

Voter Apathy in Nigeria: A Critical Analysis of Anambra State Gubernatorial Elections from 2010 To 2021

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Abstract: *This study assessed the dangerous trend of voter apathy in Nigeria with a specific focus on the 2010, 2013, 2017, and 2021 Anambra state gubernatorial elections. The research adopted a thematic method as data were gathered from secondary sources such as the Independent National Electoral Commission website, government official documents, newspaper publications, and online journals. The theoretical framework used in the study was the rational choice theory propounded by Adam Smith in 1776. Analysis of the data generated showed that in 2010, the percentage of voters turnout stood at 16.3 percent, and at 25 percent in 2013. Also, the percentage turnout was 20.77 in 2017, while it was 10.12 percentage points in the 2021 gubernatorial election in Anambra state. The downward drop in voter turnout has continued to pose a serious question about the credibility of the electoral umpire, political actors, and the registered voters in the state. Based on the above findings, the researchers recommended that the Nigerian security forces re-strategize and acquire modern security equipment. The use of modern devices in conducting elections should be encouraged by all levels of government. Laws should be enacted and seen to be enforced to prevent the multiple registration of voters. Any act of misconduct by either an Independent National Electoral Commission official or ad-hoc staff should be decisively dealt with in accordance with the enabling law. Both the government and leaders of thought should work together to address grievances expressed by separatist organizations. Finally, militarization of the electoral process should be discouraged since democracy is a government of the masses.*

Keywords: Voter Apathy, Gubernatorial Elections, Elections, Apathy, godfatherism, Constitution, Independent National Electoral Commission.

1. INTRODUCTION

An election is an exercise to determine new leadership in a country or organization; it produces popular leaders who succeed in capturing the feelings, emotions, and convictions of the electorate. The origin of elections in Nigeria is traceable to the enactment or introduction of the first elective principle in Sir Hugh Clifford's Constitution of 1922 (Osegbue, Madubueze, and Nwokike, 2016). Olamide (2016) and Media Nigeria (2018) further stressed that the first election was conducted on September 20, 1923. In that election, three (3) legislative slots were given to Lagos, while Calabar got one (1) slot. One of the major qualifications to participate in the election was that the electorate must earn at least 100 pounds per year, which was on the high side for the majority of Nigerians (Media Nigeria, 2018).

Elections were held in 1946 under the Richard Constitution, and in 1951 under Mcpherson's administration, in what was possibly the first nationwide indirect election (Osumah and Aghemelo, 2010). The first-ever direct election was conducted in 1954, while the popular nationwide direct election took place in 1959, ushering in the much-awaited independence of Nigeria in 1960 (Chukwuma and Okpala, 2018). Furthermore, there were elections in 1964, 1979, 1983, 1996, and 1997 (including local government elections). Also, elections were held in 1999, 2003, 2011, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019. All these elections had their own unique challenges and successes.

The current Anambra state, on the other hand, was established in 1991 by the then-military government of General Ibrahim Badomasi Babangida. Anambra state has participated in elections since 1992, when it was created. Her first civilian governor, Chukwuemeka Ezeife, governed the state from 1992 to 1993. His reign was very short due to the crises that preceded the annulment of the 1993 presidential election, which was described as having the qualities of a free and fair election by both national and international organizations. On the return to democracy in 1999, Anambrarians elected Dr. Chinwoke Mbadinuju to spearhead the ship of governance in the state. He was subsequently defeated in an election that wrongly returned Dr. Chris Nwabueze Ngige of the PDP in 2003. In 2006, an interesting event took place through a judicial ruling that affirmed that former governor Peter Obi of the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) was the authentic winner of the 2003 gubernatorial election in Anambra state. Mr. Peter Obi ruled the state until 2010, when his first tenure expired. It is important to note that it was Mr. Peter Obi who, through his legal team, secured a judicial interpretation of his tenure when the Independence National Electoral Commission (INEC) conducted gubernatorial elections in Anambra state just as in other states of the Federation in 2007. Not satisfied with the treatment metted out to him, Peter Obi approached the judiciary to further interpret his tenure, having stayed for a year before the purported election was conducted in 2007. In the ruling of the court, it was declared that the tenure of a governor starts from the day he or she takes the oath of office and ends after 4 years.

