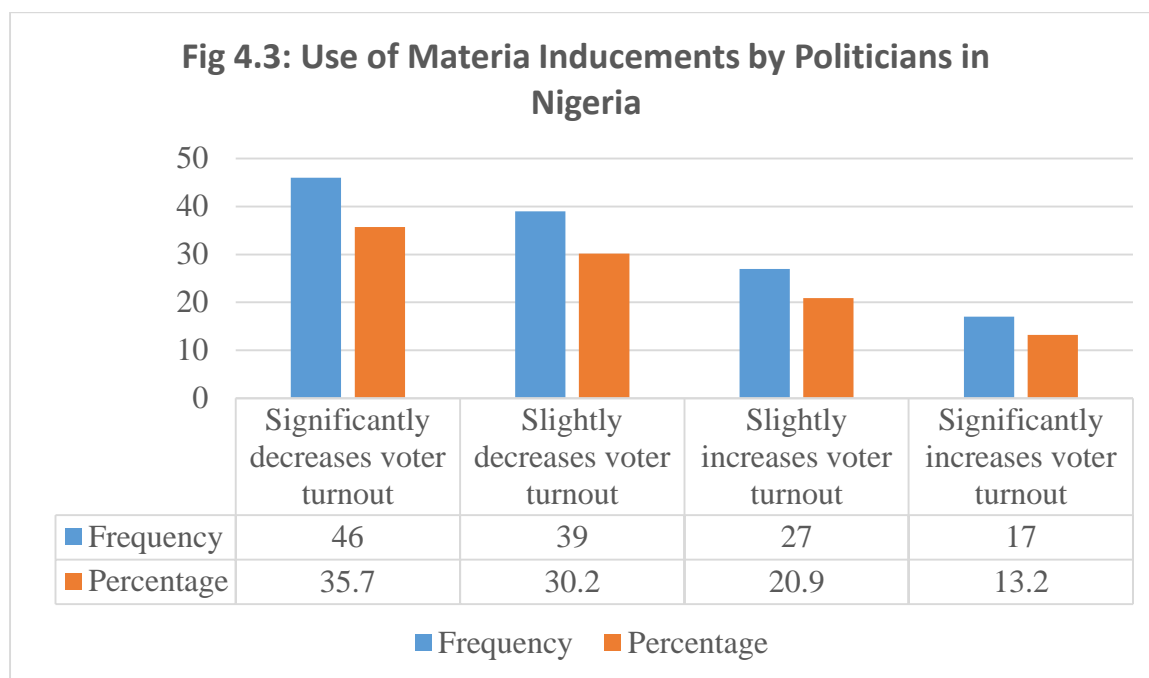
Question 2: How much do you believe financial incentives (e.g. cash distribution or promises of employment) influence voter behavior in Nigerian elections?



Source: *Researchers' Field Work (2024)*

Fig. 4.2 clearly indicates respondents' view on how financial incentives such as cash distribution or promises of employment by politicians before and during elections influence the voters' behavior and election results in Nigeria. According to the data on the above bar chart, an overall total of 116 which is 89.9% of the respondents overwhelmingly agreed that financial incentives influence voter behavior, consequently election outcomes in Nigeria. This influence according to them is either slightly, moderately and or highly as shown in the distribution above. The central crux of their argument is that financial inducement is influential on voters' behavior. This submission was clearly supported by Aiyede (2013), who in his work sees political materialism as a situation in which political leaders are primarily motivated by material gain rather than a commitment to public service. That is, the pervasive influence of wealth, patronage, and corruption on political decisions and electoral outcomes.

Question 3: How does the use of material inducements by political candidates affect voter turnout in Nigerian elections?



Source: *Researchers' Field Work (2024)*

The data above shows the distribution of respondents on the impacts of material inducement on politicians in Nigeria elections. The bar chart indicates that 46 (35.7%) of the respondents said material inducement significantly decreases voter turnout in Nigeria, 39 (30.2) of the respondents said slightly decreases voter turnout, 27 (20.9) of the respondents said it slightly increases voter turnout and 17 (13.2%) of the respondents said it significantly increases voter turnout. Findings from the above data indicate that material inducement indeed affects voter turnout in Nigeria elections. This finding was supported by Omotola (2011), who clearly stated negative effects of materialism in Nigeria's political system. To him, the culture of materialism has eroded public confidence in the integrity of elections and governance, leading to a sense of disillusionment among voters (Omotola, 2011).

Findings from the Interviews

As stated early (in the section of the research methodology), the plan was to reach 36 KPIs; this however reduced to 23 due to many factors amongst which include the inability of the researchers to visit all selected states in the six zones, and the unwillingness of some participants to avail themselves for telephone/whatsapp interviews.

Theme 1: Primary factors behind low voter turnout in specific regions or demographics within Nigeria

The respondents expressed their thoughts on the factors behind low voter turnout in specific regions within Nigeria. There seems to be some consensus amongst participants of this interview about key factors that lead to low voter turnout in the specific regions of the country. Area of convergence in their responses for instance was when they attributed low voter turnout to lack of trust in politicians, and belief that their votes do not count or make a



difference in the ballot system, among others. This was submitted by all the KPIS in this interview section. However, some of their submissions are summarized below:

Security concerns: In some regions, including parts of the southeast, fears of violence or intimidation at polling stations can deter voters (KPI Participant, Professional Bodies).

