

# Voters' Preferences during the 2011 General Election in Nigeria: A Study of Oyi Local Government Area of Anambra State

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## ABSTRACT

This research gives a general insight to the background of the area under study. Primary and secondary data were used as the methodology of this work, the study examined the Behaviour of the electorates in the 2011 general elections. The scope however, covered the 2011 elections from March 2011 to April 30th, 2011. It also looks at the existing literature on elections and how it affected political Behaviour. The research also examines the influencing factors that contributed to the manner people participated in the election proper. The research strongly recommends among other recommendations, that the government should empower the grass root people economically so as to avoid inducement of any kind; thuggery and violence, and at the same time educate the people on the impact of good elections and how it can bring massive development when the right persons are voted.

**Keywords:** Democracy, Election, Electorates, Voting Behaviour

## INTRODUCTION

### General Background to the study

Since the creation of Anambra State in 1991, Oyi Local Government Area of Anambra State, has witnessed several elections, which is one of the popular means of changing government in modern society. Indeed, one way of determining the democratic credential of any country is the ability of that country to successfully hand over power from one government to another, through the conduct of peaceful free and fair election at predetermined regular intervals. According to Toluhi, (1997) "election makes it possible for one government to succeed another in an orderly manner".

### Statement of the Research Problem

In the wake of the return to democracy in 1999, Anambra State and Oyi Local Government Area in particular is faced with the challenge of the choice of candidate during elections. This is due largely on the basis of certain factors that often prevail against the wishes of the people in any elections. A necessary question here is what are those factors and what is responsible?



## **Aims and Objectives**

The main aim and objectives are to examine factors that influenced the voting behaviour or voters' choices and their impacts on the people of Oyi Local Government Area. The specific objectives include:

1. To understand the voters' Behaviour in the 2011 general elections under review.
2. To investigate the factors that influenced voters' Behaviour in the choice of candidates during the elections.
3. To identify the possible implications of the other two factors.
4. To proffer solutions on what voters should consider in their choice of candidate during elections.

## **Hypothesis**

This work aims at testing the following hypothesis:

1. How Money-politics influences choice of candidate in the general elections in Oyi.
2. That Social, economic and educational background of the voters also contributed in influencing voters' choices.
3. How Patron-client relationship contributed to the outcome of the election in Oyi.

## **Scope of the study**

This research covers the voters' preferences during the 2011 Anambra State elections in Nigeria with specific reference to the Oyi Local Government Area elections from March 2011 to April 30th 2011.

## **Theoretical Framework**

For any serious academic discourse to be valid and meaningful there is the need to adopt a theory. As such to this works the researchers adopted elite theory:

Elite theory originated in Central and Western Europe from the tail of the nineteen centuries to the first half of the twentieth century. It is as a critique to democracy and socialism. Rooted in the idea of despotic rule it per-supposes fascism. It was adopted in the 1950's by American political scientist to explain political process in democracies it was per-cursors of the far-right totalitarian states of Italy under Mussolini, Germany. Under Hitler and Spain under King Francisco Franco. Elite theory conceives that a society consist of two social groups.

The common argument of the theory is that, every society is ruled by minority that possesses the qualities necessary for its succession to full social and political power. Those who get on top are always the best. They are known as the elite, the elite consist of those successful persons who rise to the top in every occupation and stratum of society R.C. Agarwal, (2006). According to C. Wright Mill "Elites are those who hold the leading position in the strategic hierarchies".

In attempt to correlate this theory and the subject matter, one has to understand that there are so many factors that shape the ways and manner people vote during elections. For example,



people vote because of money, charisma of the candidate, religion, ethnicity etc. Elite on the other hand manufactures those factors in order to favour their interest, most of the elites during their political campaign uses religion, regionalism, ethnicity and above all materialism to brainwash voters as in the case of the 2003, 2007 and 2011 general elections in Nigeria. Therefore, this might contribute to the choice of candidate during the 2011 general elections.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Conceptual Clarification**

#### **Democracy**

This is both a direct and representative affair of the state in terms of decision making for the interest or view of the citizens within the framework of the rule of law. According to Ojo (1999), democracy is a form of government that has its historical roots in the Ancient Greek City States where all adult males were accorded equal opportunity of directly participating in the decisions affecting the governance of their society. In fact, democracy is a combination of two Greek words, Demos (people) and Kratis (rule) which translate into rule by the people".

