

Local Government Elections in Nigeria: A Comparative Analysis of Three States

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Abstract: *Local governments (LGs) are viable instruments of grass-roots political participation and socialization while elections are means of ensuring regular changes of governments. The main objective of this paper therefore, is to explore comparatively, the level of citizens' participation and challenges of the LG elections in Nigeria between 1999 and 2008 in three states of Nigeria. The data for this paper were generated from a cross-sectional survey conducted from June to July, 2009. A purposive sample of 455 individuals was selected from three states, Anambra, Plateau and Lagos, which were purposefully selected because of their peculiarities. Anambra and Plateau were problem states while Lagos had been consistent in the conduct of local government elections. The paper observed that there was gross apathy among the respondents. A significant proportion of the respondents was ignorant of the elections and did not participate in the LG council elections. Major challenges observed from the study were delay in the provision of electoral materials, snatching and stuffing of ballot boxes, rigging, financial incentives, intimidation of voters and violence. Therefore, concerted voter education and enlightenment campaigns should be organized to improve voters' awareness. Contestants should endeavour to have an intensive publicity about themselves and their ambitions. In addition, they should be clearly identified in the electoral process and campaign debates to clarify parties' manifestos should be encouraged. Finally, political parties and INEC should agree on a Code of Conduct and ethics for the elections.*

Keywords: *citizens' political participation, Anambra, Lagos, Plateau State*

1. INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Local governments and elections are two essential features of modern democracies. They help to establish, nurture and sustain democracy and democratic political culture. Elections provide the electorate with the power to freely participate in choosing their leaders and in providing the much-needed support and legitimacy to the state. Leaders are made accountable, and the institutions that create the stability of the political system are strengthened (Fage 2007). Local governments, on the other hand, are viable instruments of grass-roots political participation and socialization. They are generally (in theory) viable instruments in the democratization of modern governments, while elections are means of ensuring regular changes of governments. Despite this, Nigerian experience leaves much to be desired. After several attempts at democratization, the country is yet to evolve a viable, virile and stable democracy that will elicit popular support and or even have direct bearing on the lives of the generality of the ordinary people. This is so because; often the so-called elected governments have lacked legitimacy. Fundamentally, the primary role of local governments is to promote the spirit of local self-help and self-reliance, community sense of unity and achievement, through a network of grass-roots and civil society organizations.

Local government elections in the country had been on non-party basis. They were first held in 1987 during the Babangida Administration. This was the first time local government chairmen were elected through universal adult suffrage. There were local government elections in 1996, 1997 and 1998 but all proved problematic. In 2003 local government elections were postponed against the provisions of the Nation's Constitution. Some states conducted local government elections in 2007 which were marred by violence; fraud and rigging while some like Lagos and Jos conducted theirs in 2008. Others, like Anambra state had local government elections just January this year, 2014, after that of 1999. This particular state has passed through four different

governors – Governors Chris Ngige, Peter Obi, Andy Uba, Virginia Etiaba and Peter Obi again. Who then governs or governed their local governments? How do they serve their citizens? It has also been observed that local government elections were generally marred by violence, fraud and rigging. Literature indicates a very few empirical studies on the local government elections and governance. Thus the purpose of this study was to explore the level of citizens' participation and challenges of the LG elections in Nigeria between 1999 and 2008 in three states of the federation.

The following research questions form the basis of this study:

- a) Did people participate in the local government elections in Nigeria in 1999, 2004 and 2007/2008 in three states of the federation?
- b) What were the challenges that affected local government elections in 1999, 2004 and 2007/2008 in three states of the federation?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Conceptual Discourse

2.1.1. Local Government

In modern usage, local government is equated with grassroots participatory democracy. It refers to self-government of the local community for local community by its elected local inhabitants (Fage, 2007). In fact, it is within the framework of grass-roots democracy that the 1976 Nigerian Local Government Reform Guidelines defined local government as: government at the local level exercised through representative councils established by law to exercise specific powers within areas defined. These powers should give the council substantial control over local affairs as well as the staff and institutional and financial powers to initiate and direct the provision of services and to determine and implement projects so as to complement the activities of the state and federal government in their areas, and to ensure through devolution of functions to these councils and through the active participation of the people and their traditional institutions that local initiative and response to local needs and conditions are maximized (Reform Guidelines 1976:1).

From this, it is clear that the concept of (modern) local government involves a philosophical commitment to the idea of democratic participation in the governing process of a country at the grassroots level. The implication of this is that, the higher-level government voluntarily grants a certain degree of legal and administrative autonomy to a local community so as to enable the community perform specific functions, but within the broad national policy framework. By so doing, the operation of local government is confined to a specific geographic area within which the local community enjoys local 'self-government'. Self-government here does not mean that the local government becomes a local sovereign political entity, rather, the term connotes that the local government council is at liberty to make bye-laws to enable it perform specific functions, have control over its finances, recruit and discipline its staff and formulate policies to usher in development programmes within the broad national objective(s).

