Effects of Porverty Reduction Strategies On Voter Apathy in Nigeria: A Study of South West Region 2015-2022

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between poverty and voter apathy in South West Nigeria, the effect(s) poverty reduction strategies on voter apathy. The study was embarked upon as a result the threat voter apathy constitutes to democracy in Nigeria. To properly carry out the study, the following research questions were posed; What are the forms of expressing voter apathy in Nigeria; is there a relationship between voter apathy and poverty in Nigeria; what poverty alleviation programmes are there to reduce the incidences of voter apathy in Nigeria. The relative deprivation theory was adopted as a tool of analysis. Data for the study were gathered from both primary and secondary sources and the study concluded that, the inability of politicians to fulfill there electoral promises electorates has pushed the voters to sell their votes on election day as a means to counter promises has pushed the voters to sell their votes on election day to counter balance the failed campaign promises. The findings of the study revealed that there is a relationship between voter apathy in the South West and the socio-economic conditions of

Nigerian especially those register voters who are non formally educated, whereas those who are formally educated and monthly salary earners are either forced or compelled to vote by their respective offices.

Keywords: Poverty, Poverty, Poverty Reduction, Voter Apathy.

Introduction

As a socio-economic problem, poverty is seriously afflicting a large proportion of the world's population. The menace of poverty manifests in varied different ways including the lack of income and productive, assets needed for sustainable livelihoods, extreme hunger and malnourishment, lack of access to clean drinkable water, education, political voice low life expectancy etc (World Bank 2007, Sneyd, 2015). The existence of extreme poverty in several developing countries is now a critical challenge that needed to be addressed with heightening urgency. Developing countries however can only come out of poverty through the implementation of a combination of poverty alleviation strategies among which are good governance, sound economic policies, growth stimulating inclusive economy, economic and general institutional reforms, the promotion of policies that enhance micro finance institutions and programmes, improve the marketing systems, and finally, cash transfer programme.

Voter apathy is fast constituting a threat to Nigeria's democracy. Elections in Nigeria since 1999 has been characterized by voters apathy, with only a small percentage of the qualified registered voters actually turning out to vote at every election. This State of affairs is fast replacing majority rule with minority rule over the majority. The worrisome situation is made worse when one juxtaposed the population of Nigeria against the number of registered voters and the actual number of those who turn out to vote. Prior to the 2019 election, records of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) shows that eighty-two point three (82.3m) million eligible adult citizens registered as voters, and the actual voters was a paltry twenty eight point six (28.6m) million, equaling a mere thirty five (35%) percent of the total registered voters (Akinyemi, 2019).

To archive the goals of poverty reduction on voter apathy, Nigeria needs sound economic policies that can address the root causes of poverty, while promoting inclusiveness in economic growth by promoting the basic needs of the poor, providing them with economic opportunities that empowers and enable them improve their living standard. (World Bank, 2017, World Bank, 2015)..

At the conclusion of the 2019 elections, INEC declared Mohamadu Buhari the candidate of All Progressives Congress (APC) winner with 15,191,847 votes or 18.5% with the first runner up Atiku Abubakah of the People's Democratic Party Pulling 11, 262,9 votes equivalent to 13.7% of the total registered voters. That Mohamadu Buhari, was declared winner of the election with 15 million votes in a country with a vast population of over 200 million people coupled with the continued decline of voters participation thereafter had prompted this undertaken. The question here is, What are the forms of expressing voter apathy in Nigeria? Does voter apathy affect socio-economic conditions of citizens in Nigeria? Is there a relationship between poverty and voter apathy in Nigeria? What poverty alleviation programme can reduce the incidence of voter apathy in Nigeria?

This study therefore is an inquest into the reason for the steady decline in voter's participation, what are the role of poverty in precipitating voters apathy in Nigeria, especially in States in South Western Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Deprivation Theory (RD)

The analysis of this research work is premised on the theoretical framework of the relative deprivation and deprivation theory.

Relative deprivation theory was developed by Robert K. Merton (1938), Samuel, A. Stouffer (1949), Ted Robert Gurr (1970) and Anifowose (1982). As a sociological theory, relative deprivation views social change and movement according to which people take action for social change in order to acquire something. It points to a situation where some persons are denied of some basic necessities, the denial is seen as a deliberate attempt to eliminate or disregard such persons or area.

Relative Deprivation is defined as an actual or perceived lack of resources required to maintain the quality of life, diet, activities and material possessions to which various socioeconomic groups or individuals within those groups have grown accustomed or are considered to be the acceptable norm within the group. In a general term, relative deprivation is that feeling that you are 'worse off' or fallen behind your reference group. In many case relative deprivation has been cited as a factor driving incidences of social disorder like rioting looting, people who feels they are being deprived of resources to which they are entitle often fall into this group when they indulge in disorderly acts to vent their grievances.

For the purposes of this work after examining the objectives of the study a descriptive research design was adopted. A descriptive research describe the phenomenon of interest, document and provide a clear answer of who, what, when, where, why and how of the research problem. The design also gave a clear direction of how data was collected through a questionnaire, interview, focus group discussion, survey and or observation, textbooks, academic journals, magazines and the world wide web. A sample size of three hundred and ninety four respondents was derived for the study through the application of Taro Yamen formula.

