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Election and Voting Pattern in Nigeria: A Study of 2019 Governorship Election in Gombe State

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Abstract

This paper examined the election and voting pattern in Nigeria with specific reference to 2019 Governorship election in Gombe State. Rational Choice Theory was used in writing the report of the study. The research utilises both primary and secondary sources where four hundred (400) questionnaires were administered to obtain data from three Local Government Area selected for the study, using multi stage sampling techniques in selecting the sample size of voters. This data generated in this research was quantitatively presented and analysed using tables and percentage. Study adopted quantitative means of data collection. The findings of the research empirically proved that voting pattern in Gombe State is more greatly influenced by lack of credible candidate and intraparty conflict than cross carpeting issue and godfatherism. The study therefore, recommended among others that, there is need for public awareness by proper authorities on the risk or threat of voting based intraparty conflict or lack of credibility consideration. Therefore, voting some candidates is supposed be based on credibility and just of contestant than godfatherism and cross carpeting.

Keywords: Election, Voting Pattern, Democracy, Gombe State, Nigeria.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The concept election is widely used in democratic system of government which can be precisely considered as a system of government that protect the interest and the rights of both the majority and the minority by placing checks on the power of the majority. Election serves as a crucial and important phenomenon that gives citizens an opportunity to exercise their civic rights to select the representative of the government through decorous electoral procedure. Similarly, as qualified adult citizens uses voting as an avenue for expressing approval or rejection of governmental opinions, policies, programs and decisions. Also, in the process of voting in developed societies electorates are extemporaneously displayed their voting pattern, attitudes and behaviour in determining who to vote for or otherwise.

Moreover, voting pattern played a significant impact on the outcome of elections but there are some certain factors that determines voting pattern by electorates; for instance, in the case of India ideology, party loyalty, performance of the party in power, public esteem of the candidate, charisma, education, religion and influence of money are among the determinant factors

influences the voting pattern of the electorates during election Hadeep (2018). Hence, (Sarlamano and Jovanoski, 2014). Opined that a voter is driven and motivated by his or her interest when making an electoral choice. Thus, the voter views his vote as an investment in which he or she expects a return. Within this context, the voter tries as much as possible to maximise his or her electoral gains by voting for the political party which he or she believes will cater and provide for his or her general welfare (Sarlamano and Jovanoski, 2014)

In the study of pattern of voting and the determinant factors that influence the behaviour and decisions of the electorates during particular election research conducted on American voting behaviour in Presidential elections from 1972 to 1992, Prysby and Scavo (1993) identified several attitudinal and social factors that may determine or shape the decision of voters in an election. On the one hand, they posited that individual attributes, assessment of government performance, knowledge of particular policy concerns, and party affiliation are the primary attitudinal factors that may determine the choice of the voter during elections. On the other hand, they identified ethnic group, faith, constituency and gender as the social factors that influence the voting decision. The influence these factors have on voter choices during specific elections assists in predicting electoral outcomes and enhances the comprehension of electoral dynamics (Prysby and Scavo, 1993).

Furthermore, Elections in Nigeria are marred with a political behaviour of rigging, the manipulation of religion, ethnicity, regionalism and nepotism as observed by Olayode (2015), Metumara (2010), & Rufa'I (2011). Voters are voting during elections based on their affinity with leaders that belong to the same religious groups, ethnic cleavages, region and other sentiments. Elections were marred with the culture of rigging, malpractices, intimidation of both voters and opposition, use of violence and political thuggery most especially by the ruling party using the power of incumbency. This at times invited military to overthrow the civilian regimes. This process leads to many Republics in the country emerging and disappearing constantly.

As Nigeria has finally, return to democracy in 1999 the electoral activities were attributed with some factors such as ethnicity, regionalism, religious bias, godfatherism, money politics and other electoral malpractices. These attributes shape the pattern and political behaviour of voters to cast their votes for or otherwise irrespective of candidate credibility and outstanding performance. Such factors spread to state level. For instance, the country was ruled by one party for three consecutive periods and Gombe have same predicament since 2003 until 2019 governorship election that ushered a new pattern of electoral behaviour that need to be research on.