The primary motive of this study is the sharp decline in voter turnout in Anambra State from 2010 to 2021, raising doubts about electoral improvement and democratization. As an illustration, there were 1,844,815 registered voters in 2010 although only 301,232 votes were cast. In 2013, there were 1,776,167 people registered to vote, but only 442,242 votes were actually cast. Also in 2017, a total of 2,064,771 voters were registered, while 428,771 votes were cast. The result of the 2021 election was even more disheartening when compared with the total number of voters registered as opposed to the numbers that actually came out to vote on the day of the election. The total number of registered voters for the 2021 governorship election in Anambra state stood at 2,466,638, while the number of votes cast stood at 249,631. From the above analysis, it became necessary to examine the causes and possible solutions to voter apathy in Nigeria and Anambra State in particular.

2. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Apathy:

Ogunbiyi (2022) said that the Greek origin of the word "apathy" is clear: "without feelings." The lack of concern that people have for the electoral process, including voting, is simply referred to as "apathy."

Voter Apathy:

Voter apathy, according to Okafor, Odigbo, and Okeke (2022), is the loss of civic engagement in the political process. Voter apathy occurs when eligible voters are reluctant or purposefully choose not to vote in the election. For reasons best known to them, some registered voters prefer to remain home on election day, while others decide not to register at all until they are threatened by the government or a religious organization. Even worse, those who were able to vote on election day would want to be "settled" before doing so. According to Nnamdi (2020), there are some nations where political apathy endangers democracy and government decision-making. To be more precise, the majority of these nations are found in South America and Africa. Nigeria is a classic case of an African nation plagued with political indifference. The absence of voter interest in representative democracies' elections is known as voter apathy. The reason for the poor participation of eligible voters in places where voting is optional is sometimes attributed to voter apathy or a lack of interest. All nations or organizations where people can vote experience this tendency to some extent. Voter apathy has increased worries about representative democracies because the results do not accurately represent the entire population of people who are eligible to vote.

According to Okafor, Odigbo, and Okeke (2022), a government's popularity among the populace is directly related to the amount of political participation demonstrated by voter turnout. When voters do not show up at the polls or there is political apathy, it is generally interpreted as a lack of support for the democratic or political system. Political apathy is caused by people's absolute refusal to actively and fully participate in politics, particularly the voting populace. Disillusionment, indifference, or contentment with or against the political or electoral system may be to blame for this. Voter apathy, according to Yakubu (2011), is defined as apathy on the part of inhabitants of any state concerning their attitudes toward political activities like elections, public opinion, and civic responsibility. Political apathy is the result of a lack of interest in or commitment to sociopolitical issues. A significant obstacle to Nigeria's democracy is voter apathy. A worrying tendency is the general lack of support for or interest in political and democratic processes among the general public, an important factor in the lower voter turnout in elections where voting is not mandatory. Democracy depends on election participation because it gives people a voice in the political process.

Osumah, and Aghemelo (2010) argued that voter apathy encompasses more than just an absence of interest in or indifference toward voting; it also refers to a voter's obliviousness to electoral processes, primarily voting motivated by discontent with the political structure and, occasionally, ignorance and a lack of basic training. Low voter turnout is therefore a result of voter indifference. Disenchanted and apathetic individuals can be a concern in a nation that is purportedly governed by elected leaders. This is due to the fact that elected officials may not accurately reflect the opinions and values of the public at large when a small number of individuals cast ballots. The significance of the popular vote is diminished, and the influence of special interest groups is increased, when fewer people vote.