This study adopted the heterogeneous or maximum variation sampling which allows the researcher judgment in selecting the participants with diverse character in other to achieve maximum variables within the primary data. Thus over three hundred and ninety four (394) respondents were selected using a multi stage design consisting of three (6) states of Lagos for its large population Ekite and Osun State for its resent election, Ondo, Ogun and Oyo. Six (6) Local Government Areas and twelve (12) electoral wards.

Literature Review

The World Summit for Development (Copenhagen 1995) stated that poverty has various manifestations, including the lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihood as exemplified by hunger, and malnutrition, ill health, limited or lack of access to education and other basic services. Other manifestations of poverty includes, increased morbidity and mortality from illness, homelessness and inadequate housing, unsafe environments, social discrimination and exclusion and the lack of participation in decision and in civil social and cultural life.

The above is indicative of the fact that poverty is both an economic and social melee that manifests in many more ways than one. Not minding the definition given to the phenomenon it remains the lack or insufficiency of some basic and essential elements of life, without which the victims experiences reduction in social confidence, dignity and psychological prestige (Adofo 2006, Anger 2010).

In agreement with the Copenhagen declaration 1995, the United Nations Statistical Audit (UNSA 2005) stated that the earliest definition of poverty is centered on the ability to obtain adequate food and other basic necessities. The World Bank (1990) considered poverty simply as the inability to achieve a certain minimal standard of living. On the other hand Aluko (1975) cited in Asinobi (2003) referred to poverty as the lack of command over basic consumption, given rise to insufficient food, clothing and shelter or the lack of capacity to participate with dignity in the society.

Soyombo (1987) argued that the term poverty means different things to deferent people. Soyombo pointed out that, while the economist thinks of poverty in a global term, the sociologist and the psychologist think of it in a relative or comparative term. Poverty he noted is not only an expression of life's situation, but also a state of mind, and a perception of oneself in the complex web of social relation.

Rowntree (1901) have opined that there are two main typologies of poverty (primary and secondary). According to Rowntree, primary poverty will occur when the income of an individual or family is insufficient to provide for the basic needs required for physical efficiency on the other hand poverty is considered to be secondary when and where there is a manifest mismanagement of available resources/income which otherwise would have been sufficient for the satisfaction of basic needs. The two affirmation groups Rowntree categorized as (a) deserving poor and (b) undeserving poor, Those living in secondary poverty is here described as deserving poor or voluntary poverty, having deliberately deprived himself for religious or other reason some material wellbeing and or comfort thereby facing into the category of voluntary poverty.

Causes of Poverty

Although poverty is a global issue, its severity differs from continent to continent and from country to country according to the factors that actuated it. Poverty is not caused by one factor but a combination of several complex factors contribute to it. Among the factors identified as contributory to the global poverty crises are: low or negative economic growth, corruption, unemployment, poor infrastructure, hash economic policy, poor governance or poor leadership, low productivity, a lag in human resources development among others (Ajakaiye & Adeyeye, 2002, Kolawole & Torimiro 2006; Adeyemi 2012). Poverty is also caused by poor leadership, lack of a comprehensive National Poverty Reduction programme, lack of sound agricultural policy, neglect of agricultural sector, lack of basic infrastructure, rapid population growth (Anger, 2010). Other factors which have contributed to a decline in living standards and are structural causes or determinant of poverty include increase in crime and violence, environmental degradation, retrenchment of workers, a fall in the real value of safety nets as well as changes in family structures (Ajakaiye and Adeyeye, 2002). The Thinkers Forum International (2006) also added mismanagement of resources, corruption, trade injustices and greed among others as the most recent causes of global poverty. Some of these factors are examined below;

Efforts at Poverty Reductions in Nigeria

Egwere, (1997) and Ekong, (1997) have earlier identified poverty as the main obstacle to rural development in Nigeria and the efforts of successive government towards poverty

alleviation in dealing with this obstacles to development, the Nigerian government according to Archibong (1997) adopted two opposing measures: (a) direct measure which tackles poverty issues and (b) an indirect measure which promotes welfares through some well thought out economic policies.

While the direct approach assume that economic growth by itself is too slow to provide substantial benefits to the poor within a reasonable period, therefore the need for the government to directly provide goods and services directly to the people so as to ensure that an equitable share of the goods and services are recovered by those living in poverty.

The indirect approach on the other hand posited the need for a reduction of governmental role in the provision of goods and services through a direct government policy. The indirect approach rather advocated the concentration of governmental efforts on the polices that increase long term economic growth.

Based on her agricultural survey, the Nigerian government adopted United Nations recommendations and embarked on the implementation of three (3) pilot schemes for an integrated agricultural and rural development projects in Funtua, Gusau and Gombe and other parts of the country in the second phase.

Ekong (1997) posited that apart from the accelerated food production aim of the programme, the government also adopted and integrated rural development strategy as proposed by the United Nations to enhance the growth potentials of the rural dwellers.

The United Nations proposals hinges on three main models including: (1) Rural Urban Integration (ii) intersection and rural coordination (iii) the package approach. The implementation of these programmes were symbolized with the emergence of such agricultural food programmes like, Operation Feed the Nation (1976), Green Revolution (1979) and the Agricultural credit Guarantee scheme Fund and so on.

