



A Study of Factors that Influenced Voters' Behaviour: A Case of Billiri Local Government (2019 General Elections)

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Abstract:

Various factors influenced voters' behaviour in an election. Sometimes in the same election it differs or reshows its case in another. In Nigeria's experiences, religion, ethnicity, region etc. tend to be dominant factors. This work had examined the factors that influenced voters' behaviour in 2019 general elections in Billiri local government. Both secondary and primary sources of data were utilized. Electronic close-ended questionnaires were administered and rational choice theory served as theoretical framework. The proposition of rational choice was outlined which include: Know what their own priorities are (lower taxes, less crime, a clearer environment etc.); gather as much information as they can about the various candidates and understand their position on the issues; understand what the likely consequences will be if this or that candidate get elected; and vote for those candidate who are most likely to satisfy those priorities once in office. Exercise of right and obligation and political aspirants influenced voters' behaviour more than any others factors. With high likelihood of not being influenced by any other and will be by the same in near future. The work recommended: constitutional conduct of public life, proper voter education and research toward true independent of INEC.

Keywords: Democracy, Democratization, Election, Voting, Voting behaviour

Introduction

The modern history of academic voting research began in 1940 at Columbia University, where a team of social scientists assembled by Paul Lazarsfeld pioneered the application of survey research to the study of electoral behaviour. As occasionally happens with major innovations, this pioneering effort seems

even in the light of subsequent advances to have been remarkably sophisticated, (Larry, 2008).

Democratization of Nigerian political life is as old as the process of colonization and decolonization of Nigeria. This is born out of the fact that some Nigerian collaborated with

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the British in colonization and decolonization of Nigeria, (Falola, 1991, pp. 75-90). In the words of Ujo (2012, 57), Clifford constitution of 1922 introduced elective principles which gave Nigerian (in Calabar and Lagos) opportunity to elect those who will have made decision on their behalf. The first opportunity for all Nigerians to vote was held in 1959 general election, under the leadership of Chief R. C. Wraith and by Federal Electoral Commission (FEC). The voting pattern that emerged was tribal, ethnic and regional, (Kurfi, 2005, p. 26).

The 1964 general election was conducted by Federal Electoral Commission, under the leadership of Chief Eyo Eswa. Ujo (2012:62) posit that "the ugly truth about the 1964 election was that it introduced ethnicity as a decisive factor in electoral politics in Nigeria. Each region regarded the election as a tribal war". The 1979 election were conducted under the leadership of Chief Michael Ani by Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO). The most controversial issues were the rejection of the nomination of Chief Odumegwu Ojukwu by FEDECO and what two-third of 19th states means. The political parties that participated in the election have a national outlook and ideology, hence, party identification was the one of the factors that influenced voters' behaviour (Kurfi, 2005, p. 28).

The 1983 general election were conducted by the Federal Electoral Commission (FEC), under the leadership of Justice Victor Erereko Ovie-Whiskey. The election witnesses the used of incumbency power. The 1999 general elections were conducted by Independence National Electoral Commission (INEC) under the leadership of Chief Ephraim Akpata.

Toward 2003 general elections, according to Ujo (2012, 88) the country witness political instability in form of violence and political assassination. The 2003 general elections

were conducted by an Independence National Electoral Commission (INEC), under the leadership of Dr. Guobadia. The 2007 general elections were conducted under the leadership of Professor Maurice Iwu. INEC introduced the use of direct data capture machines for voters' registration and limited campaign funding. Cited in Ujo (2012, 90), "2007 elections were described by international and local observers as the worst in the history of election, not only in Nigeria, but also in the world".

Shehu (2014, pp. 57-58) in a survey conducted in Billiri Local government area on 2011 general elections disclosed a paradigm shift in voting patter to voting for political aspirants and civic exercise of right and obligation as citizens. Furthermore, INEC under the leadership of Atahiru Jega, introduced Card reader machine to curtail election malpractice.