Local governments could also be understood as administrative offices that are smaller than a state or province. The institutions of local government vary greatly between countries, and even where similar arrangements exist, the terminology often varies. Common names for local government entities include state, province, region, department, county, prefecture, district, city, township, town, borough, parish, municipality, shire and village (Ojo 2007). However all these appellations are often used informally in countries where they do not describe a legal local government entity. Local governments are set up to bring government closer to the people at the grassroots i.e. people in the communities be it urban or rural. Local Government in Nigeria forms the third tier of government coming after the Federal and State governments.

According to Green (cited in Akinboye 2007) Local government is an essential instrument of national or state government for performance of certain basic functions which can best be administered locally on the intimate knowledge of the needs, conditions and peculiarities of the areas concerned". The constitutional guarantee of an autonomous local government system in Nigeria is a clear indication that grass-roots administration in the country's political system is a fact of life (Akinboye 1995).

The most authoritative and generally acceptable definition is that provided by the United Nations Office for Public Administration. The UN defines local government as a political sub-division of

a nation or (in a federal system) state, which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs, including the power to impose or exact labour for prescribed purposes (UN Report, 1960:3 cited in Akinboye, 2007). A clearer picture of this definition reveals quite poignantly that local government is 'local', in the sense that it has to do essentially with a group of people having something of a common outlook and living in a close vicinity in a particular locality; and is 'government' in the sense that it is not just a mere delegation of powers from state or central government but has effective autonomous legal status (Akinboye 2007).

In the light of the above definitions, the definition provided by the 1976 Nigerian Local Government Reform Guidelines was adopted in this study.

2.1.2. Elections

Elections refer to formal processes by which voters make their political choices on public issues or candidates for public office. The use of elections in the modern era dates back to the emergence of representative government in Europe and North America since the 17th century. Regular elections serve to hold leaders accountable for their performances and permit an exchange of influence between the leaders and the governed. The availability of alternatives is a necessary condition. Votes may be secret or public. Elections can be defined as the means or mechanisms by which individuals or groups are chosen or elected through votes, to occupy certain given positions (Aluko, 2010). In some cases, electoral forms are present but the substance of an election is missing, as when voters do not have a free and genuine choice between at least two alternatives. Most countries hold elections in at least the formal sense, but in many of them the elections are not competitive (e.g., all but one party may be forbidden to contest) or the electoral situation is in other respects highly compromised.

Webb (2014) enunciates that elections serve various functions. Besides making a fundamental contribution to democratic governance, elections enable voters to select leaders and to hold them accountable for their performance in office. Elections serve as fora for discussions of public issues and facilitate the expression of public opinion particularly where the electoral process is competitive and forces candidates or parties to expose their records and future intentions to popular scrutiny. They also provide political education for citizens and ensure the responsiveness of democratic governments to the will of the people. They serve to legitimize the acts of those who wield power, a function that is performed to some extent even by elections that are noncompetitive. Elections also reinforce the stability and legitimacy of the political community and help to facilitate social and political integration. Furthermore, elections serve a self-actualizing purpose by confirming the worth and dignity of individual citizens as human beings. Whatever other needs voters may have, participation in an election serves to reinforce their self-esteem and self-respect. Voting gives people an opportunity to have their say and, through expressing partisanship, to satisfy their need to feel a sense of belonging. Even nonvoting satisfies the need of some people to express their alienation from the political community. For precisely these reasons, the long battle for the right to vote and the demand for equality in electoral participation can be viewed as the manifestation of a profound human craving for personal fulfillment. Finally, elections break the monotony of daily life and focus attention on the common fate.

Elections in Nigeria are forms of choosing representatives to the federal government and the various states. Nigeria elects a head of the state (the President of Nigeria) and a legislature (the National Assembly) on federal level. On the state level, we have gubernatorial elections for the governors and the council elections for the Chairmen of the local governments. At the local level, legislation governing local governments varies from one state to the other. There is no uniformity in tenure or timing of local government elections. Councillors and Chairpersons of councils are elected directly by universal adult (over age 18) suffrage. Local governments are divided into wards and each ward elects a single member to its local council. Councils range in size from ten to 13 councillors depending on the number of wards. An elected council is made up of an Executive Chairman, Vice Chairmen and Councillors. Councillors represent the legislative arm of the local council.

2.2. Theoretical Anchorage of this Paper

This paper is premised on a combination of Behavioural theory of elections by Bendor *et al* (2011) and classical elite theory of Pareto and Mosca.

Bendor *et al* (2011) used the concept of bounded rationality to explain political participation: voter turnout, voter choice, and party competition. The concept of bounded rationality implies that people are rational but cognitively limited. They are constrained by the limited ways they see the world or the world presents itself or is presented to them. People adapt themselves to their environments by developing heuristics or rules of thumb more restricted than the pure optimization associated with canonical rationality. They respond to experience by adapting their rules of thumb on the basis of this feedback. Applying the aspiration-based adaptive rules (ABAR), Bendor *et al* (2011) construct formal models of party competition, turnout, and voters' choices of candidates. These models predict substantial turnout levels, voters sorting into parties, and winning parties adopting centrist platforms. In multiparty elections, voters are able to coordinate vote choices on majority-preferred candidates, while all candidates garner significant vote shares. Overall, the behavioural theory and its models produce macro implications consistent with the data on elections, and they use plausible micro assumptions about the cognitive capacities of politicians and voters. Citizens must decide whether to turn out, and if they do, who to vote for, while parties figure out what platforms to espouse.