These programmes were adjudged to be a failure as it failed to meet the food sufficiency aspiration of the country; neither did it improve the living conditions of the rural people. Archebong (1997) and Egware (1997) argued that the poverty alleviation effects of the programmes were at best minimal, Egware however stressed that despite the encouragement of the National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NLDA) to small famers to have more land under cultivation, the improvement recorded in the agricultural sector as a result or move out put, did not significantly reduce poverty.

Having failed in the first phase of agricultural driven rural development and economic growth, the government formulated other programmes and policies targeted at alleviating poverty. This includes such programmes as the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Family Support Programme (FSP) which was latter replaced by Belter Life for Rural Women. People's Bank and the Expanded Programme on immunization, the Economic Advancement Programme and so on.

A chronicle and analysis of some of the poverty alleviation programmes embarked by the Federal Government of Nigeria over the years will show the inconsistency inherent in the programmes design and implementation which invariably led to its failure to achieve set goals for example, in 1980, the Green Revolution replaced the Operation Feed the Nation. Both programmes were aimed at curtailing the importation of food items and agricultural products that can be grown in Nigeria, the question here according to Ikwuba, (2011) is why the change of name for a programme that are designed to arrive at the same destination, only for the programme to end three years later in 1983.

In an attempt to solve the mystery of insercent failures of poverty alleviation and rural development programmes in Nigeria, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) (1998) cited in Ogwumeken (2001) attributed the failures of both the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) and the Green Revolution (GR) to three main factors, including the lack of political will, policy instability and the insufficient involvement of beneficiaries in the programme. Ogwumiken further stated that, the Green Revolution failed because many senior civil servants, military officers and high profile businessman high jacked the process to satisfy their own selfish interest by turning themselves into big time "ghost" farmers, distributors of farm inputs (fertilizer, tractors) and so on, acquiring big farm land for speculative purposes. (Ikwuba, 2011).

Another agricultural scheme was later to be introduced in 1984 by the short lived Buhari/Idiagbon regime. The scheme which was unrestrained "Go back to Land" gave rise to the popular School To Land" programme in Rivers State introduced by the than military Administrator of the state. Police Commissioner Fidelis Oyakilome. The programme which was credited for the training of many youths in live stock and crop farming was badly floored in terms of it farmers settlement scheme which was non existence due to corruption as start up funds allocated for the settlement of the young farmer were either misappropriated or out rightly stolen. (Diri, 2020).

As has become the tradition, every successive government floats it own agricultural programme and development scheme. The General Ibrahim Babangeda regime in 1986,

having adopted the IMF led Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), established the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) as well as the Directorate of Food Road and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI) (Ogwumuke, 2011) DFRRI, a multi sectorial programme has as it focal point the reduction of rural poverty and the enhancement of quality life through the construction of feeder roads, rural water supply scheme and agricultural development. The scheme Obadan (2001) noted brought more forcefully desired for policies and programmes aimed at alleviating poverty and providing safety net for the poor, regrettably, the programme which brought some salutary effects on economic development became embroider in high profile politics and over whelmed with the corruption monster to the extent that it worsened the living conditions of the poor (Ogwumike, 2001); Olesa & Obibuakal, 1992 cited in Ikwuba 2011).

With the demise of the Banbangida regime, General Sani Abacha, the new head of state, set up a 248 member committee to fashion a development plan that will not only bring Nigeria out of poverty but also catapult her to the level of industrialization, which gave birth to Vision 2010.

The main trusts of Vision 2010 were better educated population, decrease dependency and the reduction in corruption. The implementation of Vision 2010 became a seemingly difficult task due to inconsistency, indiscipline in government and the lack of continuity.

At the return in 1999 to democratic rule, President Olusegun Obasanjo introduced the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) which according to Ogwumike (2001) failed on arrival due to the inability of the government to identify the poor and the nature of poverty prevalent in Nigeria. The poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) was succeeded by the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) which adopted a four-prong strategy for achieving it mandate, Including: (1) Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) (ii) Rural Infrastructural Development Scheme (RIDS) (iii) Social Welfare Service Scheme (IV) National Resources Development Scheme (NRDS) these programmes though very comprehensive and well articulated in nature, were unable to make any dent on the poverty index due largely to the inefficiency associated with the poor implementation of the programme. (Ikwuba, 2011).

The inability of successive government to tackle the issues of poverty in Nigeria despite the laudable and lofty schemes and programmes dedicated to this purpose over the years, is largely attributed to corrupt practices amongst government officiates, half hearted implementation of the programme and incessant changes in government and governmental structures.

i. The Seven Point Agenda (SPA)

The seven-point agenda (SPA) was not only President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's election covenant with the people of Nigeria, but it was also a policy package contemplated for the transformation of the entire economy. SPA, as its name suggests, hinges on seven sectors of the economy as the engine room for the total emancipation of the Nigerian economy. These sectors are: transportation, power and energy, food security, national security, Niger-Delta and energy security, education and human development, land tenure reforms and home ownership and wealth creation (Osanyituyi, 2007). According to the Nigeria High Commission (2009), SPA was properly conceptualized, comprehensively articulated and the implementation strategy adequately laid out to ensure the realisation of Vision 20:2020. Unfortunately, SPA was short-lived in view of the demise of the progenitor.