Dolapo (2019) states that voter apathy is a condition in which people lack the motivation or inclination to carry out their civic responsibilities within society or participate in political activities. Voter apathy is described as a lack of enthusiasm among some voter groups to participate in elections. As a result, we can infer from the preceding insinuation that Nigerian leaders have failed to ensure that democracy provides the Nigerian voter with the same level of usefulness as an axe does for the farmer. In fact, it is required by law for anyone who has reached the age of voting but has never registered to vote to participate in registration. The failure of political parties and candidates to fulfill the promises that inspire voters' faith in democracy is, in fact, what is to blame for the widespread disengagement and apathy of citizens, not the lack of enough eligible voters, which is clearly not the main issue responsible for voter apathy. When eligible voters fail to cast their votes in democratic elections, voter apathy happens. Voters may appear disillusioned with politics or politicians in general during non-election periods. Disgruntled and uninterested citizens can cause issues in a nation that is purportedly governed by elected authorities. For instance, when a small number of people cast ballots, the politicians chosen do not reflect the opinions and principles of the public at large. Voter apathy has been characterized as a state of political sadness where one feels powerless and unable to change significant events. Voter apathy has been described as a form of political despair where people feel powerless and unable to change vital situations.

Empirical Analysis

In their 2015 study, Amanye, Bariledum, and Nwibor focused specifically on the period from the 2007 national elections to the 2014 Osun State gubernatorial election in order to analyze the impact of electoral violence on political participation in Nigeria. The study put forth the hypothesis that there is a connection between voter apathy in Nigeria and election violence in all its manifestations. The theoretical framework of elitist theory incorporates this point. This theory tries to describe, clarify, and anticipate the potential effects on democracy and national security of the political class's total dependence on terrorism and violence as a method of election victory. Data was mostly acquired from secondary sources and processed using content and historical analysis; hence, the methodology utilized was qualitative. The report recommends, among other things, that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the people, law enforcement agencies, anti-corruption organizations, and the legislation fully involved in resolving election violence in Nigeria.

Aronu, Ebu, Nwosu, Aronu, and Okoli (2014) examined the possibility that Anambra State residents will cast ballots in the gubernatorial election. The purpose of the research was to ascertain how demographic factors, including sex, age, occupation, and educational level, affected people's tendency to vote in the gubernatorial election in Anambra State. to determine whether political efficacy items influence people's inclination to vote in the Anambra State governor's race. Additionally, to identify the organization that Anambra State's politicians, political parties, the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC), and police trust most when it comes to election-related matters. The primary method of gathering data for the study was through questionnaires. According to the analysis's findings, demographic factors like sex, age, and educational level have a big impact on people's propensity to vote in the gubernatorial election in Anambra State. Additionally, it was discovered that factors related to political efficacy, such as interest in politics and in monitoring public affairs, have a considerable impact on a person's likelihood to cast a ballot in the gubernatorial election in Anambra State. Additionally, it was discovered that men are 68.31 times more likely than women to vote in Anambra State's governorship elections. It was shown that the likelihood of voting increased by 75% for every one-unit increase in age. The findings also revealed that the likelihood of voting increased 16.32 times for every unit increase in the educational category. It was discovered that the propensity to vote increases by 58.2% as responses on the level of political interest increase by one unit. Additionally, it was noted that the likelihood of voting increases by 93.1% as the level of followership and interest in politics and public affairs rises by one unit. Additionally, it was noted that during the Nigerian elections, INEC received higher trust than politicians, political parties, and the police. The police, politicians, and political parties were the groups that people had the least faith in.

Chukwuma and Okpala (2018) carried out a study on voter turnout and the quest for free and fair elections in Nigeria, based on the 2017 Anambra gubernatorial election. Gubernatorial elections in Anambra State appeared alarming, demonstrating a continuing fall in voter turnout despite attempts by the government and other institutions to promote citizens' active involvement in elections by raising awareness and providing political education. Thus, the study explores the factors that influence voter participation and the particular one that contributed to it in the recently held Anambra State 2017 election. This is in spite of numerous campaigns by interested parties stressing the significance of voter turnout in Nigerian elections. As a result, the study was based on the Elite Theory, and the study's data were gathered using documentary methods and analyzed using the analytical inductive method. The results show that, despite efforts to address the consistently low voter turnout in Nigerian elections, the problems persist because of the country's culture of political apathy, which is linked to elite political behavior in Nigeria, and other numerous factors that IPOB exacerbated in the 2017 Anambra election. The research recommended regular town hall meetings in both rural and urban communities, as well as internet voting, to fight voter apathy among Nigerians and the atmosphere of insecurity.