The classical elite theorists Pareto and Mosca argue that in all societies including democracies there are dominant minorities (variously called elites, ruling classes, political classes, oligarchies, aristocracies, etc.) and the dominated majority, or the masses (Bottomore, 1993). The dominant minorities rule, as a result of their superior personal qualities and/or superior organisational skills over the masses which are made up of unintelligent, irrational, apathetic and poorly organised individuals who can be easily manipulated by political propaganda carefully used by the political elite. Pareto suggests that there is a circulation of elites which he thinks occurs because each type has inherent weaknesses. Whilst the Lions lack imagination and cunning; they use force to achieve and retain political power conversely, Foxes possess cunning but fail to act coercively and rule primarily by manipulation and propaganda. There are six classes of Residues but the first one (class 1) is relevant to this paper. Class 1 residue is the foxes' instinct for combination. They tend to manipulate words and construct abstruse theories and ideologies. They do not have strong attachment to church, family, nation or tradition but can exploit these loyalties in others. They are creative in economics and politics and promote change and novelty. They do not plan far ahead and do not look to a great future for their people. They rely on their wits to thwart challenges and ad lib answers to questions.

Bendor *et al's* theory of political participation has been endorsed as *tour de force* since traditional approaches in political science have failed to explain why people vote or take other actions that apparently have no basis in self-interest. Elite theory explicates how political elites recruit themselves not just the national elite but also local elite. Local government elections are conducted under the tutelage of the state governors who recruit their clients and impose them on the electorate. This affects the political behaviour of the electorate.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

3.1. Research design

The study adopted a non-experimental research design. Three states were selected purposefully because of their peculiarities. Two of them were problem states – Anambra and Plateau representing South-East and North-Central geo-political zones respectively. The third state was Lagos which had been consistent in the conduct of local government elections. Anambra did not have any local government elections since 1999 until January this year, 2014, while Plateau experienced crisis after 2008 local government elections.

Anambra state

The present Anambra State was carved out from the old one which comprised Enugu State including the Abakaliki part of Ebonyi in August 1991, with Awka as its capital. Anambra State is situated in South-East Nigeria with a population of 4,182,032 as at March 2006 (Federal Government Printer [FGP] 2007) and a total land area of 4,416 sq. km. Administratively, the state consists of 21 local government areas, 3 senatorial districts namely: (a) Anambra North, (b) Anambra Central, and (c) Anambra South. Igbo ethnic group dominates the state.

Lagos state

Lagos state was created on May 27, 1967 by virtue of the State Creation and Transitional Provisions of Decree No. 14 of 1967, which reconstructed Nigeria's federation into 12 states. The

state is located on the south western part of Nigeria. Administratively, Lagos state is divided into 20 local government areas (LGAs) and 37 development areas. The study worked with the old number of LGAs because population sizes of the new development areas had not been clarified. By 2006 census, Lagos state had a population of over 9.0 million inhabitants (FGP 2007). The Lagos state government has however declared that the figure was unacceptable because a parallel census conducted by the state produced a much higher figure of 17.6 million people (Obia 2007). Lagos state is inhabited predominantly by the Yorubas.

Plateau State

Plateau State derives its name from the Jos Plateau. It is located in Nigeria's middle belt with an area of about 26,899, square kilometres and an estimated population of 3,178,712 people (FGP, 2007). In 1996, the present Nassarawa State was carved out of the western half of Plateau leaving Plateau State with seventeen LGAs

3.2. Research Method

A cross-sectional survey was employed to elicit quantitative data from the population. Data were collected at one point in time through the use of interviews.

3.2.1 Study Populations

The units of analysis for the survey were household individuals in the studied population.

3.2.2. Sample and Sampling Techniques

Sample size for the study was computed based on the proportion of females to males in 2006 census data. Women were 48.78% while men were 51.22% of the total population of Nigeria as at March 2006. The computed sample size was 1,650. Due to limited fund, 25% of the number i.e. 412 was finally accepted. However, 455 respondents were studied because populations of Anambra and Plateau states were raised in order to allow for comparative analysis. The states were allocated sample sizes based on the proportional distribution of their populations to the total 2006 census figures e.g. Anambra state has a total population of 4,182,032 which is 2.99% of the total population of Nigeria. Population of Plateau State is 3,178,712 i.e. 2.27% of the total and Lagos State – 9,013,534 representing 6.44% of the total. This implies that 225 respondents in Lagos State; 112 in Anambra State and 75 in Plateau State should be studied. However, in order to get the least number that was adequate for comparative analysis between rural and urban populations, the populations of Anambra and Plateau states were jacked up. Consequently, 120 and 110 were studied in Anambra and Plateau states respectively.