ii. The Transformation Agenda (TA)

In 2011, upon assumption of office, President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan unveiled a new policy package tagged the Transformation Agenda. It represents a five (5)-year development plan, 2011-2015, which invariably coincided with his four-year term in office. The transformation Agenda is being midwifed by a 28-man Economic Management Team with the President and the Vice president as the Chairman and Vice chairman respectively, while the Minister of Finance, Dr Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, is the Coordinator. The Transformation Agenda proposes to reposition the economy by addressing the critical issues of poverty, unemployment, insecurity and most particularly, the diversification of the entire economy from total dependence on oil to a significant reliance on non-oil driven economy (Itah, 2012 as cited in Gyong, 2012, p. 99). The Minister of Trade and Investment, Olusegun Aganga, added that the Transformation Agenda revolves around good governance, power, security and development of the non-oil sector such as manufacturing and solid mineral, investment in infrastructure, education and anti-corruption crusade (IT and Telecom Digest, 7 February, 2012, as cited by Gyong, 2012).

The details of the Transformation Agenda were provided by the Honorable Minister and Deputy Chairman of the National Planning Commission. According to him, the Transformation agenda is focused on three (3) key areas, namely: inclusive non-inflationary growth, employment generation and poverty alleviation and value re-orientation. It will also address some other key areas such as good governance, the provision of infrastructure and human capital development.

In short, the Transformation Agenda seeks to hopefully transform Nigeria socio-economic cum political landscape into a catalyst for growth and national development. But whether the policy thrust of the Transformation Agenda will be achieved by 2015 depends entirely

on the sincerity of government and the integrity of the operators. According to Gyong (2012), the appointment of the minister of finance, a reputable economist, as the coordinating minister indicates the centrality of the economy as the driving force in the success of the Transformation Agenda. He added that from all intents and purposes, the Transformation Agenda is largely in pursuance of collective national goals and aspirations towards driving Nigeria towards the speedy fulfillment of Vision 20:2020.

In summary, the anti-poverty policies had been too numerous and inconsistent, and this in part can explain the disappointing outcomes in the past three decades with respect to poverty incidence. Although, Obadan (2001) observed that some of the poverty-reducing efforts of government yielded some positive results, especially in the areas of agriculture, primary health care, education enrolment, mass transit programme and financial sector services through the People's Bank of Nigeria and the Community Banks.

Generally, however, the poverty-reducing efforts of government notwithstanding, the poverty situation in Nigeria has deteriorated to a crisis level where seven out of every ten Nigerians are poor and majority of the people cannot find food to eat (NEEDS, 2004; Ikwuba, 2011). A recent report from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) shows that 112.519 million Nigerians or 69% live in relative poverty while 99.284 million or 60.9% live in absolute poverty (Onuba, 2012). These unimpressive statistics to a great extent indicate that those strategies were ineffective. A number of factors have been attributed to the failures of the past poverty-related programmes and efforts of government. These include: severe budget management problems, lack of accountability and transparency and lack of targeting mechanisms for the poor. Others are political and policy instability, poor coordination, lack of consultation and participation of the beneficiaries in the formulation and implementation of the programmes (Obadan, 2001). This view was also shared by Ikwuba (2011), who emphatically asserted that the failure of the past poverty- reducing efforts was because they were all initiated by government and then passed down to the people (top-down approach) without due consultation, participation or involvement by the poor in the programme initiative, execution, coordination and implementation. She therefore recommended a bottom-up approach to poverty reduction in Nigeria as a way forward.

Concept of Voter Apathy

Voter apathy as subset of political behavior is a multidimensional and hydra headed phenomenon. Historically and even in contemporary times, voter apathy operates at the meeting points of psychology, sociology, economy and geography. The word apathy according to Mason *et al* (1991) is an individual's impassivity or indifference and a form of

collective political behavior. Political apathy is expressed as the lack of psychological involvement in public affairs, emotional detachment from civil obligation and absentantion from political activities.

However, political apathy is not any one of these things alone, though these may be regarded as necessary, itinerary not be a sufficient component of political apathy. Though political apathy has its origin in the psyche of an individual person, it is broadly evidenced in the mass collective behavior of a group/set of people or a particular social group. In aglomerelition, political apathy is externalized in the attitudes by their absence from expected activities. It is predominantly showcased when people cease to care about political life, as exampled by their withdrawal from obligations to civil society. (INEC, 2011)

Voter apathy or the lack of interest in elections is often cited as the major reason for low turnout amongst eligible voters during elections. Voter apathy has led to the increased concerns about representative democracy (s) because the phenomenon of voter apathy has rendered election results incompatible with the population of eligible voter (Abe el at, 2013, Clark & Mason, 2014).