1.1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

Since Nigeria return to democracy in 1999, where political issues and activities of elections took place from the national, state and local level, there are some factors influencing the political behaviour of the country in general which are: godfatherism, electoral malpractices, ethnicity, religiosity, regionalism, and incumbency. Gombe is one the state that have been dominated by one party when the ruling party (APP) were unseated by the opposition party (PDP) since 2003; the state ruled for sixteen years (PDP from 2003-2019) that explain the factors influencing political behaviour in the state as incumbency, electoral rigging/malpractices, money politics and godfatherism. Despite a long historical antecedent factor in Gombe State, the 2019 Governorship election came with different pattern of voting whereby the opposition party defeated the ruling party; this new trend of political development in the state which many describe as unpredictable necessitated the kin interest to conduct a study on Election and Voting Pattern in Nigeria: A study of 2019 Governorship Election in Gombe State.

1.1.2 Research Questions

1. What is the nature and pattern of voting in 2019 governorship election in Gombe State?

2. What are the factors that influenced the electorates to vote out PDP in 2019?

Governorship election?

3. To what extent the factors influenced the voting pattern and behaviour of the electorates in an election in Gombe state?

1.1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the nature and pattern of voting in 2019 governorship election in Gombe state.
2. Find out the factors that influenced the electorates to voter out for PDP in 2019 governorship election.
3. Identify to what extent the factors influenced the voting pattern and behaviour of the electorates in an election in Gombe state.

2.0 Literature Review

Numerous research on election and voting pattern in Nigeria has been carried out by many scholars and academic polemicists due to its crucial importance in studying individual or electorates behaviour in any political setting which is the fulcrum of every democratic dispensation; despite legion literatures written on this aspect the researcher identified that there is few or no formal studies conducted on 2019 Governorship election in Gombe State that necessitated the interest to conduct on Election and Voting Pattern in Nigeria: A Study of 2019 Governorship election in Gombe State. The work was critically and thematically reviewed to fill the existing gap and make an academic contribution to the existing literature. However, election considered as a focal point of political issues and that related to the study conducted by Cutright and Rossi (1958) argued that the election outcome is a bundle of several factors; "the characteristic of the candidate, the activities of the competing party organizations, the processes of communications and the influence involving the mass media and informal groups, and finally, the social and psychological characteristics of individual voters.

Olayode (2015) opined that general elections are generally portrayed with dominance of ethno- religious sentiments as determinants of voting behaviour and political participation across the country. According to Olayode (2015): "From the presidential through gubernatorial, national and state assemblies" elections, aspirants were largely chosen on the basis of ethno-regional identities. In the presidential election, the president and vice president elect received almost 90 per cent of their votes on the basis of ethno-regional identity. Similarly, the incumbent president received en masse votes from his ethno-regional zones". This has been the culture in Nigerian political theatrical arena where votes are allotted according to ethnic allegiance and religious sentiments by each particular section or group in the country where their candidate emerge irrespective of whether he will win through their votes or he will loss.

Similarly, Election in Nigeria usually has the political culture and voting pattern of ethnicity, religion and regionalism which is part of the issues that are bedeviling the successful choice of good leaders in the country (Abdullahi, 2015). Closely related to the above is the politics of winning at all cost where elections in Nigeria are marred with rigging, violence, manipulation of results and intimidation of opposition and their supporters using the apparatus of security personnel and political thugs (Auwal, 2015). Election in Nigeria took the dimension of money politics where vote buying, godfatherism, bribery, corruption, overspending, violation of electoral rules and other irregularities affected the process and its outcome (Sule, Azizuddin, Sani, & Mat, 2017; Sule et al., 2018).