A research titled "Voter Turnout and the 2017 Gubernatorial Election in Anambra State: A Critical Analysis" was undertaken by Chiamogu & Chiamogu in 2018. Following Nigeria's transition to a civilian government in 1999, voter attendance has steadily decreased in all subsequent elections held. The rate of exercising one's right to vote has decreased throughout national, state, and local elections. The existence of overly bloated security officers amid tumultuous sectional and violent inter-ethnic relations has remained distinctive and remarkable and is not unrelated to factors like a lack of confidence in political and governmental procedures. Thus, this study explored the significance of democratically elected public leaders when eligible voters declined to cast their ballots. It notes that in a state with over 2 million registered voters, the 22% voter turnout in the 2017 Anambra State governor's race was not typically democratic. It looks at various legal definitions of what constitutes an acceptable voter turnout for a legitimate election in Nigeria while also investigating a clearer understanding of what makes up a real mandate for the election of political leaders. Based mostly on secondary sources of information, the study offers a descriptive and analytical clarification of the efficacy of the democratic contest for votes within the context of disconnected politics and government.

According to a study conducted by Nnamdi (2018) on understanding political apathy in Nigeria's 20th century elections, every democratic state longs for widespread participation. It is undeniable that political indifference is a foe of democracy because, if, as Abraham Lincoln put it, "democracy is the governance of the people for the people and by the people," then every representative of a democratic state must be chosen by a majority of the electorate. As a result, the state is considered to be pseudo-democratic if any representatives are not chosen by the majority. The democratic process and government decision-making are threatened by political indifference. Nigeria is a prime example of an African nation plagued with political indifference. Nigeria had four successful

presidential elections prior to the end of the 20th century. These elections took place in 1959, 1964/1965, 1979, and 1999. Some leaders in Nigeria were unable to serve out their full terms of office due to recurrent military interventions during the 20th century.

In a study by Egobueze and Ojirika (2017) titled "Electoral Violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Implications for Political Stability". Elections are crucial to a democratic system and are now frequently seen as a means of confirming the power of the executive branch. Elections that have been tainted foster violence within the state, which could result in political unrest. This investigation examined how electoral violence affects Nigeria's Fourth Republic's political stability (1999–2015). This study uses an ex post facto research design and documentary data to investigate the general elections of 2015 in a qualitative manner. The researchers argued that electoral violence in Nigeria is caused by the extreme ambition of the governing elite and its allies to gain and maintain state power at all costs in order to broaden their wealth base.

Theoretical Framework: Rational Choice Theory

This study is based on rational choice theory, which has a long history. Adam Smith is the one who developed the hypothesis; in fact, he is credited as its originator. His 1776 essay, "An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations," made the case that wealth was a product of human nature's propensity for self-interest. Smith used the phrase "the invisible hand" to describe variables influencing the free market (Ogu, 2013).

Economics, political science, psychology, and philosophy are just a few of the disciplines where rational choice theory is applicable. According to this view, people make decisions based on their own interests in order to maximize their own benefits. People consider their options before making the decision they believe will ultimately benefit them. So each option is chosen after carefully weighing the costs, risks, and advantages of that choice. Depending on the person's desires, decisions that appear nonsensical to one person may make perfect sense to another.