Multi-stage random sampling method was used to select the 455 respondents. The first stage involved identifying and selecting the states from the zones. In the second stage each of the states has three Senatorial Districts. The allocation of sample slots to the states in the zones was based on the proportion of each state to the total population size of Nigeria using the 2006 census figures as provided by the National Population and Housing Census (see above). The third stage was the selection of 25 percent of LGAs (which in Lagos was five LGAs) from the Senatorial Districts in the states. Consideration was given to the urban-rural spatial distribution such that in a peculiarly urban state like Lagos, 60 percent of the respondents were drawn from urban LGAs while 40 percent were drawn from the rural LGAs. It thus follows that 3 urban LGAs (Lagos Mainland, Kosofe and Ajeromi-Ifelodun) and 2 rural LGAs (Ikorodu and Epe) were selected for the study in Lagos.

In Plateau and Anambra states, one rural LGA and two urban LGAs were investigated in each since their sample sizes were less than that of Lagos State. In Anambra State, Awka South and Onitsha North were the urban LGAs while Awka North was the rural LGA. In Plateau State, Jos North and Jos South formed the urban LGAs while Barkin-Ladi was the rural LGA studied. From the selected LGAs, a minimum of 25 percent of the wards were selected in the fourth stage. From the selected wards, 25 percent of the streets were selected randomly. From the selected streets, households were selected systematically and then the final sampling unit was the consenting individuals aged 30 years and above in the fifth stage. This constituted the respondents who were eligible to vote as from 1999. Efforts were made to have a gender balance of 50% males and 50% females in the final sampling unit but in some instances women declined to respond to questions. With respect to ethical considerations, respondents' oral consent was obtained. They were not coerced.

3.2.3. *Research Instruments*

The interview schedule was structured with closed-ended and a few open-ended questions based on the objectives of the study. The content of the instrument was highly specific to the elections. A pre-testing of the research instruments was conducted outside the LGAs under study.

3.3. **Data Collection**

The survey was conducted from June to July, 2009. Research team consisted of sociologists and political scientists: the principal investigator, three state supervisors and eleven research assistants (RAs) (5 in Lagos State; 3 in Anambra State and 3 in Plateau State). The state supervisors and RAs were recruited among the residents in the states under study on the basis of possession of demonstrated and adequate social research skills and experience. All the RAs were trained in a day. The training focused on the objectives of the study, the art of interview and how to approach and develop rapport with the respondents. The aim of the training was to ensure that the interviews were conducted in similar ways in order to enhance comparability of information and to minimize interview bias.

3.4. **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using version 15 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and were presented in frequencies and percentages.

3.5. **Challenges of the Fieldwork**

One major problem was that of recall on the part of the respondents since the study was in retrospect. It was also not uncommon for the respondents to demand financial rewards for their time and cooperation. Rains constituted another major challenge. These problems were addressed as they arose. The training equipped the RAs with the necessary skills to overcome the challenges. During the training, emphasis was on communication skills and interpersonal relations which should enhance rapport with diverse respondents in the communities of interest. The recruitment and training ensured that RAs were people who understood the local terrain as well as the languages of the communities under study. These ensured that the survey gained acceptance of the local population and also took care of the uneducated.

4. **FINDINGS**

4.1. **Social Demographic Profile of the Respondents**

The total number of respondents investigated was 455 comprising 120 from Anambra state, 225 from Lagos state and 110 from Plateau state. Disaggregating into rural and urban location, there were 60% of the respondents from the urban centres in both Anambra and Lagos states while in Plateau we investigated 54.5% of urban dwellers (see Table 1 below). In other words 58.7% of the total respondents were urban dwellers.

Out of the total respondents 55.8% were males while 44.2% represented females. In spite of our efforts to investigate equal number of male and females, many women declined to participate. One half of the respondents were within age range 30 – 34 years with the highest proportion in Plateau State (64.9%) followed by Anambra State (55.9%). About three fifths of the total respondents were married (60.7%) while one-third of them were never married. Educational levels of the respondents indicated that 30.1% had acquired tertiary education and professional education (17.4%). About one-quarter of the total respondents had obtained other forms of education such as modern 3, pit man etc. With respect to occupational status, 25.7% of the total respondents were self-employed artisans accounted for 14.7%, students (14.3%) private sector employees (10.5%) and civil servants (9.9%). The respondents were predominantly Christians as they accounted for three quarters of the sample. The next dominant religion was Islam (22.0%).

4.2. **Political Behaviour**

4.2.1. *Participation in Local Government Elections*

In this section, the political behaviour of the respondents was assessed. In Table 2 all the studied states conducted LG elections in 1999 but since then, Anambra State did not hold another one until January this year, 2014. Lagos and Plateau States were supposed to hold LG council election in 2003 and 2007 but they were delayed to 2004 and 2008 respectively because of some political reasons. The level of awareness of local government elections in the three periods under review showed a similar pattern. 84.8%, 81.1% and 80.9% of the respondents were aware of the local

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government council elections of 1999, 2004, and 2008 respectively. These varied from one state to another. For instance, in 1999, 70.8% of Anambra state respondents compared to 92.4% of Lagos state and 84.5% of Plateau state respondents knew about the LG council elections. The level of awareness in Lagos and Plateau states increased to 97.3% and 88.2% respectively in 2004. By 2008, almost all the respondents in Lagos State and 99.1% respondents from Plateau State knew that local government elections were held.