Indeed, democracy is good if not the best system of government under which people exercise their governing power either directly or through representatives periodically elected by them. Appadorai (1974). Bako (1997) conceived democracy in a liberal way, as a bane of liberal democracy such as: Right to vote and be voted for, Freedom of expression and the press, right to the freedom of movement, Rule of law, Multiparty system, Periodic election etc.

It is thus the ruling elite in government who determines when democracy will come and go, and decide even the individuals that would participate in it. This can be observed in the kind of elections conducted in Nigeria, which shows that democracy is indeed in the hand of the ruling class or elite.

#### **Election**

This is a process of choosing a person or group of persons for a particular post through the means of voting, mainly in a political organization. But scholars have their own views of what election is, and how elections should be conducted. According to Omonijo (2007), election is the act of choosing public officers to fill vacant posts by vote. It is an act of choosing those that govern a state, it may be conducted periodically. Elections are central institution of democracy; the authority of the government derives solely from the consent of the governed. The principal mechanism for translating consent into governmental authority is the holding of free and fair elections. Elections also promote public accountability. "The threat of defeat at the polls exerts pressure on those in power to conduct themselves in a responsible manner and take that account of popular interests and wishes when they make their decisions" (Microsoft Corporation 1993-1998).

#### **Electories**

This implies to the citizens who are entitled to cast their votes, in any election. "Electories, is applied to all of the eligible voters in a political democracy. If a substantial majority of the mature citizens of a community are allowed to Participate in elections, and if no compulsion



or restraint is involved in voting, that community is considered to have a democratic electorate" Microsoft Encarta Premium (2009). Electorates strengthens the democratic dispensation of any country that so much believe in democracy, and at the same time empower their political leaders by the act of voting.

### **Voting Behaviour**

Voting Behaviour is the criteria voters use in determining who they will vote in an election, such criteria may include social class, party affiliation, religion, personality etc. Voting behavior is the basic factor that influences individual attitude or human personality towards elections; it is the variable that determines the choice of the electorate. According to Gordon M. (1998), "Voting behaviour is the study of political process, which focuses on the socioeconomic factors that have effect on how and why electorate vote as they do, and how they arrive at the decision they make". Indeed, voting behaviour can therefore be the action, actions or reaction of people under specific circumstance which formally expressing their preferences for candidates for public office. Therefore, voting behaviour could be defined as the behaviour or attitude exhibited by the citizens of the country in the course of election.

Brief History of Oyi Local Government Area.

Oyi Local Government Area was part of the former Anambra Local Government Area of Anambra State created in 1975 under the Murtala, Obasanjo regime. Oyi was first created by the civilian Administration of Chief Jim Ifeanyichukwu Nwobodo, in 1981 with Umunya as its headquarters. It took its name from the pacific and famous Oyi River that flows northwards into Omambala (Anambra River).

When the military overthrew the civilian administration of Alhaji Shehu Shagari under which chief Nwobodo was governor in 1983, Oyi and its constituent towns were drown back into the old Anambra local government Area with Otuocha as its' headquarters. Later, under the administration of Col. Nnaemeka Akonobi as Governor under Gen. Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, Oyi became a Local Government of itself again and Nteje as its headquarters and has remained so even after the excision of the towns into new Ayamelum Local Government Area.

### **Economy**

According to Rev. Anayo (1891-1980), the people are mainly farmers, and their chief crops are Cassava, yarn of various sizes and varied types they are also seen as the home of Garri production. The people also engage in hunting, fishing and carving as part time means of livelihood. As of down of westernization many people took to Western education, white collar and other allied western oriented jobs.

The Umunya people are also distinguished in banking and in the civil service, while others have followed the professions or are distinguished academics. Generally, of recent, the people of Oyi are more engaged in business and Western education and others in entertainment industries and politics. Oyi as an Igbo community has four major local market Afor Umunya, Eke Nteje, Nkwo Awkuzu and Oye Ogbunike, this market is mainly where the people make their seals of farm produce. Oyi also have a modern market located in Ogbunike along the Onitsha- Awka express way.



## Administrative Structure

Traditionally, the local government is structured in such a way that it will benefit all the towns that made up the local government. As earlier stated, that Oyi is composed of five towns and each of this town has their traditional rulers called the Iche, Nze na Ozo (Chieftaincy title holders) as the names implies.