The theory is relevant to the study on the fact that before deciding to vote or stay neutral during an election, Nigerians first weigh their own personal interests. In Nigeria, voters believe that voting is pointless since the political cabals, who have no interest in keeping their fraudulent election promises, have already decided the results or outcomes of the election. They therefore consider voting to be a time- and money-wasting activity that could be substituted for other, more productive activities.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE ANAMBRA GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS IN 2010, 2013, 2017, AND 2021

When the country returned to democracy in 1999, gubernatorial elections were held in all of the federation's states, including Anambra. Governor Chinwoke Mbadinuju of the Peoples Democratic Party was returned and ruled until 2003, when Chris Ngige was wrongly declared the winner of the second election (2003) by the Independent National Electoral Commission. However, Mr. Peter Obi of the All Progressive Grand Alliance, the authentic winner of the election, continued to litigate until the Federal Court of Appeals validated him as the legitimate winner of the state's 2003 election in 2006. In 2007, the Independent National Electoral Commission held a second election for the governorship of Anambra, despite the fact that the incumbent had returned to power a year before. On November 29, 2007, a winner was declared and sworn in, compelling Mr. Peter Obi to reappear in court for a judicial interpretation of his tenure. In a groundbreaking decision, the Supreme Court determined that a governor's term officially began the day they took the oath of office. Peter Obi was therefore reinstated and continued to rule until 2010.

2010 Gubernatorial Election

In the 2010 Anambra gubernatorial election, a total of 25 candidates registered with the Independent National Electoral Commission to contest the election. Peter Obi won the APGA nomination. Emeka Sibeudu was his choice for running mate. The ACN candidate was Chris Ngige. There were 25 candidates running for office. On February 6, 2010, IECN held the 2010 Anambra State governorship election.

Table 1. Showing Parties, Candidates and the Number of Votes Recorded by Each Contestant in 2010

S/N	Candidate	Party	Votes	%
1	Peter Obi	All Progressives Grand Alliance	97,843	34.39
2	Charles Chukwuma Soludo	People's Democratic Party	59,355	20.86
3	Andy Uba	Labour Party	26,106	9.17
4	Nicholas Ukachukwu	Hope Democratic Party	20,777	7.30
5	Uche Ekwunife	Progressive Peoples Alliance	9,595	3.37
6	Other candidates		10,631	3.74

	Total		284,547	100.00
	Valid votes		284,547	94.46
	Invalid/blank votes		16,685	5.54
	Total votes cast		301,232	100.00
	Registered voters		1,844,815	16.33

Source: INEC, 2010

The table above showed that Mr. Peter Obi of the All Progressives Grand Alliance scored a total of 97,843 votes, and Chris Ngige of Chris Ngige scored 60,240 of the votes cast. Also, Charles Chukwuma Soludo of the People's Democratic Party got a total of 59,355 votes, Andy Uba of the Labour Party scored 26,106 votes, Nicholas Ukachukwu of the Hope Democratic Party got 20,777 votes, and Uche Ekwunife of the Progressive Peoples Alliance recorded 9,595 votes cast. On the same note, other contestants together recorded 10,631 votes cast in the election. Mr. Peter Obi was therefore declared the winner, having secured the most votes cast in the election.

In 2010, there were 1,844,815 registered voters in Anambra State, of which 284,547 cast valid votes and 16,685 invalid votes. The total number of votes cast in the election, including invalid and valid votes, was 301,232. We calculated the voter turnout to be 16.3% by dividing the percentage of votes cast by the total number of registered voters. The outcome is a blatant example of voter apathy, as evidenced by the low turnout. In this situation, a tiny minority of voters decided the fate of the good people of Anambra State in 2010.

2013 Gubernatorial Election

A gubernatorial election was conducted in 2013 in preparation for the handover on March 17, 2014. A total of 23 candidates registered with the Independent National Electoral Commission to contest the election. On November 16, 2013, Nigeria held the 2013 Anambra State governorship election. Tony Nwoye of the PDP was defeated in the election by Willie Obiano, the APGA candidate.