About 43.3% of respondents from Anambra State, 37.3% from Lagos State and 40% from Plateau State did not take part in 1999 local government council elections (see Table 2). The situation improved in Lagos State as more people (76.0%) participated in LG elections in 2004. However, proportion that participated slumped again to 68.4% in 2008. In Plateau State, the situation remained the same until 2008 when fewer people declined to participate (34.5%). Reasons provided for not being involved in the elections were lack of interests, not familiar with the contestants, not their business and therefore unconcerned or that they traveled outside the states.

Table 1. Social Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Characteristics	Anambra N = 120		Lagos N = 225		Plateau N = 110		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Urban	72	60.0	60	54.5	60	54.5	267	58.7
Rural	48	40.0	90	40.0	50	45.5	188	41.3
Gender								
Male	61	50.8	126	56.0	67	60.9	254	55.8
Female	59	49.2	99	44.0	43	39.1	201	44.2
Age								
30-34	66	55.9	95	42.4	63	64.9	224	51.0
34-39	14	11.9	46	20.5	17	17.5	77	17.5
40-44	11	9.3	39	17.4	8	8.2	58	13.2
45-49	8	6.8	21	9.4	3	3.1	32	7.3
50+	19	16.1	23	10.3	6	6.2	48	10.9
Marital status								
Single	48	40.0	50	22.2	51	46.4	149	32.7
Currently married	59	49.2	167	74.2	47	42.7	273	60.0
Divorced/separated/widowed	7	5.8	8	3.5	9	8.1	24	5.3
No response	6	5.0	--	--	3	2.7	9	2.0
Education								
None	5	4.2	4	1.8	3	2.7	12	2.6
Primary	15	12.5	11	4.9	8	7.3	34	7.5
Secondary	7	5.8	12	5.3	3	2.7	22	4.8
Tertiary	43	35.8	82	36.4	16	14.5	141	31.0
Professional	17	14.2	30	13.3	32	29.1	79	17.4
Others	32	26.7	86	38.1	44	38.9	162	35.6
No response	1	0.8	--	--	4	3.6	5	1.1
Occupation								
Unemployed	4	3.3	7	3.1	14	12.7	25	5.5
Housewife	6	5.0	7	3.1	10	9.1	23	5.1
Pension/Retired	6	5.0	2	0.9	3	2.7	11	2.4
Student	29	24.2	18	8.0	18	16.4	65	14.3
Farmer	6	5.0	3	1.3	8	7.3	17	3.7
Self/Own	25	20.8	75	33.3	17	15.5	117	25.7
Self/Informal	6	5.0	14	6.2	1	0.9	21	4.6
Art	6	5.0	60	26.7	1	0.9	67	14.7
Unskilled	4	3.3	--	--	--	--	4	0.9
Private sector	10	8.3	23	10.2	15	13.6	48	10.5
Civil Servant	16	13.3	10	4.4	9	17.3	45	9.9
Others	--	--	1	0.4	3	2.7	4	0.9
No response	2	1.7	5	2.2	1	0.9	8	1.7
Religion								
Traditional	5	4.2	2	0.9	3	2.7	10	2.2
Christianity	114	95.0	133	59.1	95	86.4	342	75.2

Islam	--	--	90	40.0	10	9.1	100	22.0
Others	1	0.8	--	--	1	0.9	2	0.4
5.00	--	--	--	--	1	0.9	1	0.2

The findings also revealed in Table 2 that the respondents participated in various capacities. Major mode of participation was voting, although some respondents contested as Vice Chairmen, councillors while others campaigned for others. About 73.3% of Lagos State respondents, and more than one half of both Anambra and Plateau state respondent affirmed that they did not belong to any political party in 1999. Lagos and Plateau states ran almost similar patterns in 2004 and 2008 elections as in 1999.

Table 2. Respondents' Participation in Local Government Elections

Aware of LGA elections	Anambra N=120			Lagos N= 225			Plateau N =110		
	1999	2004	2008	1999	2004	2008	1999	2004	2008
Yes	70.8	-	-	92.4	97.3	99.1	84.5	88.2	89.1
No	29.2	-	-	7.6	2.7	0.9	15.5	11.8	10.9
Participate in elections	1999	2004	2008	1999	2004	2008	1999	2004	2008
Yes	55.0			62.7	76.0	68.4	60.0	60.0	64.5
No	43.3			37.3	24.0	31.1	40.0	40.0	34.5
No response	1.7			--	--	0.4	--	--	0.9
If no, why	1999	2004	2008	1999	2004	2008	1999	2004	2008
Didn't know	9.2			2.7	0.4	0.4	0.9	0.9	--
Didn't know anybody	1.7			4.0	1.8	1.3	6.4	6.4	6.4
Not interested	7.5			15.6	14.7	24.0	15.5	16.4	18.2
Not my business	4.2			1.8	0.9	0.4	6.4	3.6	3.6
Others	24.2			12.9	6.2	4.0	10.9	8.2	6.4
No response	53.3			63.1	76.0	69.8	60.0	64.5	65.5
If yes, In what capacity	1999	2004	2008	1999	2004	2008	1999	2004	2008
Vice chairman	0.8			0.4	-	-	0.9	-	-
Councillor	0.8			--	-	-	1.8	-	-
Voted	55.8			59.1	72.4	65.3	52.7	53.6	53.6
Campaigned	2.5			3.1	2.7	3.1	4.5	9.1	12.7
No response	40.0			37.3	24.9	31.1	40.0	37.3	33.6
Whether the respondents belonged to any party	1999	2004	2008	1999	2004	2008	1999	2004	2008
Yes	35.8			25.8	26.7	28.4	45.5	54.5	38.2
No	57.5			73.3	72.4	70.7	52.7	43.6	57.6
No response	6.7			0.9	0.9	0.9	1.8	1.8	4.2