Political apathy is not restricted to a particular geographical location. It is no respecter of the age or the long practice of democracy in fact voter fatigue is some time held responsible for voter apathy, where election is held too frequently. In the United State of America reports according to the Congress (2011) suggests of wide spread and growing wide spread voter apathy. The few research center noted that only 55.7% of the voting age in the United State actually turn out to cast their vote in the 2016 presidential election. The reason for the low turnout was as a result of the indifference about the activities of government prompting Nelson (2009) to posit that, all the citizens do is to vote for the president every four years and nothing much else politically, it seem they have abandoned polities. Most poor people who participates in politics before now does so with the hope that, there socio economic fortune will have a turn around as a result of new government by creating jobs, wealth and security. However Chardler (2016) argued that voter apathy or the total lack of interest in politics by the citizens is over stated in regards to socio economic factors. He is of the view that wealth and educational attainment correlates most strongly with voters participation. The argument of professor Chardler here is some worth confusing to our mind, the lack of wealth and access to quality education falls within the definition of poverty. Poverty as it were is itself a socio economic problem, therefore the argument of Chardler (2016) that voter apathy or a lack of interest in the political system is overstated with regards to socio-economic factors does not resonate with this research.

The global trend has been towards a decline in voter's turnout. Several factors has been adduced, including the lack of trust of the political class, the unwillingness of the government to listen to the people's strongly held opinion on policy matters and so on. The attitude of the people according to Thomas (2004) in his article, "New State Man" which was a response to British official concerns over declining voter turnout was that, "we are merely waiting for them, the ruling class to say we have listened" (p 13).

The south west geopolitical zone or what was the western region has the history of low election turnout and voter apathy. According to INEC (2011), the records of registration and voter turnout statistics for all the constituencies in Northern, Western and Eastern regions as well as Lagos Federal Territory in the 1963 elections shows that, while the northern region has a voters turnout of 89.2%, the east 74.4% and the west 76.2%.

Post (1963) posited that, despite the West having the most practically active citizens, the low turnout was a result of intendeds party conflict and activities in the West, leading to people being interested in politics but not having the wiliness to go out and vote, noting also the percentage turnout of voters as against registered voters, Mackerzic (1966) stated that out of the 174 continuances in the Northern region only 1 (one) (Gubungrawa-Madaglole) recorded less than 70% voters turnout. While the Western region 25 of the 62 constituencies recorded percentage voters turnout of less than 70% with the least three (3) being Oketikpupa South (53:3%) Ekite North West (53%) and Ede-Ejigbo (48.4%).

In comparism with the 1959 elections, Ayediren (1981) opined that the 1979 election result may have been over bloated as a result of multiple registration, registration of fictitious individuals and very many other forms of electoral malpractices. Though the controversial figure was released by the Federal Electoral Commission, INEC (2007) noted with interest that the official report of the electoral body that supervised the 2007 election failed to release data on the vote cast for any of the elections held in 2007. This meant that it is very difficult if not impossible at this stage to ascertain the voters turnout for 2007, prompting Ibeanu (2007) to state that;

> The electoral process as currently constituted in Nigeria is psychologically alienated from the vast majority of the people who are largely outsiders and are only periodically inverted in the process when they cast votes. At the same time, this alienation is underscored by the fact that even when these vote casters have completed the ritual, the outcome bears little resemblance to the choices they have made through their ballots…. So long as the vast majority of Nigerians remain mere

> vote casters rather than an electorate, the vote of Nigeria will remain devalued… the voter do not attach great promissory content or psychological value to their votes. The vote is grossly devalued and the mandate claimed by politicians are effectively dubious. Pp 50-54.

The deposition of Ibeanu above underscores the fact that elections in Nigeria in the eyes of the electorate is a mere ritual without any attachment. The voters often cast then votes with no care if the outcome is the same as their voting preference. Because of the lack of interest and enthusiasm on the outcome of the election, may allow the politicians to dubiously acquire electoral mandates by the sale and purchase of votes.

Suberu, (2010) in his analysis of voter preference in the last decade expressed an enduring sense of unvanquished optimism and faith in the democratic process in Nigeria. This run contrast with the dire prognosis of many informed commentator on Nigeria's electoral process. Commentries on the integrity of the electoral process amidst malpractices during the 2003 election further identified some forms of electoral chicanery that have been recorded in Nigerian political history. These includes wide spread corruption, maladministration by with the electoral umpire and judicial bodies alike, election violence and ideological confusion and in most cases sterility amongst the political parties. (Ibeanu, 2007, Bratton, 2010, Adegumobi, 2010).

Literature on elections as seen above is a multifaceted frame that suggested the existence of voter apathy and low voter turnout in Nigeria while also trying to interpret and create the best understanding of the phenomenon at the historical, socio- political, individual/psychological, institutional, systematic and procedural spheres of operation. This is especially as election observer's mission during different election kept highlighting the issues and challenges of voter apathy (Williams 2011).

IDEA (2002) operationalized voter apathy in two forms. One is the percentage of voter registration (vote/Reg %) while the other is the percentage of the population of voting age. (VAP %) the organization referred to voter/Reg % as the total percentage of the registered voter who turns out to vote on Election Day. The VAP % on the other hand refers to the percentage of voting age population, registered or not, that either cast their votes on Election Day or are willing to cast their vote on election day. The organization further noted that analysis on voter apathy are often based on one of the operationalized definition of voter apathy which the vote/Reg %, i.e. the percentage of registered voter who turn out to vote on Election Day.