Despite the fact that ethnicity, regionalism/sectionalism, religion, other issues that determine political behaviour and voting pattern of electorates in Nigeria include rigging of elections, Prebendalism, manipulation and political violence. Osayi (2015) and Apowoghaga (2014) examined that Godfatherism is the major factor in determining who will get the platform of contest among political parties and to a larger extent, the emergence of the winner in the general election. Some powerful cabals constituted themselves into a gangster that influence who should be elected. While, in analysing the determinants of voting in Nigeria Onapajo (2012) believed that Nigerians are more loyal to religion than state. This according to him can be observed from the trend of what he termed "Religiosity of politics" where religious affinity determines the outcome of election in a democratic dispensation. This affects voting behaviour of the electorates and one can never imagine doing away with the influence of religion in Nigerian election.

On the other hand, Political participation and democratic culture in Nigeria as a concept is one that is ridden with grievances and fears of isolation hence the struggle for central power by different ethnic groups. This struggle negatively affects electoral activities in the area of malpractices like thuggery, rigging and other political electoral violence, which is replete in party politics in Nigeria. Democratic culture of any country to a large extent determines

their political participation. A culture of democracy must reflect the norms and values that place a premium on the freedom of individuals Adeniyi, (2010).

Furthermore, Metumara (2010). political behaviour and voting pattern in Nigeria are affected by an amalgam of rival ethnic groups that were set against each other in a fierce rivalry in a struggle for power and competition for control of scarce resources and this has been visible in the political processes. This sometimes even threatens the corporate existence of the country. This scenario has been rooted since colonial era and any political arrangement during colonial administration that is convincing failed. It takes the intervention of military to avoid the full eruption of ethno-religious conflict into national war. But, with the resurgence of democracy in 1999 exploded the politics of ethno-religion where voting pattern is anchored around ethnic and religion choice of candidate Metumara (2010).

Politically democratic system of government usually comes up with periodic activities that allow electorates to exercise their franchise for the approval or rejection of their leaders that called election. As perceived by Johari, (2011). Election is the process of choosing leaders in a democratic process where a legitimate change of government is constitutionally allowed. While, (Cohen: 2003). Identified Voting is the main form of political participation in a democratic society and its study in political science is highly specialized in the sub-fields. The registered citizens are only eligible to cast their vote. Voting defined by Universal Declaration of Human Right as "Voting is the fundamental right of all citizens over the age of eighteen". Voting is the expression of a person's preference for a candidate, or a group of candidates as well as the person's preference of one political system rather than other (Blais et al: 2004).

Voters' turnout determines the voting pattern of the electorates also during a Presidential Election in this country. Political apathy is recorded in General Elections in Nigeria because of the attitude of the political office holders who promised earth and heaven to the voters during electioneering campaign and after assumption of power, reneged against their promises and transformed themselves into emperors who enrich themselves from the public treasury at the expenses of developmental projects (Sule et al., 2017). Voting pattern in Nigeria can take three major approaches; the sociological, party identification and rational choice (Mudasiru, 2015)

Corollary above, Tenuche (2009) posited that political behaviour in Nigeria is full of incinerating and abusive language by both the contestants and the electorates. He cited former President Olusegun Obasanjo in 2007 elections where he said elections is a war and you must win by all means possible. This further interpreted revealed that, in order for the incumbent to win elections, they did not rely on voters' power but through the use of coercive and subjugative method such as political snuggery, rigging and even political assassination. The electorates are inculcated with such attitude too and it formed a kind of political behaviour among the voters during an election process. Thus, the voting pattern is such in a way that voters are sometimes coerced to vote for a particular candidate or even abandon voting because it will not even count.

The analysis of voting pattern centered on determinants such as, why people vote and how they make decisions. Social scientists look at the socio-economic determinants such as support of political parties, occasions, ethnicity and gender, correlation between the classes, age and vote. Others are political programmes, electoral campaign, issues and popularity of leaders of the political parties contesting elections" (Leadnum, 2006).