Politically, the leadership of these towns in Oyi is based on the constitutional monarchical system headed by the Igwe or Eze of the towns respectively. This leadership is based on the tenure kind of system in some of these towns like Nteje. While in others is based on the choice of the people.

The local government is structured in a way that is comprised of fifteen wards in the five towns that make up the Local Government. The wards are divided in such a way that it would bring peace and political development in the areas.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method employed here for investigation is both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected by an in-depth interview between the researchers and some prominent concerned people, questionnaires were also administered based on random sampling since the researcher cannot cover all the population of the case study. Therefore, ten (10) questionnaires were administered to each ward and the administration of the questionnaire cut across various ten (10) respondents from each ward. Just as stated, the research is a combination of the use of table and percentage, this will enable the successful breakdown of data collected based on the information gathered. Secondary source comprises related literature such as political science journals, text books, magazines, published works, unpublished works, newspapers, internet works, paper presentation etc.

## DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

As earlier stated, that the method of investigation of this research is both primary and secondary data collection. An interview will be conducted with some of the prominent concerned people. Having fulfilled the research methodology, that was proposed to use in the research, one hundred and fifty (150) questionnaires that will cut across the fifteen words in Oyi Local Government Area in which ten persons were expected from each ward to answers the questions. As for distribution and collection, only one hundred and five (105) of the questionnaires were recovered from the respondents.

**Table.1 Shows the Distribution of Respondents Based on Gender**

| Sin | Gender       | Frequency  | Percentage (%) |
|-----|--------------|------------|----------------|
| 1   | Male         | 54         | 51.4%          |
| 2   | Female       | 51         | 48.6%          |
|     | <b>Total</b> | <b>105</b> | <b>100%</b>    |

Source: Fieldwork, March 2022.



The table above shows clearly the influence of gender in voting behaviour in which 51.4% of the total respondents are male while 48.6% constitute the female respondents. This shows that gender has no much influence in the voting behaviour of the people.

**Table.2: Shows the Distribution of Respondents Based on Age**

| S/n | Age          | Frequency  | Percentage % |
|-----|--------------|------------|--------------|
| 1   | 18-29        | 45         | 42.9%        |
| 2   | 30-41        | 28         | 26.7%        |
| 3   | 42-53        | 14         | 13.3%        |
| 4   | 54-above     | 18         | 17.1%        |
|     | <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>105</b> | <b>100%</b>  |

Source: Fieldwork, March 2022.

From the above table we found that age distribution has a significant influence in the voting behaviour of which 42.9% of the respondents are below 30 years of age, which the other categories of age distribution constituted 26.7%, 13.3% and 17.1% respectively. This means that youth participated more in politics than the others in the Local Government Area.

**Table.4: Shows the Distribution of Respondents Based on Educational Qualification**

| Sin | Edu. Qualifications | Frequency  | Percentage % |
|-----|---------------------|------------|--------------|
| 1   | Primary Education   | 18         | 17.1%        |
| 2   | Secondary Education | 50         | 47.6%        |
| 3   | Tertiary Education  | 32         | 30.5%        |
| 4   | Adult Education     | 1          | 1.0%         |
| 5   | None Educated       | 4          | 3.8%         |
|     | <b>Total</b>        | <b>105</b> | <b>100%</b>  |

Source: Fieldwork, March 2022.

This table shows that education is considered to be one of the influencing factors that shaped the voting habit of the people of Oyi. Secondary education with total percentage of 47.6% shows that most of the people that voted ended up at 0 level due to one reason or the other.

**Table.5: Shows the Distribution Based on Occupation of the Respondents.**

| Sin | Occupation | Frequency | Percentage % |
|-----|------------|-----------|--------------|
| 1   | Farming    | 13        | 12.4%        |

|   |               |     |       |
|---|---------------|-----|-------|
| 2 | Business      | 46  | 43.8% |
| 3 | Civil Servant | 16  | 15.2% |
| 4 | Others        | 30  | 28.6% |
| 5 | Total         | 105 | 100%  |

Source: Fieldwork, March 2022.