Instructively, it is proper to consider all the facets of voter apathy in the concluding analysis of election behaviors. If and where only one aspect of voter apathy is considered as noted by IDEA (2002) the possibility is that a lot of the reason for voter apathy may be over looked thereby losing a lot of data on the subject matter of voter apathy.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 4.1: Showing Relationships between Poverty and Voter Apathy

State	Aware of Party manifesto	Ethno-Religious Considerations	Voted as a Party Member	Mobilized to Vote	Paid to Vote
Oyo	3	10	6	20	26
Lagos	1	3	6	40	20
Ogun	6	4	11	38	39
Osun	2	-	3	17	42
Ekiti	-	2	5	18	30
Total	24	20	34	141	161

Source: Field work 2022.

Table 4.3 above shows the relationship between poverty and voter apathy. According to the table those who voted in the last election with the knowledge of the manifesto of the party they voted for are twenty four (24) in number. A breakdown of which show that three (3) respondents from that category are from Oyo state, one (1) from Lagos state, six (6) from Ogun state, twelve (12) from Ondo state, two from Osun state, none for Ekiti state.

Those who voted due to ethno religious considerations are twenty (20) in number, ten (10) from Oyo state, three (3) from Lagos, four (4) from Ogun state, one (1) from Ondo state, none from Osun state and two (2) from Eketi state.

The next category of respondents are those who voted based on party membership. Thirty four of them in this category, six (6) each from Oyo, and Lagos states respectively. Eleven (11) from Ogun state, three (3) each from Ondo and Osun states, while Ekiti state recorded five (5) respondents.

The table further shows that one hundred and forty one (141) respondent were mobilized to go and vote. A breakdown shows that, twenty (20) respondents are from Oyo state, forty (40) from Lagos state, thirty eight (38) from Ogun state, eight (8) from Ondo state, seventeen (17) from Osun state, while eighteen (18) are from Ekiti state. The last category this study considere are those who were paid to vote or those who willingly soled their

votes. According to the table, those in this category are one hundred and sixty one (161) in number. A breakdown by states shows that twenty (20) are from Lagos state, four (4) Ogun state, thirty nine (39) Ondo state, forty two (42) Osun state and thirty (30) Ekiti state.

Table 4.2 Voter Apathy and Socio-Economic Condition of Nigerian Citizens

Question: Did you Vote in the Last Election

	Educational Level						**Employment Status**						**Marital Status**					
States	**Non formal**		**FSLC**		**O Level**		**Tertiary**		**Paid Employment**		**Daily wage worker**		**Business Owner**		**Marriage**		**Singles**	
	Yes	**No**	**Yes**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Oyo	4	6	1	9	17	8	9	11	10	11	5	15	12	12	15	11	16	23
Lagos	12	7	3	5	11	11	8	13	19	11	20	3	4	16	28	17	10	15
Ogun	2	9	3	17	12	3	9	8	9	13	4	17	10	10	13	11	18	21
Ondo	5	14	5	8	9	4	12	6	12	7	7	20	9	8	13	18	13	19
Osun	6	16	12	3	6	10	8	3	19		5	22	10	8	10	22	7	25
Ekiti	9	3	9	4	5	8	12	4	16	3	6	14	9	17	5	10	22	18
Total	**38**	**55**	**33**	**46**	**60**	**44**	**58**	**45**	**85**	**45**	**47**	**91**	**54**	**61**	**84**	**89**	**86**	**121**
	380						**380**						**380**					

Source: Field work 2022

According to table 4.2 above showing the relationships between voter apathy and socio-economic conditions of Nigeria, respondents who answered the questions on if they voted in the last election as represented in the table above. Thirty eight persons across the six States of the south west geopolitical zone who had non formal education indicated that they voted in the last election. Four (4), twelve (12) and nine (9) in Ogun, Ondo Osun and Ekiti States respectively.

Fifty five (55) respondents who are non formally educated indicated that they did not vote in the last election despite being registered as votesr. Six (6) persons from Oyo State, Seven (7) and nine (9) from Lagos and Ogun States, while Ondo State recorded fourteen (14) respondent who did not vote, Osun and Ekiti State recorded sixteen (16) and three (3) respondents respectively.

Thirty three (33) other respondents across the six (6) States who are holders of First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC) agreed to have voted in the last election while forty six (46) who are holders to the same certificate did not vote. The distribution according to Stats shows

that Oyo State had one (1), Lagos and Ogun States had three (3) respondents each while Ondo, Osun and Ekiti State had five (5), twelve (12) and nine (9) respondents respectively. Those who voted and are (9), five (5) and seventeen (17) respondents each in Oyo, Lagos and Ogun States, eight (8) three (3) and four (4) for Ondo, Osun and Ekiti States representing respondents who did not vote.

For the holders of Senior Secondary School Certificates, sixty (60) respondents voted, while forty four (44) others with the same certificate did not vote. The table shows that, seventeen (17), eleven (11) and twelve (12) O levels certificate holders voted in Oyo, Lagos and Ogun States respectively. While nine (9), six (6) and five (5) respondents with the same certificates voted in Ondo, Osun and Ekiti State. On the other hand, eight (8) eleven (11) and three (3) respondents did not vote in each state of Oyo, Lagos and Ogun, while for Ondo, Osun and Ekiti States table shows that four (4), ten (10) and eight (8) respondents did not vote.