Technical issues: Problems with voter registration, distribution of Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs), or the use of electronic voting systems can prevent some from voting (KPI Participant, Professional Bodies).

The position of the above interview clearly aligns with the outcome of the questionnaire data presented fig. 5.1 where respondents identified security fears and technical issues as the major causes of low voter turn in specific regions of the country.

Voter apathy: Many Nigerians feel their votes don't count or that elections won't bring meaningful change, leading to disengagement from the political process (KPI Participant, Politician).

Distrust in electoral institutions: Perceptions of corruption or bias in the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) can discourage participation (KPI Participant, Civil Society Organization).

The submissions made by respondents are true. This is so because their claims were supported by findings of Adetula (2018) and Omotola (2016). However, factors for low voter turnout are influenced based on the peculiar experiences of the different zones of the country. The southeast specifically, factors like the activities of separatist groups, historical feelings of marginalization, and occasional calls for election boycotts have sometimes contributed to lower turnout compared to some other regions.

Theme 2: The extent to which financial incentives, such as cash distribution or promises of employment, influence voter behavior in Nigerian elections?

According to the participants in this interview, financial incentives, including cash distribution and promises of employment, have significant influence on voter behavior in Nigerian elections in so many ways. Their responses are summarized below;

Direct cash handouts are sometimes used to sway voters, particularly in economically disadvantaged areas. This can influence both turnout and voting choices (KPI Participant, Politician).

In regions like the northeast and north central, for instance with high unemployment rates, promises of jobs can be a powerful motivator for many voters, potentially swaying their choices (KPI Participant, Civil Society Organization).

Responses from the civil society organizations and politicians as summarized above indicate the pervasive influence of financial inducement and fake campaign promises on voters' behavior in Nigeria. It can be deduced from their submissions that the act of financial inducement or incentives create the problem of distrust between electorates and politicians, and a lack of confidence on the part of the electorates and the electoral process of the country. A consequence of this according to them is the low voters' turnout (form of political apathy)



which was evidenced in the 2019 General election in Nigeria as shown in Figure 1 above. The above submission is in line with the findings of Omotola (2011).

It is however important to note that while financial incentives can significantly influence voter behavior, their impact is not uniform across all voters or regions. Factors such as education levels, political awareness, and strength of ideological commitments can mediate the effectiveness of these incentives.

Theme 3: Use of material inducements by politicians resulting in increased or decreased voter turnout in Nigerian elections

This question is though more or less synonymous to the previous question which focused on financial inducements and fake campaign promises that grossly affect voter behavior in Nigeria. Despite this, there still exists the need to separate the two interview questions.

The use of material inducements by political candidates in Nigerian elections has complex effects on voter turnout. According to the participants in this interview, the use of material inducements by political candidates tends to have a mixed impact on voter turnout in Nigerian elections. In some cases, it can lead to increased turnout, while in others it may result in decreased participation. Below are a few of their responses. For those that suggested potential increased turnout;

Mobilization effect: Handouts can motivate some voters to go to the polls who might otherwise have stayed home.

Increased engagement: The distribution of goods or money can create a sense of obligation or reciprocity, encouraging recipients to vote.

For those with potential for decreased turnout:

Cynicism and apathy: Widespread vote-buying can lead to disillusionment with the political process, causing some voters to abstain (KPI Participant, Professional Bodies).

Intimidation: In some cases, the distribution of inducements may be accompanied by threats or pressure, which can deter voting (KPI Participant, Civil Society Organization).

Logistical issues: The chaos sometimes associated with the distribution of inducements can disrupt the voting process (KPI Participant, Politician).

One can deduce from the findings of the above responses that effects of material inducement by politicians on turnout likely varies depending on local contexts, the scale of inducements, and how they are perceived by different communities. In some areas, material inducements may boost short-term turnout but potentially harm long-term democratic engagement. This clearly shows the relationship between politics of materialism and voter apathy as supported by the findings of Adeola (2000), Omotola (2011) and Omotola (2016) in the literature review.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study highlights the pervasive influence of materialism in Nigeria politics and its detrimental effects on civic engagement and governance. It underscores the need for reforms to combat voter apathy and promote a more transparent and accountable political system. Based on the findings, the study recommends the following solution as a panacea to abate the gross ripple effects of voter apathy and the politics of materialism in Nigeria.

- There is a need to strengthen electoral laws and institutions to prevent vote-buying and other forms of electoral fraud.
- There is a need to fight corruption in order to restore public trust in the political system.
- There is a need to create more job opportunities in order to reduce poverty and the materialistic nature of the electorates toward their civic role. voters about
- There is a need to educate their rights and responsibilities in order to increase voter turnout and engagement.
- There is also a need to make it easier for people to vote, by creating three days public holiday prior to the Election Day and providing transportation to polling stations.
- Addressing the politics of materialism and voter apathy is essential for strengthening democracy in Nigeria. When people are engaged in the political process, they are more likely to hold politicians accountable and demand good governance.

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