During the 2015 elections many factors influenced voter's choice. According to Sule et al (2017:11) in the presidential election religion and ethnic sentiments influenced voters' choice with less significant thus affirmed that media and social media socialization account for shift in political, economic and social contexts. On the premise of socialization- campaign promise, Sheriff and Asbullahi (2015, pp. 12-13) noted that fear, insecurity, expectations and economic situation accounted for the paradigm shift in voting patter to address the insecurity in the country. Whereas, to Adamu and Abubakar (2017, 58) ethnic and kinship affiliation played significant role than party, issues and ideology in Bauchi state governorship election.

Toward 2019 general elections, Shehu (2018, 7) called on Nigerian's youths to ensure peace and unity of Nigeria before, during and after elections. And that voting pattern should reflect national needs than any

others factors. For these and many more to be achieved, INEC maintain the use of smart card reader in addition to electronic collation and transmission. The presiding officers (POs) were responsible for the e-transmission and e-collation from their respect polling unit, (INEC 2018 Manual for electoral officials). According to one of election official in charge of smart card reader who responds on anonymity, that a nationwide survey for more effective network at each election point was conducted and if network failed, the POs can still summit at ward area manual collation centre.

To this end, this research intends to study the factors that influenced voters' behaviour in 2019 general elections, in Billiri local government. The objectives of the research are: to identify the factors that influenced voters' behaviour, examine the extent to which these factors influence voters' behaviour and propose ways in which the effect of these factors on voters' behaviour can be addressed.

Null and alternate hypotheses are formulated to guide the research:

H_0 There is no significance relationship between factor that influence voters' behaviour and election result.

H_1 There is a significance relationship between factors that influence voters' behaviour and the elections result.

Conceptualization

For the purpose of this work, the following concepts: democratization, democracy, election, voting and voting behaviour ought to be defined.

Democratization: Gofwen (1993, 53) defined democratization as the process of establishing democracy. This require open contests for the right to win control of government and this in turn require free elections the result of which determines who governs.

Democratization can be deduced to the process of inculcating the spirit of democracy into the populace.

Democracy: Cited in Ujo (2004, 4), Schumpeter (1967) defined democracy as "institutional arrangement for arriving at political decision in which individual acquire the power to decide by mean of a competitive struggle for the people's vote". Democracy: is the system of government in which the wills of the people is been converted into that of the government through the process of election.

Election: Encyclopaedia Britannica defined election as the means by which the people in a society make political choice by voting for competing candidate or parties. Election is a legal devise use by voters (subject) to change or endorse government/administration to continue.

Voting: Sills (1972, 387) defined voting as "a means of aggregating individual preferences into collective decision". Umaru (2003, 4) defined voting as "the mechanism by which citizens are able to express their interest and needs to their leaders". Voting: is the process of changing or supporting an existing government.

Voting Behaviour: Encyclopaedia defined voting behaviour as the main form of political participation in liberal democratic societies and the study of voting behaviour is a highly specialised sub-field within political science". Voting behaviour is the visible and invisible patterns which voters disclosed while casting their vote.

Methodology

The population of this study comprise the registered voters in Billiri local government area of Gombe state. The sample, include those who that voted during the 2019 general elections and with active social media

account during the survey – Facebook or WhatsApp. The justification for the sample is in order to facilitate the sampling technique. The sampling technique for the research is convenience, non-probability sampling and Asika (2008) assert that accidental or convenience sampling is use when the researcher is operating with little or no budget. This is due to the fact that it will cost responder time and data. Hence, it ought to be at his/her convenience.

Source of data for this study include secondary and primary. The secondary sources served as background for the study in order to link the study to existing knowledge and it includes textbooks, articles, newspaper, magazines and online materials. While the primary source, are from the researcher's observation during the elections, interview and administering (electronically) structure-questionnaires. The questionnaires are design and administered with aid of Google form. 120 respondents are targeted.