4.2.2. Challenges of Local Government Council Elections

In 1999 LG council elections, 50.8%, 48.2% and 35.6% of the respondents from Anambra, Plateau, and Lagos States respectively did not know whether all the contesting parties were represented (see Table 3 below). In 2004, the findings revealed that a higher proportion of Lagos respondents (70.7%) than that of 1999 (62.2%) testified that all the parties involved were represented. On the contrary, in Plateau State a lower percentage (21.8%) than that of 1999 (38.2%) reported so for the same year. By 2008, the proportions of respondents who affirmed that all parties were represented dropped to 52.9% in Lagos State and 18.2% in Plateau State.

Voters' turnout in 1999 was encouraging in all the states investigated. About 62.5% of Anambra State, 69.8% of Lagos State and 75.5% of Plateau State respondents said that the turnout of voters was impressive. In Lagos State, people's turnout was more impressive in 2004 than in 1999 as 80.4% compared to 69.8% of the respondents said that the citizens came out en mass to vote. This percentage dropped further to 67.1% in 2008 (see Table below). On the contrary, in Plateau State, the percentage of respondents who said that there was a mass turnout of voters dropped from 75.5% in 1999 to 70.9% in 2004 but increased to 80.0% in 2008.

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However in 1999, one in four of Anambra State respondents, one in ten of Lagos State and a little above one in five of Plateau State respondents reported that the voters were bribed by the political parties while 15.8%, 7.1% and 13.6% of Anambra, Lagos and Plateau respondents respectively claimed that the voters were compelled to vote for parties which were not their choices in the same year. Furthermore, 15% of Anambra State, 4.9% of Lagos State and 15.5% of Plateau State respondents reported that LG Chairmen and councillors declared as having won the elections did not actually win.

Table 3. *Challenges of Local Government Council Elections*

All parties were represented	Anambra N=120			Lagos N= 225			Plateau N =110		
	1999	2004	2008	1999	2004	2008	1999	2004	2008
Yes	35.8			62.2	70.7	52.9	38.2	21.8	18.2
No	4.2			1.8	3.6	18.2	10.9	21.8	30.9
Don't know	50.8			35.6	23.6	27.6	48.2	52.7	47.3
No response	9.2			0.4	2.2	1.3	2.7	3.6	3.6
People came out to vote	1999	2004	2008	1999	2004	2008	1999	2004	2008
Yes	62.5			69.8	80.4	67.1	75.5	70.9	80.0
No	1.7			0.9	2.2	14.2	1.8	9.1	3.6
Don't know	21.7			27.1	16.9	18.2	20.0	18.2	13.6
No response	14.2			2.2	0.4	0.4	2.7	1.8	2.7
Whether the electorate were bribed	1999	2004	2008	1999	2004	2008	1999	2004	2008
Yes	25.8			10.7	15.6	10.7	22.7	30.0	42.7
No	25.8			52.4	58.7	55.6	19.1	20.0	12.7
Don't know	36.7			34.2	24.9	33.3	57.3	50.0	42.7
No response	11.7			2.6	0.9	0.4	0.9	--	1.8
Whether the electorate were permitted to vote for the contestants of their choices	1999	2004	2008	1999	2004	2008	1999	2004	2008
Yes	39.2			61.3	65.8	62.7	42.7	37.3	39.1
No	15.8			7.1	8.4	7.6	13.6	23.6	33.6
Don't know	30.0			29.8	24.4	29.3	40.9	37.3	26.4
No response	15.0			1.8	1.3	0.4	2.7	1.8	0.9
Whether the declared winners actually won	1999	2004	2008	1999	2004	2008	1999	2004	2008
Yes	31.7			63.6	68.4	67.1	37.3	28.2	13.6
No	15.0			4.9	7.1	5.3	15.5	30.0	40.9
Don't know	39.2			29.8	23.6	27.1	45.5	40.0	42.7
No response	14.2			1.8	0.9	0.4	1.8	1.8	2.7
Whether problems were encountered during the elections	1999	2004	2008	1999	2004	2008	1999	2004	2008
Yes	20.8			2.7	4.0	2.2	9.1	17.3	29.1
No	40.8			68.4	73.3	77.3	44.5	29.1	20.9
Don't know	23.3			28.4	20.9	18.7	44.5	42.7	29.1
No response	15.0			0.4	1.8	1.7	1.8	10.9	20.9

With regards to whether the electorate was bribed in 2004, 30% of Plateau State and 15.6% of Lagos State respondents said yes. Furthermore, 23.6% of Plateau State and 8.4% Lagos state respondents said that voters were not allowed to cast votes for the parties of their choice. About 30.0% of Plateau State and 7.1% of Lagos State respondents reported that the declared winners did not actually win the elections. These percentages were greater than those of 1999.