Table 2. Showing Parties, Candidates and the number of votes recorded by each contestant in 2013

S/N	Candidate	Party	Votes	%
1	Willie Obiano	All Progressives Grand Alliance	180,963	42.55
2	Tony Nwoye	People's Democratic Party	97,700	22.97
3	Chris Ngige	All Progressives Congress	95,963	22.57
4	Ifeanyi Ubah	Labour Party (Nigeria)	37,495	8.82
5	Godwin Ezeemo	Progressives Peoples Alliance	5,120	1.20
6	Other candidates		8,013	1.88
	Total		425,254.	100.00
	Valid votes		425,254.	
	Invalid/blank votes		16,988	
	Total votes cast		442,242	
	Registered voters/turnout		1,776,167	

Source: INEC, 2013

In the table above, Willie Obiano of the All Progressives Grand Alliance scored 180,178 cast, Tony Nwoye of the People's Democratic Party recorded 97,700 votes, Chris Ngige of the All Progressives Congress got 95,963 votes, Ifeanyi Ubah of the Labour Party (Nigeria) scored 37,495 votes, Godwin Ezeemo of the Progressives People's Alliance recorded 5,120 votes, and other remaining candidates scored a total of 8,013 votes. The total number of registered voters in the state was 1,770,127, and the total number of votes cast was 442,242, while the number of valid votes was 425,254. Rejected votes totaled 16,988. Therefore, a total of 25% of registered voters turned out for the 2013 Anambra gubernatorial election. By implication, the low voter turnout was an indication that few people determined the eventual winner of the election.

2017 Gubernatorial Election

A total of 37 candidates registered with the Independent National Electoral Commission to contest the 2017 Anambra state gubernatorial election, which was conducted in 2017 in preparation for the handover on March 17, 2018. After becoming the lone contender, Willie Obiano secured the APGA nomination for governor. As his running mate, he chose Nkem Okeke. The APC candidate was Tony Nwoye, who was joined in the race by Dozie Ikedife. On November 18, 2017, INEC held the Anambra State gubernatorial election. The APGA's nominee, Willie Obiano, secured reelection by defeating Tony Nwoye of the APC.

Table 3. Showing Parties, Candidates and the number of votes recorded by each contestant in 2017

S/N	Candidate	Party	Votes	%
1	Willie Obiano	All Progressives Grand Alliance	234,071	55.43
2	Tony Nwoye	All Progressives Congress	98,752	23.38
3	Oseloka Obaze	Peoples Democratic Party	70,293	16.64
4	Godwin Ezeemo	Progressive Peoples Alliance	2,787	0.66
5	Osita Chidoka	United Progressive Party	7,903	1.87
6	Other candidates		8508	2.01
	Total		422,314	100.00
	Valid votes		422,314	
	Invalid/blank votes		6,457	
	Total votes cast		428, 771	
	Registered voters/turnout		2,064,134	

Source: INEC, 2017

In the table above, Willie Obiano of the All Progressives Grand Alliance scored 234,071 votes overall, while Tony Nwoye, Oseloka Obaze, Godwin Ezeemo, Osita Chidoka, and other contestants obtained 98,752, 70,293, 2,787, and 7,903 votes, respectively. The average turnout of voters in the election stood at 20.77 percent. The turnout of voters in the 2017 Anambra state gubernatorial election was low and not encouraging.

2021 Gubernatorial Election

The election to elect the governor of Anambra State took place on November 6, 2021. Former Central Bank Governor Charles Chukwuma Soludo, an APGA candidate, won the position over former Transcorp CEO Valentine Ozigbo, a PDP candidate. In the major parties' primaries, the APC controversially selected Andy Uba, a former senator from Anambra South, as its candidate in a direct primary that was later annulled in December 2021. Ifeanyi Ubah, the incumbent senator from Anambra South, was the YPP's choice. The election marked the first significant election in which the Independent National Electoral Commission used the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) device and electronically transmitted results, with polling unit staff members uploading results to the INEC results portal immediately after the polls closed.