The link of the questionnaires was sent to more 120 via Facebook and WhatsApp and responds were monitored in order to receive the targeted 120. The responses will be analysis with a simple percentage. The null hypothesis will be tested with a bench mark of 51% and above accepted and below rejected.

Theoretical Framework

There are many theories in social sciences and political science in particular, just as phenomenon. Phenomenon under study determined the choice of theory that will be employed in the light of the strength of the theory to the subject matter. Rational choice theory is adopted in the study of the factors that influenced voters' behaviour in 2019 general election in Billiri local government.

Rational Choice Theory

Rational choice theory was developed by Anthony Downs. "The basic principle of ra-

tional choice theory was derived from neo-classical economics", (Ritzer & Jeffrey, 2014, p. 403). According to Ward as cited in Marsh and Gerry (2002, 403), rational choice arose as part of the behavioural revolution in American political science of the 1950s and 1960s that sought actually to examine how individuals behaved, using empirical methods. Sodaro (2001, 246) argue that rational choice theory was first used by American political scientists at the University of Michigan in a comprehensive analysis of election in the late 1940s and 1950s in United States.

According Sodaro (2004, 246) rational choice theory is the conscious intention of maximizing one's benefit not the end result, over which individual voter do not have much control. It does not concern itself with only individuals' material self-interest but also that of the community.

Downs (1957) as cited in Marsh and Gerry (2002, 65), observed that individual votes for the party which, if it got into office, is expected to yield them the highest utility. Parties are assumed to be motivated solely by the desire for office, competing for votes by changing their policy plat forms. In the of words of Ward H. Rational choice theory assumed that individuals have all the rational capacity, time and emotional detachment necessary to choose the best course of action no matter how complex the choice.

Ritzer and Jeffrey (2014, pp. 431-434), quoted Coleman's rational choice theory is also called 'purposive action'. Individual level (action) and the aggregated composed to yield the system level. Persons act purposively toward a goal (and thus the action) shaped by values or preferences. Individuals' actions bring about the behaviour of the system and to maximize their utility.

Marsh and Gerry (2002, 70) cited Little (1991) that rational choice theory "takes in-

dividuals' preference, belief and feasible strategies as causes of the action they take". Sodaro (2001, 246) summed rational voters as:

1. Know what their own priorities are (lower taxes, less crime, a clearer environment etc.);
2. Gather as much information as they can about the various candidates and understand their position on the issues;
3. Understand what the likely consequences will be if this or that candidate get elected; and
4. Vote for those candidate who are most likely to satisfy those priorities once in office.

Critique of Rational Choice Theory

Some scholars have questioned the validity and applicability of rational choice theory. For instance, scholars like Green and Shapiro (1994), as cited in Marsh and Gerry (2002, 82) the desire of rational choice theorists to generate a universal applicable model of politics leads them to evade and to ignore contrary evidence. According to Tilly (1997), as cited in Ritzer and Jeffrey (2014, 437) argue that rational choice theory has neglected to specify causal mechanisms.

From feminist point of view, England and Kilbourne (1990) have criticized the assumption of selfishness in rational choice theory; from their perspective selfishness-altruism should be considered as a variable, Ritzer and Jeffrey (2014, 438). Other believed that the theory is too individualistic and it can't explain social action. The theory has also failed to provide equilibrium between voters and political aspirant were political aspirant are rational and at the same time voter are rational. From elite theory apostles the theory is criticized on the ground that whatever will happen elite are leaders and they rule for their own interest.

Relevance of Rational Choice Theory to Study

Though rational choice theory has been criticized by numerous scholars, yet for the purpose of this study the theory is still significant. This is based on the fact that the theory is helpful among other things in: one of the argument of Downs version of the theory is that how informed the voters are aid them in making choice. Since politicians and government knew that how informed the electoral are about them attracted vote to them. Therefore, they try to made adequate publicity.