Fifty eight (58) respondents who are holders of tertiary certificates voted in the last elections across the six States, while forty five others who are holder of the same certificate did not vote. The distributions according to States the table shows Oyo, Lagos and Ogun State having nine (9) eight (8) and nine (9) respectively, while Ondo, Osun and Ekiti State have twelve (12) eight (8) and twelve (12) respondents respectively who voted. For those with post secondary certificates that did not vote Oyo State had eleven (11) Lagos State thirteen (13), Ogun State eight (8) Ondo State six (6), Osun State three (3) and Ekiti State four (4).

The table further indicated that, the employment status of all those who voted are eighty five (85), forty seven (47) and fifty four (54) for monthly paid employment, daily wage earners and business owners. The distribution by States shows that monthly paid employees for Oyo State that voted are ten (10) Lagos nineteen (19) and Ogun State nine (9) respondents. Ondo, Osun and Ekiti States, the table shows are, twelve (12) nineteen (19) and sixteen (16) respondents who voted in the last election.

Monthly paid employees that did not vote according to the table are eleven (11) each for Oyo and Lagos States and thirteen (13) for Ogun State others are seven (7) and six (6) for Ondo and Ekiti State, while Osun State is nil. Daily wages workers who voted according to the table by states are five (5) for Oyo State, twenty (20) for Lagos state, four (4) for Ogun state and Ondo, Osun and Ekiti States are seven (7) five (5) and six (6) respectively. The table further shows that the total number of daily wage workers that did not vote across the six states are ninety one (91). Osun State has the highest number which is twenty two (22) followed by Ondo state, twenty (20), Ogun state, seventeen (17) Oyo state fifteen (15)

Ekiti State, fourteen (14) and Lagos State four (4). Under the business owners category, fifty four (54) respondents voted while sixty one (61) did not vote. The break down by states shows that in Oyo State twelve (12) voted and twelve (12) did not vote. Lagos state, four (4) voted and sixteen (16) did not vote. In Ogun state, ten (10) respondents who are business owners voted and ten (10) others did not vote. Ondo state recorded nine (9) voters as against eight (8) who did not vote while Osun and Ekiti state has ten (10) and nine (9) voters, eight (8) and seven (7) non voters respondents respectively.

The marital status and voting pattern of the respondents as shown by the table indicated that a total of eighty four (84) married persons across the six (6) states voted and eighty nine (89) did not vote. For non married persons including never married singles, divorcees, widows and widowers that voted according to the table are eighty six (86) in number and those who did not vote are one hundred and twenty one (121). A break down by states shows that in Oyo state, fifteen (15) married, and sixteen (16) singles voted while eleven (11) married and twenty (23) singles did not vote. Lagos state according to the table, twenty eight (28) married and ten (10) singles voted, while seventeen (17) married and fifteen (15) singles did not vote. The record for Ogun state shows that thirteen (13) married and eighteen (18) singles voted while eleven (11) married and twenty one (21) singles did not vote.

In Ondo state, thirteen (13) married and thirteen (13) singles voted while eighteen (18) married and nineteen (19) singles did not vote. Osun state recorded ten (10) married persons and seven (7) singles who voted, and twenty two (22) married and twenty five (25) singles who did not vote.

Finally, the table shows that in Eketi state, five (5) married and twenty two (22) singles voted and ten (10) married and eighteen (18) singles did not vote.

Reduction of Voter Apathy through Poverty Alleviation Strategies

As a socio-economic problem, poverty is seriously afflicting a large proportion of the world's population. The menace of poverty manifests in varied different ways including the lack of income and productive, assets needed for sustainable livelihoods, extreme hunger and malnourishment, lack of access to clean drinkable water, education, political voice low life expectancy etc (World Bank 2007, Sneyd, 2015). The existence of extreme poverty in several developing countries is now a critical challenge that needed to be addressed with heightening urgency. Developing countries however can came out of poverty through the implementation of a combination of poverty alleviation strategies among which are good governance, sound economic policies, growth stimulating inclusive

economy, economic and general institutional reforms, the promotion of policies that enhance micro finance institutions and programmes, improve the marketing systems, and finally, cash transfer programme.

To archive the goals of poverty reduction on voter apathy, Nigeria needs sound economic policies that can address the root causes of poverty, while promoting inclusiveness in economic growth by promoting the basic needs of the poor, providing them with economic opportunities that empowers and enable them improve their living standard. (World Bank, 2017, World Bank, 2015). Several countries of Africa especially sub-Saharan Africa have tried to develop poverty reduction plans strategies and programmes aimed at improving the living standard of the people especially those living in poverty. It is the view of this study that these poverty reduction strategies and programmes if properly implemented in Nigeria especially in the south west geo political zone will help in curbing the incidences of voter apathy by improving their living standard.

(a) **Marking System Improvement**

One of the best ways to reduce poverty according to Karnani (2017) is to raise the productive capacity of the poor. Efficient marketing systems are vital in achieving this by enabling the poor to increase their productivity capacity and deliver their products to the market at completive price that will result in increase income. In addition all such bottle necks and blockades that could lead to damages to products and financial loses, including exploitations by middle men should be removed or mitigated to a very large extent.