The next LG elections did not hold in 2007 as planned. Lagos and Plateau States cast their votes in 2008. Around 67.1% of Lagos State and 80.0% of Plateau State respondents declared that the turn out for voting was satisfactory. More than two-fifths of the Plateau State sample and one in ten respondents from Lagos State claimed that voters were offered bribes. There is no difference

between 2004 and 2007/2008 proportions of the respondents who said that the chairmen and councillors did not win in Lagos State but in Plateau State, the proportion increased from 30.0% to 40.9% between the same periods under review. Again, the above results showed an upward increase from percentages of 1999 to 2004 and finally to 2008 indicating that the problems were deteriorating from one period to the other,

The respondents were asked if they witnessed any problems during the polls. About 20.8% of Anambra State respondents compared to 9.1% of respondents of Plateau and 2.7% of those of Lagos State reported that there were problems. By 2004 and 2008 the percentages of Plateau State respondents who said there were problems increased from 9.1% in 1999 to 17.3% in 2004 and 29.1% in 2008.

4.3. Discussion of the Results

The findings revealed that Anambra State only had LG election in 1999 since then has been governed by Caretaker Committees. It could be said that democratic process has eluded the state. Although awareness of the elections increased in 2008, a significant proportion of the respondents claimed that they were not aware of the elections. This could be a problem of recall because election days are usually holidays that restrict human and vehicular movements except for those on essential duties. This problem of recall might have accounted for the low level of knowledge among the respondents, political participation in all its ramifications is every citizen's right.

The study found that electorate political participation was generally low in 1999 and 2008. Reasons provided for not being involved in the elections were apathy, not familiar with the contestants, not their business and therefore unconcerned or that they travelled outside the states. Apathy here could be a protest by the electorate because they reported that they were not allowed to vote for their choices. It could also be caused by the imposition of the candidate by the political parties. Party thugs could not get to the state and federal levels to be rewarded but at the local government level. This could be said to collaborate Bendor *et al* and elite theory's assertions.

The results revealed that the respondents who were involved in the elections participated in various capacities such as voting, campaigning and contesting as Vice Chairmen and Councillors. Political party membership was not common among the respondents as majority of the total respondents did not belong to political parties. This indicates the level of apathy among the electorate and can be said to support Bendor *et al* (2011). They posit that people adapt themselves to their environments by developing heuristics or rules of thumb more restricted than the pure optimization associated with canonical rationality. The respondents responded to their past experiences by adapting their rules of thumb on the basis of this feedback. If they were not satisfied with the performances of their LG Chairmen, they would not be interested in participating in LG elections.

Almost half of the respondents from Anambra and Plateau and one-third of Lagos respondents did not know whether all the contesting parties were represented in 1999 LG council elections. These proportions declined in 2004 and 2008. This could be attributed to low level of campaigns and too many political parties that usually confuse the electorate. This again validates Bendor *et al* view. By this time, LG council elections were characterized by rancour, accusations and counter-accusations by various parties. A greater proportion of those who said that some political parties were not represented were found among the Plateau respondents throughout the three periods under review. They revealed that some parties declined to participate. For instance in Lagos in 2008, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) declined because of the issue of 20 Local Government Councils and 37 Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs). Thirty-one political parties indicated their interests in participating in the local council poll in the state.

Voters' turnout in 1999 was encouraging in all the three states. In Lagos State, people's turnout was more impressive in 2004 than in 1999 but dropped in 2008. On the contrary, in Plateau State, the turnout dropped in 2004 but increased in 2008.

Among the challenges mentioned by the electorate in the three states were bribery, compulsion to vote for parties which were not their choices and some LG Chairmen and councillors did not win the election but were declared winners. This is probably because these politicians exercise their political powers by putting their friends and clients on the state payroll as council employees, thus

ensuring them a secured livelihood. Another challenge was delay in the provision of electoral materials, snatching and stuffing of ballot boxes, rigging and violence.

Literature indicates that the local government elections of 2003/2004 were marred by violence and intimidation (Human Rights Watch 2004). Local government elections had originally been scheduled to take place in 2002, but were repeatedly postponed. The official reasons given for these postponements related mostly to logistical and administrative preparations. But many Nigerians speculated that the delays were more likely to have been motivated by political considerations. After the terms of local government councils expired in May 2002, state governors appointed local transition or “caretaker” committees to take the place of elected local government councils. A federal government announcement in June 2003 that the system of local government administration would be subjected to a wide-ranging review meant that local government elections were, for a while, indefinitely suspended; in the meantime, local governments continued to be controlled by unelected individuals, picked by state governors. When the elections were eventually announced for March 2004, many of these individuals were reluctant to give up these lucrative positions. Human Rights Watch (2004) also documented several cases in which members of these transition committees were implicated in acts of violence against their perceived opponents during the 2003 elections.