According to James Coleman, individuals' action combined together for collective action. This is relevance in the understanding voters' choice and policy preference. Applicability of the theory by voters will bring about electoral as a process and democratic as a principle development in the society in question. Base on this, one can say that the theory is more employed in developed democracy than developing.

Above all, the theory summarized factors that determined voters' choice from general to specific which are the need of the electoral.

Result Presentation and Discussion

Table 1:
Sex

Variables	Frequencies	Percentage %
Male	84	70
Female	36	30
Total	120	100

Source: online survey Nov/Dec 2019

Table 1, disclosed respondents sex where 84 male participated in the survey which constitute 70% while female is 36, 30%. Therefore, male participated in the survey more than female. Although male and female in Nigeria and Billiri in particular have equal political right, still male participate in the

election under review as disclosed by table one.

Table 2:

Ages

Variables	Frequencies	Percentage%
18-25	19	15.8
26-35	74	61.6
36-45	22	18.4
46 and above	5	4.2
Total	120	100

Source: online survey Nov/Dec 2019

Table 2, showed respondents age group which 18-25 with 19 (15.8%), 26-35 with 78 (61.6%), 36-45 with 22 (18.4%) and 46 and above 5 (4.2%). Majority of the respondents are between ages 26-35. Of which much of are single (as affirmed in the third table) and either civil servants or involved in other activities as their source of livelihood.

The respondents voted during the election because they know their right and obligation as citizens (45%) and political aspirant (30.8%), as capture in table seven. Although there was no significant relationship between the factors that influenced voters' choice with the election result, is a call for the declared winners to fulfilled their promises and attend to the needs of the electorate.

Table 3:

Marital status

Variables	Frequencies	Percentage%
Married	34	28.3
Single	83	69.2
Widowed/Widower	3	2.5
Total	120	100

Source: online survey Nov/Dec 2019

Table 3 covered marital status of the respondents. The married constitute 34 (28.3%), single 83 (69.2%) and widowed/widower 3 (2.5%). The result showed that single partici-

pated more than married and widowed/widower during the survey. This implied that the participant desired better life themselves and the future generation.

Table 4:

highest level of education

Variables	Frequencies	Percentage%
Adult & non-formal Education/Primary	5	4.2
Secondary	11	9.2
Diploma/NCE	21	17.5
Degree and above	83	69.1
Total	120	100

Source: online survey Nov/Dec 2019

Table 4, captured respondent's qualification in which adult and non-formal education/primary school 5 (4.2%), secondary 11 (9.2%), diploma/NCE 21 (17.5%) and degree and above 83 (69.1%). The percentages of the degree and above showed they contributed to the studies more than others. From the rational theory is the participants are knowledgeable to know what their own priorities are (lower taxes, less crime, a clearer environment, security etc.) and have gather as much information as they can about the various candidates and understand their position on the issues. The likely consequences for each candidate informed their voting pattern.

Table 5:

Profession

Variables	Frequencies	Percentage%
Farmer	8	6.6
Politicians	5	4.2
Civil servant	54	45
Others	53	44.2
Total	120	100

Source: online survey Nov/Dec 2019

Table 5, goes for respondents' occupation, the categories that participated are farmer 8 (6.6%), politicians 5 (4.2%), Civil servant 54 (45%) and other 53 (44.2%). Civil servant participated more than any others in the on-line survey.

Table 6:
Did you vote during 2019 general elections?

Variables	Frequencies	Percentage%
Yes	113	94.2
No	7	5.8
Total	120	100

Source: online survey Nov/Dec 2019

Table 6, indicate voting during 2019 general elections where 113 (94.2%) responded that they voter while 7 (5.8%) did not. The seven participants have not voted during the election but participate in the survey may mean, if they partake in the election, they will vote on the variable reflected in the survey.