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Theoretically, the aforementioned factors which condition voting pattern and behaviour can be located within Rational Choice Theory: The Rational Choice Theory of Election is a political economy approach towards understanding the nature and pattern of voters' choice during election in a particular democratic setting. The Theory has argued to develop from the writings of Anthony Downs (1957) in his discourse of "An Economic Theory of Democracy". Another scholar behind the postulation of this theory is Kenneth Arrow (1951). In his writing "Social Choice and Individual Values".

The Rational Choice Theory of Election identifies that political behaviour and voting pattern of the electorates is a rational choice based on some indicators such as economic benefit, resources allocation, distribution of goods and services, allocation of juicy political offices and favour (Downs, 1957; Arrow, 1951). This view has been consolidated by Farber (2009). Rational Choice Theory of Election is either evaluative or non-evaluative according to Downs (1957) and

Arrow (1951). Evaluative is the process of measuring and evaluating the performances of regimes to determine whether they deserve voters' choice or not and, in this regard, rationality is based on performance measurement. The non-evaluative is based on clientelistic considerations such as favouritism, patronage, ethnicity, religion, regionalism and family.

In essence, the basic assumption of the rational choice theory of voting is premised on three cardinal assumptions: first, "that all decisions related to voting made by voters and political parties are rational; second, that the democratic political system implies a level of consistency that supports predictions about the consequences of decisions made by voters and political parties and third, that the democratic system assumes a level of uncertainty, sufficiently important to allow different options" (Antunes, 2010 p. 158). Based on these assumptions it is believed that voters will vote for the political party or candidate with valuable policies and programmes that they feel will best suit their interest.

The theory has been applied as a framework of analysis for been pivotal to explaining voting pattern and behaviour displayed in an election which they evaluate candidates and issues on why some voters stick to a particular voting pattern in a series of elections which ultimately influence their voting pattern which is relevant and useful in supporting the reviewed literature context and the discussions section on Election and Voting Pattern of 2019 Governorship Election in Gombe State.

3.0 Research Methodology

This research utilised both primary and secondary sources of data while the Sampling method entails the "way sample units are selected from a parent population" (McNabb, 2009:127). This study used a combination of cluster and systematic sampling techniques in determining the unit and size of the population and questionnaires distribution. The area of study, Gombe state has eleven local government areas and three senatorial zones. More so, the three senatorial zones constituted the units of the study, for each of the three units of the study, one local government was systematically selected, making the sum of three local government areas. The three local government areas selected are Gombe Local Government, as the state capital, representing Gombe North Senatorial Zone; Akko Local Government, representing Gombe Central Senatorial Zone and Kaltungo Local Government, representing Gombe South Senatorial Zone. The selection of these local government areas, to represent their respective Senatorial zones, is due to the fact that they are well known centres of politics, trade and commercial activities in their senatorial zones.

Questionnaires are also distributed fairly among the three local governments. The number of valid votes cast for two major political parties during 2019 election provided that Akko local government area has 58,479, Gombe local government has 68,384 and Kaltungo Local Government Area has 26,744, the population who voted are 18 years and above.; and the total number of valid votes cast by the electorates in the three local government areas is 153,607 and thus, 153,607 formed the actual population size in this research.

Statistically, to get the actual number of questionnaires that were administered in each local government area, the research divided the number of valid votes cast by each selected local government to the actual population size of this research which is 153,607, and multiply it with the number of questionnaires generated from Taro Yamane (19670) scale which is 400. For instance, if one taken says Akko Local Government, the result shown that 58,479, divided by 153,607; it gave us 0.3807053064 and multiplied it by 400; one got 152.2 into one significant figure. Therefore, 152 questionnaires were administered in Akko Local Government Area, and the same formula were used in arriving at the number of questionnaires administered in other two local government areas, Gombe and Kaltungo, 178 and 70 questionnaires respectively.

4.0 Results and Discussion

These section deals with data presentation and analysis collected on voting pattern in 2019 governorship election in Gombe State from the field through questionnaire distribution. For this research, four (400) questionnaires distributed out of which only three hundred and eighty-four (384) were duly collected or returned back. All the findings were

discussed based on three hundred and eighty-four (384) questionnaires successfully collected from the respondents. Data would be presented in tabular form using, frequency distribution and simple percentages as a tool of analysis.