The 2003 elections had already demonstrated that the fiercest battles for political control were played out at the local level, and local disputes were the motivation behind many of the most serious incidents of violence. The 2004 local government elections confirmed this pattern. Violence broke out in many locations before, during and after polling day on March 27, leading to dozens of deaths. In addition to battles between supporters of different political parties, the period of the local government elections saw an intensification of internal fighting, in particular within the PDP, with different factions vying for control of local government positions. From February 2004 onwards, there were several incidents of apparently politically-motivated killings and attacks in different parts of the country. For example, on February 6, Aminasoari Dikibo, National Vice-Chairman of the PDP for the South-South Zone, was shot dead in Delta State. In Kogi State, the chairman of the State Independent Electoral Commission, Philip Olorunnipa, was killed on March 7, and the PDP candidate for the chairmanship of Bassa local government, Luke Shigaba, was killed on March 3. Also on March 3, a vehicle carrying the Benue State Governor, George Akume, was attacked; the Governor escaped unhurt, but a friend travelling with him, Andrew Agom (who, like the governor, was a PDP member), and a police officer were both killed. There has been speculation that some of these incidents may have been caused by infighting within the PDP.

Between January and April 2004, there was also an intensification of inter-communal violence in areas such as the Niger delta and the central Plateau State. Not all these incidents were directly related to the elections, but some analysts argued that the climate of heightened political tension created by the prospect of elections contributed to the increase in violence, especially in Delta State.

On the actual election day of March 27, numerous incidents of violence and intimidation and clashes between supporters of different parties and candidates were reported across the country. The geographical spread of locations from which electoral violence was reported during the local government elections might have been even greater than during the 2003 general elections. Whereas the worst violence in 2003 was concentrated in the south-south and southeast, violence around the 2004 local government elections erupted in multiple locations across the country. In an initial non-exhaustive count of incidents reported by the end of March 2004, Human Rights Watch noted at least twenty-two states (out of Nigeria’s thirty-six states) in which killings and other types of violent clashes were recorded by election observers, journalists and other sources (Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), (2004). Between late March and early April, there were reports of further incidents, including killings, some of which might have been linked to the aftermath of the elections (Daily Champion, 2004; Associated Press, 2004)

In addition to the violence, election observers reported widespread rigging of election results. Elections did not take place at all in several locations, in some cases because state or local authorities had chosen alternative dates, and in other cases, such as in Warri in Delta State, because state governments feared that elections would aggravate ongoing violence. The

cancellation or postponement of elections was in itself a source of further frustration and anger among some communities. Where elections did take place, there was a very low voter turn-out; observers speculated that people had been discouraged from voting by a mixture of apathy, fear, and disillusion with the 2003 elections (Transition Monitoring Group (TMG 2004).

In other parts of the country that conducted their local government elections in 2007, violence, fraud and rigging were also experienced. In Plateau State, clashes of ethnic groups between the Jos indigenes and Hausa-Fulani settlers erupted in Jos after local government elections in 2008, with some people killed and the military was deployed to restore order. The Plateau State Independent Electoral Commission (PLASIEC), announced the results of the 17 local government elections, which were won by the ruling party, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). The Plateau State Independent Electoral Commission said the election was free, fair, credible and peaceful but the riots started when youths who were protesting attempted to rig the election in Jos North Local Government area took to the streets. They set a church on fire. It was reported that the trouble started when an agent of one of the political parties was killed at Kabong, where results for Jos North were being collated. Supporters of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) candidate for Jos North Local Government suspected that the election was to be rigged in favour of the Peoples Democratic Party candidate. The ANPP candidate was said to be leading by about 57, 000 votes and the PDP was only expecting 10, 000 votes from the remaining areas where the votes had not been counted (Read International Crisis Group's report on the Jos crises, 17 December 2012 for an informed analysis).

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following are recommended:

- Anambra should endeavour to organize LG elections as at when due and regularly to fulfil the requirements of democracy.
- The study revealed gross apathy among the respondents. A significant proportion of the respondents was ignorant of the elections and did not participate in the LG council elections. Concerted voter education should be conducted by civil societies to improve voters' awareness about the elections. Civil societies should be proactive in this regard.
- Contestants should endeavour to have an intensive publicity about themselves and their ambitions. Secondly, Nigerian democracy is still evolving therefore to improve the electoral process and address the apathy among the citizens, citizens' votes must count and enlightenment campaigns should be organized for the electorate. It is basically the legitimacy deficit of the government at different levels that gives rise to apathy. In addition, contestants should be clearly identified in the electoral process. And campaign debates to clarify parties' manifestos should be encouraged.
- Major challenges observed from the study were delay in the provision of electoral materials, snatching and stuffing of ballot boxes, rigging, financial incentives, intimidation of voters and violence. Political parties and INEC should agree on a Code of Conduct and ethics for the elections. Agreement on a Code of Conduct and campaign ethics would send a major signal to the population that the political leadership of the country is committed to the evolution of modern democratic practices.

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