Table 7:
Factors Influenced Voters

Variables	Frequencies	Percentage%
Political Aspirants	37	30.8
Political Parties	14	11.6
Religion	4	3.3
Money	3	2.3
Trust in INEC	4	3.3
Exercise of Right and Obligation	58	48.3
Total	120	100

Source: online survey Nov/Dec 2019

Table 7, recorded factors that influenced voters during the elections under reviewed. Political aspirants 37 (30.8%), political parties 14 (11.6%), religion 4 (3.3%), money 3 (2.3%), trust in INEC 4 (4.4%) and exercise of right and obligation 58 (48.3%). The responses disclosed that exercise of right and

obligation and then follow by political aspirants influenced voters' choice more any other factors during the elections under studies.

Notwithstanding, voters are rational who knows their right and vote in accord with their desires. The results also indicate voting for individuals rather that political party. When money and religion are no longer factor to influence or intimidate voters it calls for politicians to be acting in the interest of their communities in order to be voter for or voted for again and political parties to ensure internal democracy and production of civic candidate for an election.

Table 8:
Extent of influenced

Variables	Frequencies	Percentage%
Less	15	12.5
Strong	56	46.6
Strongly	49	40.8
Total	120	100

Source: online survey Nov/Dec 2019

Table 8, show the extent that identified factors in table seven influenced the voters' choice. 15 respondents i.e. 12.5% where less influenced, 56 strong (46.6%) and 49 (40.8%) strongly. This indicate that majority of the respondents may likely not be influenced by any others factors in the election under review and may likely be influenced by the same factor(s) in the near future.

This affirmed the one term in politics, and that on the same factor(s) one is elected after four years may not be elected and someone difference will be. Since once elected is not a grantee for re-election, maintaining service delivery, community development and interaction with all people remained the sole device for maintaining the status quo.

Table 9:
How can the effect of the identified factors address?

Variables	Frequencies	Percentage%
Proper voter education	50	41.6
Effective secret voting system	7	5.8
Adequate security	10	8.3
Effective independent of electoral body	51	42.5
Not Necessary	1	0.8
Good Governance	1	0.8
Total	120	100

Source: online survey Nov/Dec 2019

Table 9, how can the effect of the identified factors be address recorded the following frequencies: proper voter education 50 (41.6%), effective secret voting system 7 (5.8%) adequate security 10 (8.3%), effective independent of electoral body 51 (42.5%), good governance and not necessary 1 (0.8%) each. The survey showed that there is need for INEC to be truly independent from all arms of government and proper voter education should be ensured. This opposes the popular opinion of good governance as a major factor that influenced voters' choice.

Table 10:
There is no significant relationship between factor that influenced voters' behaviour and election result.

Variables	Frequencies	Percentage%
Yes	70	58.3
No	50	41.7
Total	120	100

Source: online survey Nov/Dec 2019

Table 10, contain the relationship between the factors that influenced voters' choice and elections result. 70 (58.3%) responses indicated that there is no significant relationship between factors that influenced voters' choice and election result. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted for the study. There is no significant relationship between the factors that influenced voters' behaviour and election result.

Conclusion

This article "a study of factors that influenced voters' behaviour: a case of Billiri Local government (2019 general elections)" had employed both secondary and primary sources of data with quantitative analysis. Factors that had shaped voters' choice in Nigeria's elections historically from 1959 to 2015 were enumerated. From the online survey, exercises of right and obligation follow by political aspirants were the elements that influenced voters' behaviour than any others factors in the election under review. And IN-EC should be truly independent in discharge of their onus and proper voters' education is advocated in future elections.

Recommendation

1. Conduct of public life should always be constitutional owned to the fact that voters knows their right and duties as citizens and religion and money cannot be used in manipulating them during elections.
2. Since voters are rational voters whose knows what they want and how to acquire it, politicians should concentrate in meeting the need of the voter in order to be elected or re-elected.

3. INEC, media establishment, political parties and aspirants in addition to all others governmental agencies and non-governmental bodies should be organising voter education from time to time not few months or weeks to election.
4. A research should be conducted on election/appointment/ recruitment of INEC staff, promotion and funding in order to be truly independent and populace to have trust in it.

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