Table 4. Showing 2021 Anambra State gubernatorial election

S/N	Candidate	Party	Votes	%
1	Charles Chukwuma Soludo	APGA	112,229	46.46%
2	Valentine Ozigbo	PDP	53,807	22.28%
3	Andy Uba	APC	43,285	17.92%
4	Ifeanyi Ubah	YPP	21,261	8.80%

5	Other Candidates		11,001	4.55%
	Total		241,523	100%
	Total Valid Votes		241,523	
	Total invalid Votes		8,108	
	Total Votes Cast		249,631	
	Total Registered Voters		2,466,638	

Source: INEC, 2021

APGA candidate Professor Charles Chukwuma Soludo got 112,229 votes, followed by PDP candidate Valentine Ozigbo with 53,807 votes and APC candidate, Andy Uba with 43,285 votes. Additionally, Ifeanyi Ubah of the Young Progressive Party (YPP) scored 21,261 votes, while the other candidates received a combined 11,001 votes. But only 10.12% of eligible voters actually showed up at the polls. The implication is that the winner of the race for governor of Anambra State was chosen by a very small number of registered voters.

Foundational causes of low Voters Turnout in Anambra state Gubernatorial Elections: A Threat to Democracy

One of the tenets of a democratic process is a free and fair election, an exercise devoid of intimidation, threat to life, free will, accountability, and transparency. The process must be able to prove beyond all reasonable doubt that the umpires are prepared to conduct the exercise with sincerity of purpose, patriotism, and selflessness. Over the years, scholars have wondered about the downward trend and sheer loss of interest in casting votes among Anambra indigenes, who are within the voting age. For instance, in 2010, a total of 1,844,815 residents registered. The total number of votes cast in the election was 301, 232, while the percentage turnout stood at 16.3%. Furthermore, in 2013, the total number of registered voters in the state was 1,770,127, and the number of votes cast was 442,242. Therefore, a total of 25 percent of registered voters turned out. A gubernatorial election was also conducted in 2017. The number of registered voters stood at 2,064,134, while 428,771 votes were eventually cast on the day of the election. The percentage turnout was 20.77 percent. Finally, in 2021, a total of 2,466,638 voters were recorded, while 249,631 (10.12 percent) voters turned out for the election.

Table 5. Showing Anambra Gubernatorial election Results (2010 to 2021)

S/N	Year	Registered Voters	Votes Cast	Percentage (%)
1	2010	1,844,815	301, 232	16.3%
2	2013	1,770,127	442,242	25%
3	2017	2,064,134	428, 771	20.77
4	2021	2,466,638	249,631	10.12%

Voter apathy, anywhere in the world, is a dangerous threat to democracy and good governance. It cast serious doubt on the electoral process, conduct, and governance. Below are some of the possible factors behind voter apathy in Anambra state as discussed by scholars, government agencies, INEC officials, international organizations, religious bodies, and Anambrarians.

1. **General Fear of Insecurity:** Elections in Nigeria, especially in Anambra State, are generally threatened by attacks, killings, and intimidation. Prior to the 2021 Anambra state gubernatorial election, there were initial worries and apprehensions, particularly about roving gunmen and a kidnapping gang that were carrying out a series of coordinated attacks on people; security personnel, government offices, and politicians were not spared, and residents were equally killed and brutalized for participating in political rallies, campaigns, and other political activities in Anambra state and some south-east states (Jimoh and Elewekw, 2021). In 2021 and 2017, there were elections, and people fled the state for other locations to avoid being caught in the crossfire since there were worries that there might be severe issues before the election. Due to a pervasive fear of insecurity, people were unable to vote. People opted to stay indoors for safety rather than venture outdoors where they might be killed.
2. **Malfuction of electronic devices used in the accreditation of voters:** In the elections of 2017 and 2021, card readers and the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) were employed. The Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) is an electronic tool that reads Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) and verifies voters' eligibility to cast a ballot at a particular polling place using their fingerprints. During voter registration, BVAS also serves as the INEC Voter Enrolment Device (IVED). Additionally, it has replaced the use of incident forms for election day accreditation. According to Jimoh and Elewekw

(2021), the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) faults that were seen throughout the state during the 2021 election, in particular, were believed to have disenfranchised residents of Anambra State.