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

S/NO	Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
1.	Age	18-35 Years	203	53
2.		36-53 Years	110	29
3.		54 Years and above	71	18
	Total		384	100

Total 384 100

Source survey research 2021

From the table: 203 (53%) of the respondents are between the ages 18-35, 110 (29%) of the respondent fall within the age range of 36-53, while 71 (18%) of the respondents fall between within the range of 54 years and above. The analysis was obviously identified that youths are the majority of the respondents. Similarly, the youth are the backbone of the society because they play an important role in 2019 governorship election and other electoral activities in Gombe State. Likewise, they are the determinant factor of electoral success or otherwise and that's why some of them have been use by politicians to achieve their aims.

Table 3: Educational Qualification of Respondents

S/NO	Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
1.	Qualification	Primary	60	16
2.		Secondary	70	18
3.		Tertiary	39	10
4.		Islamic education	215	56
5.		Others	Nil	Nil
	Total		384	100

Source: Survey research 2021

Table 4: illustrates different level of educational qualification of the respondents. That is 60 (16%) have primary education while those with secondary leaving certificate constituted 70 (18%), those with tertiary education were 39 (10%) and those with Islamic education were 215 (56%) and there were none with the others qualification. This revealed that those with Islamic education participated more in responses of the questionnaires distributed and Gombe Populace have high number of such people. Also, those with secondary qualifications are second in number of people followed by Primary certificate and tertiary institution respectively. Therefore, the voters are conscious and knowledgeable to make a rational decision on the matters that affect their lives.

Table 4: Employment Status of Respondents

S/NO	Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
1.	Employment status	Civil/Public Servants	45	12
2.		Self-employed	213	55
3.		Politicians	85	22
4.		Students	41	11

5.		Others	Nil	Nil
	Total		384	100

Source: Survey research 2021

The above table of the employment status of respondents reveals that 213 (55%) of the respondents are self-employed (with higher percentages) compared to civil/public servants with 45 (12%), politicians 85 (22%), students, 41 (11%) and none to others. The result from the table revealed that majority of the electorates in Gombe State who cast their votes are self-employed and have more interest than the rest of professions or category.

Table 5: What Was the Nature and pattern of Voting Pattern in 2019 Governorship Election in Gombe State

S/NO	Category	Frequency	Percent
1.	Peaceful	313	82
2.	Violence	63	16
3.	No idea	8	2
	Total	384	100

Source: Survey research 2021

As seen above indicated 313 (82%) of respondents peaceful, followed by 63 (16%) respondents' violence and no idea constituted 8 (2%) respondents. This means that 2019 governorship election were peacefully conducted which constituted (82%) of the election which is greater than (18%) of violence and no idea respondents put together.

Table 6: Which Political Party Did You Vote for in 2019 Governorship Election?

S/NO	Category	Frequency	Percent
1.	PDP	83	21
2.	APC	240	63
3.	ABP	34	9
4.	SDP	27	7
5.	Others	Nil	Nil
	Total	384	100

Source: Survey research 2021

From the above 240 (63%) of the respondents had voted APC, followed by PDP 83 (21%), followed by ABP 34 (9%) then SDP 27 (7%) and non for others. This confirms the authenticity of the result release by INEC during 2019 governorship election in which APC candidates emerge victorious with a total 364,179 votes, PDP became second with a total of 222,868 votes, ABP became third with a total of 9,241 votes, and SDP fourth with a total of 2,536 votes.

Table 7: What Factor Motivated you to Vote for the above-Mentioned Party in 2019 Election?

S/NO	Variables	Frequency	Percent
1.	To have good leadership and development	140	36
2.	To consolidate democratic principles	91	24
3.	To have same/correspondent party with national level	50	13
4.	To bring justice in the state	64	17
5.	All of the above	39	10

6.	None of the above	Nil	Nil
Total		384	100

Source: Survey research 2021

The above 140 (36%) respondents who has the highest figures and percentage submitted that they have voted to have good leadership and development. This response shows that the electorate in Gombe State were adamant to have a good political leadership that would operate based on democratic principles for proper and speedy development and that make the electorates to vote out for PDP i.e. the ruling party with full confidence and support.