(b)Improvements in Critical Infrastructures

To stimulate economic growth and reduce the menace of poverty, such critical infrastructure like rural feeder roads, rural electrification projects, rural water supplies and irrigation will help improve the fortunes of the rural farmers as good road will help move farm produce from the rural farms to the urban centers, storage facilities in the urban and semi urban centers will help reduce spoilages and increase income and reduce the prevalence of poverty. With the added advantage of electrification, farm produce can be processed to enable value addition and an improvement in returns. The implementation of these measures can stimulate local, regional and national economy especially if it is under pinned by the establishment of a well rounded and robust agro industrial sector which also has the added advantage of multiple job creation.

(c)Economic and Institutional Reforms

The implementation of economic and institutional reforms is an important step in reducing poverty in developing countries. These reforms create an enabling environment and

condition that is conducive enough to attract investment, increase efficiency and effectiveness in the use of available scarce resources to stimulate economic growth and create job. A properly implemented economic and institutional reforms can be instrumental in strengthening governance and reduce the prevalence of corruption and poor accountability that hitherto contributed to the poor economic performances which has engendered mass poverty in many developing countries.

Improvement in governance that ensures greater inclusiveness, transparency and accountability, reducing also the misuse of public fund by ensuring the near total elimination of unproductive expenditures with greater focus on prioritizing the needs of people living in poverty. By so doing the micro economics will be stabilized while structural constraints will be thoroughly address to the extent that it will help accelerate growth, reduce high cost of doing business and regulatory excesses.

(d)Agricultural and Micro Finance Programmes

Economic growth is a very vital component needed to aid any impoverished community to utilize its resources to increase its out puts and income with a view of breaking its poverty cycle. (World Bank, 1990). However, for economic growth to be effective in reducing poverty, economic growth needs to be inclusive and occur at a rate that is far higher than the rate at which the population grows.

Over time agriculture has proving to be the dominant economic sector in most poor communities especially in south west Nigeria. Agriculture has the potential to create employment higher than any other sector, produce food for the teaming population and also an income generating venture. Therefore to achieve the aim of agriculture as a poverty reducing strategy will mean the adoption of high yielding crop verity(s) and the use of such complementary inputs such as fertilizers and pesticide. Technological improvements in agricultural practice like irrigation, dry season farming, the use of tractors and the adoption of post harvesting measures that will help reduce the loss of agricultural products becomes a sine qua non. Because these measures are costly and out of the reach of poor local farmers in the south west, the need for cheap, low interest credit facilities from micro financial institution become necessary, as accessing loan facilities from formal institutions may prove to be cumbersome.

Micro financial credits can be very instrumental in stimulating economic activities, creating job in the informal sector, increase house hold income and reduce poverty in the overall. However the design of a credit facility is vary critical, as it has significant impact on poverty reduction. A properly designed micro financial credit has the ability to

stimulate economic growth that has the capacity to enable poor communities to access financial capital for investment in diverse income generating activities. On the other hand, if the design of a micro credit facility is poorly designed (eg. High interest rate and short gestation period) this can lead the poor to be entrapped in the circle of poverty thereby undermining economic growth and poverty reduction by the misapplication of loan facility.

Conclusions

Poverty and Voter Apathy

According INEC (2011) report on voter apathy, the inability of the politicians to fulfill their electoral promises to the electorates has pushed the voters to sell their votes on election days or totally abstain from voting. The report further noted that, the electorate sees the sale of votes as a means to counter balance failed campaign promises with the sale of vote. The implication here is that despite the failure of the politician to deliver on their campaign promises, people may still turn out to vote on election date, with the intents to bargain with the highest bidder for the purchase of their vote as a result of poverty and the need to make ends meet. Apart from the issues of failed campaign promises another area of concern for the electorates is the fact that votes do not count.

Because they believe that the final outcome of the election result will not correspond with the wishes of the people as a result of the fraud perpetuated by INEC staffs and politicians, it become profitable to sell their votes. Beside the lack of trust in the electoral system, one of the other major reasons for political apathy among young people is the lack of understanding of the political space, poverty and in some cases lack of education, considering the huge number of youths who are uneducated. We therefore advocated a national orientation and voter education by educated Nigerian youths reaching out to those with little or no education on the need to vote and vote right.

It was noted also that poverty makes people less likely to vote during elections, because most people living in poverty are often intensely political, therefore their abstinence from voting is not as a result of total political apathy but of disgust for the political system.

Recommendations.

1. To actualize a drastic reduction in voter apathy, the electoral umpire, INEC should organize proper voter mobilization as a vital sine qua non for the reduction of voter apathy. To achieve this, the voters themselves should be seen as critical stakeholders in the electoral process. Because if the voters sees themselves as stakeholders, they will join hand in the mobilization of other voters, while the content of their message will

include making the right choice, avoiding bribery and resisting the temptation of selling their votes.

2. As stakeholders, the voters themselves will stand to defend their votes thus should be complemented with INEC conducting free and fair election and the government on it part should strive to fulfill electoral promises made to the electorates.
3. The inability to meet socio economic challenges and making ends meet is seen as the chief culprit for the perpetuation of voter apathy, while the financiers of the act literatures revealed are afraid of falling below the poverty line, having seen election as a means to an end. It is the view of this study that properly implemented poverty reduction strategies and programmes in Nigeria especially in the south west geo political zone will help in curbing the incidences of voter apathy by improving their living standard.

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