3. Multiple registrations, as described by political analysts, were another alleged reason for the poor voter turnout results. It was claimed that some voters were registered in more than two or three locations, making them automatically ineligible to vote, whereas other voters were limited to one polling location.
4. Separate governorship elections and electoral irregularities in Anambra state: Anambra State holds off-cycle governorship elections in contrast to the majority of other states in the country due to the peculiarities of its governance history and the roles of the powerful politicians who wielded power and ran the state in the past as "godfathers." Prior to this, the election results were determined by the "godfathers," or people in positions of authority, who significantly influenced the Electoral Umpire in Nigeria in general and Anambra State in particular. There are occasionally more votes cast than there are registered voters, and the results are churned out arbitrarily. This, along with other irregularities that were pervasive in the previous elections in Anambra State, caused the majority of voters to lose faith in the entire process.
5. The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) had threatened to impose a six-day curfew in Anambra and other south-east regions, including on election day. In line with the pro-Biafra separatists' declaration that the Nigerian government would not be permitted to hold elections in territories of the defunct Republic of Biafra, it was widely believed that the planned six-day sit-at-home protest, declared prior to the 2021 election, was intended to halt the Anambra governorship election. On November 4, just 48 hours before the election, the sit-at-home order was subsequently lifted. This action had an impact on voter turnout because the news of the cancellation of the planned sit-at-home exercise on election day arrived late and there was fear of an attack by "unknown gunmen."
6. Militarization of the electoral process: The deployment of soldiers, police, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC), and other security services, as well as their strong presence, has raised concerns. In the state for the most recent election in 2021, 34,587 police officers were stationed, while the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) reportedly stationed 20,000 personnel as well. The Nigerian Army also has troops stationed in the state. 2017 saw the deployment of 26,000 police personnel in addition to sniffer dogs, gunboats, helicopters, and armored personnel carriers (APC). The presence of fearless security personnel conveys the wrong message to prospective voters, suggesting that the election would be fierce and risky, necessitating their avoidance.

4. CONCLUSION

Political analysts and academics have expressed grave alarm over the rate at which voter turnout is declining in Anambra State. Anambra state's gubernatorial elections have been marred by anxieties and concerns about the current condition of insecurity. Gunmen who were allegedly acting on behalf of politicians and other interest groups brutally murdered civilians, security personnel, employees of government agencies, politicians, and locals. Anambra State residents were denied the right to vote in the 2021 election in particular due to faults in the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) that were seen throughout the state. Some of the electorates registered in more than two different locations, which automatically disqualified them from casting a ballot. Many voters lost faith in the entire process as a result of presumed godfathers' predetermination of previous elections. The use of heavily armed security guards has also drawn criticism since it conveys the incorrect image to prospective voters that the election would be tense and dangerous.

5. Recommendations

The researchers recommend as follows:

1. Nigerian security forces should re-strategize and acquire modern security equipment in order to nip security threats in the bud before they wreak havoc on Nigerian lives and property. Prevention, they say, is "better than cure," so the government should make security a priority.
 2. The use of modern devices in conducting elections should be encouraged by all levels of government but must be done in a transparent manner to avoid the electorate losing faith in technology.
 3. To stop voter multiple registration, laws should be passed and honestly being implemented.
 4. Whenever there is a disparity between the number of votes cast and the number of accredited voters, the umpire should cancel the result and call for another election. Any act of misconduct by either an Independent National Electoral Commission official or ad-hoc staff should be decisively dealt with in accordance with the enabling law.
 5. Both the government and leaders of thought should work together to address grievances expressed by separatist organizations.
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6. Heavy militarization of the electoral process should be discouraged since democracy is a government of the masses. Instead, modern technology is deployed, like in western countries, to avoid breaches of security protocol during electioneering campaigns and voting.

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