Second category of the respondents were 91 (24%) they voted in order to consolidate democratic principles as a result of their level of political exposure, thus, they electorates opined that their votes as such would lead them to have proper leader and good governance that protect the interest of the ordinary citizens. Hence, those need to bring justice in the state (just government) constituted 60 (17%) of the respondents. That is after election to have democratic system of government with fairness and justice to the citizenry.

Furthermore, there are those with 50 (13%) respondents, who support the idea of same/correspondent party (sak) from national to state level. This means their notion from political leadership after election was to favour due to same party with the federal government. Also, there are some respondents who voted in order to have all of the above mentioned, they were 39 (10%). This means that they generally believed that all the options were among the factors that can make electorates to cast their votes and likewise, they are all synergy for good governance and democratic consolidation that would solve electorate's problems.

On the contrary, there is none of the above option in the questionnaire distributed and none of the respondent identified that was among the factors that motivated them to cast their vote during elections.

Table 8: What is the Factor That Influenced your choice to vote out for PDP in 2019 Governorship Election?

S/NO	Category	Frequency	Percent
1.	Lack of credible candidate	189	49
2.	Intraparty conflict	72	19
3.	Crosscarpeting	69	18
4.	Godfatherism	54	14
	Total	384	100

Source: Survey research 2021

When asked about factors that influence the candidates' choice to shift their vote from PDP to (19%) identified intraparty conflict, 69 (18%) indicates Cross carpeting while 54 (14%) indicated godfatherism of contestants influencing their vote.

Table 9: To What Extent Do You think that Intraparty Conflict and Lack of Credible Candidate Influenced the Voting Pattern and Behaviour of the Electorates?

S/NO	Category	Frequency	Percent
1.	To higher extent	278	72
2.	To lower extent	91	24
3.	No extent at all	15	4
	Total	384	100

Source: Survey research 2021

From table 8: above, majority of the respondents 278 (72%) indicated that, lack of credibility of the candidate and intraparty conflict influenced their voting behaviour and 91 (24%) indicated to lower extent, only 15 (4%) identified no extent at all. Finally, based on the research questions and data analysed revealed that people in Gombe State participated in election because of the awareness of the candidates(s) contesting in the elections. And that the conditions which influenced people decision to vote in election is not competence of contestants or party affiliation but ethnic and kinship consideration, therefore, lack of voting in an election do not reflect incompetence or poor qualification of candidates.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The 2019 governorship elections were the sixth set of elections to be conducted in the state since Nigeria returned to democratic governance in 1999. Based on the research objectives, the data analysis and findings revealed that majority of the electorates who participated in Gombe State governorship election are conscious about the issue of candidature when it comes to election period. Also, the factors that influenced people decision to vote out for the ruling party were not majorly depend on cross carpeting or godfatherism issue but rather lack of credible candidate and intraparty conflict was significantly influenced the voting pattern and behaviour of voters during election that necessitated the ruling party to be unseated by the opposition one in Gombe State. The paper also concludes that the voting pattern of 2019 Governorship Election differs from the previous Elections in the history of the State since 2003.

The work therefore recommends that for a voting pattern to change in the state; the elected leaders should be more accountable to the masses to know their yearning and aspiration in order to consolidate democratic principles for good governance and development. Democratic leaders should put more effort to deliver their mandate as their have promised, voted and sworn in for to bring justice and fairness irrespective of political party affiliation of the citizenry. In order to improve the democratic principles and leadership political education should be encouraging to improving the electorates on the credibility of the candidate to be voted for irrespective of class, status or godfatherism. And Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should make special provision with specific rules and regulation for cross carpeting and the contest of election to reduce some electoral obstacles before, during and after the conduct of election.

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