Form the above table we should understand that the bulk of people in Oyi are comprised of business men and women and constituted 43.8% of the total respondents. Others, which are neither farmers, civil servants, businessmen nor women constitute 28.6% of the total respondents, followed by the civil servants with 15.2% and farmers with 12.4%. this shows that the people in Oyi are mainly in business and politically oriented, that is why they participated actively both in business and politics.

**Table.6: Shows the two most Important Factors that made the Respondents vote A Candidate in the 2011 General Elections.**

| S/n | Response                               | Frequency  | Percentage % |
|-----|--|------------|--------------|
| 1   | Personality and religion               | 0          | 0%           |
| 2   | Personality and political party        | 15         | 14.3%        |
| 3   | Personality and campaign promises      | 12         | 11.4%        |
| 4   | Personality and past contributions     | 24         | 22.9%        |
| 5   | Political party and marital inducement | 16         | 15.2%        |
| 6   | Political party and Godfather          | 2          | 1.9%         |
| 7   | All of the above                       | 36         | 34.2%        |
|     | <b>Total</b>                           | <b>105</b> | <b>100%</b>  |

Source: Fieldwork, March 2022.

This table shows that more are needed to be done to improve the democratic processes in Nigeria and in Oyi in particular, because the 34.3% of the respondents that voted for a candidate just for no reason shows that political party as an agent of socialization still have a long way to go. However, 22.9% said they voted because of the personality and past community contributions of the candidate, which shows their amount of awareness in politics and in the policies of the State. Others voted because of the personality and political party, political party and material inducement, personality and campaign promises, and lastly political party and godfather which constituted 14.3%, 15.2%, 11.4% and 1.9% respectively. Godfather and political party has the least out of all, meaning that godfather no longer has an influence on the people in Oyi Local Government Area of Anambra State as the respondents in the interview puts it, that since the former Governor, Senator Chris Ngige defeated the godfathers, Anambra State no longer operate in the dictates of the godfathers. In the same light religion is not a problem in the state because 97% of the People in the area are composed of one religion (Christianity) while the remaining 3% are pagans.



## **DISCUSSIONS: MAJOR FINDINGS AND VERIFICATION OF FINDINGS**

Form the data presented and analyzed above, the area under study is quite similar to most local government areas in other parts of the country, in terms of social, economic and political characteristics and activities. Consequently, voting behavior or voters' preferences for candidates during elections are influenced by a variety of factors that border on bio-data, nature of Nigerian politics and society in general. More specifically, our major deductions or findings include.

- How Money or materialism played a significance role in determining who to vote for in the 2011 general elections in Oyi. This finding corroborates assumption number one which states that money-policies influences choice of candidate in the general elections,
- That Social, economic and educational background of the voters also contributed in influencing voters in the 2011 general elections. Just as a respondents in the interview stated, that the people of the Local Government has the problem on whether to further their education, that is why most of them ended up in business of different kinds. This agree with the assumption number two.
- Godfather, according to the respondents in the interview who argued that godfather has no influence in the 2011 elections because since 2003 Anambra State took a drastic step into stopping the influence of godfathers in their election. This finding disproves the assumption number three which states that patron-client-relationship contributed to the outcome of the 2011 general elections.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study set out to examine voters' preferences for candidates during elections in Nigerian with an empirical focus on Oyi Local Government Areas of Anambra State. It also went forward to study the local government structures and wards in relation to knowing the impact it has created to solving election related problems in the Area.

Data or relevant information collected was subjected to statistical and deductive analysis. This study has revealed voters' behaviour or preferences for candidates during elections (2011 general elections) were influenced by host of factors, the most important of which were materials inducements. Social, economic and educational backgrounds of voters' and lastly the personality of the politicians (candidates). These factors to a large extent have shown one challenges faced by the Nigerian elections.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In view of deductions or findings made on the subject studied, the following recommendations are given for the improvement of elections in Anambra State and Nigeria in general.

- The government should educate the people through a proper channel, (civil society, political parties, mass media etc) on how elections would be conducted based on free and fair grounds to sustain the democratic process in Nigeria.
- The voters should base their choice on which political parties that has the ideology they perceive to be suitable to them for the development of the country that is the party that



has the best programme, campaign promises of candidate, qualities or calibers of candidates etc

- Thuggery and violence should be discouraged since the credibility of every election is dependent on the level of peace that existed to sustain the democratic processes.

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