

ELECTION VIOLENCE AND VOTER TURNOUT IN NIGERIA (1999-2023): EVIDENCE FROM THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTION

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of electoral violence on voter turnout in Nigeria, with particular focus on the 2023 general elections. The study was motivated by the persistent occurrence of election-related violence, political intimidation, insecurity, and the steady decline in voter participation across Nigeria's Fourth Republic (1999–2023). The objectives were to identify the major causes of electoral violence, assess its effect on voter turnout, and explain its implications for democratic consolidation and electoral credibility in Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive research design and relied exclusively on secondary sources, including academic journals, electoral reports, official publications from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), observer mission reports (EU, NDI/IRI), and materials from human rights organizations. The Frustration–Aggression Theory (Dollard et al., 1939; Berkowitz, 1962) served as the theoretical framework. Findings revealed that voter turnout declined from 69.08% in 2003 to 29% in 2023, the lowest since 1999, despite increased voter registration. Electoral violence, which resulted in over 800 deaths in 2011 and 629 deaths in 2019, was driven by political intolerance, weak democratic institutions, electoral malpractice, economic hardship, and lack of confidence in the electoral system. The 2023 election recorded violence across 15 states, including Rivers, Lagos, and Kano, involving voter intimidation, attacks on polling units, ballot snatching, and digital electoral violence (misinformation, hate speech). The study established that violence, insecurity, and intimidation discouraged citizens from voting, particularly among women, elderly persons, and first-time voters. The study concluded that electoral violence remains a major threat to democratic participation, electoral credibility, and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. It recommended strengthening election security through intelligence-driven policing, full implementation of the Electoral Act 2022 (including BVAS and electronic result transmission), establishment of an Electoral Offences Commission, intensified voter education, and institutionalization of peace-building initiatives before, during, and after elections.

Keywords: Electoral violence; voter turnout; democratic consolidation; political participation; electoral security; Nigeria; 2023 general elections; Frustration–Aggression Theory

Introduction

Elections are fundamental to democratic governance, serving as the primary means through which citizens participate in political decision-making and confer legitimacy on governments. Voter turnout is widely regarded as a key indicator of political participation, public confidence, and electoral legitimacy. However, electoral participation is often undermined by election violence, which includes acts of intimidation, coercion, physical attacks, and other forms of disruption intended to influence electoral outcomes or discourage voter participation. Globally, concerns about election violence have increased amid rising political polarization, insecurity, and declining trust in democratic institutions (International IDEA, 2024; Reuters, 2024).

Across Africa, the expansion of multiparty democracy since the 1990s has been accompanied by recurring electoral violence, including voter intimidation, political assassinations, destruction of electoral materials, and clashes among political supporters. These challenges have weakened electoral credibility and democratic consolidation in several countries, including Nigeria (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2024). Since the return to democratic rule in 1999, Nigeria has conducted successive general elections, many of which have been characterized by electoral violence, political thuggery, attacks on polling units, and disputes over election outcomes.

A notable consequence of this trend has been the steady decline in voter turnout. Participation fell from over 69 percent in 2003 to about 35 percent in 2019 and reached a historic low of 26.7 percent in the 2023 general election despite record voter registration (Owonikoko & Ashindorbe, 2025). Reports from the 2023 election documented incidents of voter intimidation, attacks on polling centres, and disruptions of voting activities, raising concerns that insecurity discouraged many citizens from exercising their voting rights. This is particularly significant because the election generated unprecedented political interest, especially among young voters, yet recorded the lowest turnout since 1999.

Although several studies have examined electoral violence in Nigeria, limited attention has been paid to its long-term impact on voter turnout across successive electoral cycles, particularly in relation to the 2023 general election. This study therefore examines the relationship between election violence and voter turnout in Nigeria from 1999 to 2023, with emphasis on evidence from the 2023 general election.

Statement of the Problem

Elections are central to democratic governance because they enable citizens to participate in political decision-making and confer legitimacy on governments. However, election-related violence has increasingly become a major threat to electoral participation, democratic legitimacy, and political stability. Electoral violence discourages voter engagement by increasing the physical and psychological costs of participation, thereby weakening democratic consolidation (International IDEA, 2024; Norris, 2022). Globally, evidence suggests that electoral violence undermines voter turnout, weakens trust in electoral institutions, and contributes to democratic backsliding, despite expectations that democratic expansion should encourage greater political participation (International IDEA, 2024; Reuters, 2024; Norris, 2022).

The challenge is particularly evident in Africa, where electoral contests in countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Côte d'Ivoire, and Nigeria continue to be characterized by intimidation, voter suppression, political clashes, and post-election violence. These developments have undermined electoral credibility and citizen participation across the continent

(Lindberg, 2023; Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2024). In Nigeria, despite uninterrupted democratic rule since 1999 and several electoral reforms, elections have remained associated with voter intimidation, ballot-box snatching, attacks on electoral officials, and other forms of violence that raise concerns about electoral integrity and democratic governance (Jega, 2021; Onapajo, 2022; International Crisis Group, 2023).

At the same time, voter turnout in Nigeria has steadily declined from over 69 percent in 2003 to about 35 percent in 2019 and further to 26.7 percent in the 2023 general election, the lowest recorded since the beginning of the Fourth Republic (INEC, 2023; Owonikoko & Ashindorbe, 2025; Dataphyte, 2023). This decline occurred despite increased voter registration, technological innovations, and heightened political awareness. The 2023 election was marked by widespread reports of voter intimidation, attacks on polling units, and electoral disruptions, suggesting that insecurity may have contributed to voter disengagement (NDI & IRI, 2023; European Union Election Observation Mission, 2023; International Crisis Group, 2023).

Although existing studies have examined electoral violence and democratic consolidation in Nigeria, there remains limited longitudinal research on how election violence has influenced voter turnout across electoral cycles from 1999 to 2023. This gap constrains policy efforts aimed at improving electoral security, increasing voter participation, and strengthening democratic legitimacy (Onapajo, 2022; Jega, 2021). Consequently, this study investigates the relationship between election violence and voter turnout in Nigeria between 1999 and 2023, with particular emphasis on evidence from the 2023 general election.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the impact of electoral violence on voter turnout in Nigeria during the 2023 general elections, however the study seeks to achieve this set objectives.

1. Examine the major causes of electoral violence during the 2023 general elections in Nigeria;
2. Assess the effect of electoral violence on voter turnout and political participation during the 2023 general elections; and
3. Explain the implications of electoral violence on democratic consolidation and electoral credibility in Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

Concept of Elections

Elections are fundamental institutions of democratic governance through which citizens choose leaders, confer legitimacy on governments, and participate in political decision-making. Scholars generally view elections as mechanisms for representation, accountability, participation, and peaceful transfer of power. Norris (2015) defines elections as institutional processes through which citizens confer political authority on leaders under democratic rules, while Uhlaner (2015) and Van Deth (2021) emphasize their role in facilitating political participation and linking citizens to government. Similarly, Heywood (2021) and Van Ham (2020) argue that elections translate citizens' preferences into political representation and governmental authority.

Other scholars highlight the accountability function of elections. Birch (2018) maintains that elections enable citizens to reward or punish governments based on performance, while Garnett and James (2020) view elections as democratic processes that facilitate peaceful political competition and leadership succession. From the perspective of popular sovereignty, Koenig-Archibugi (2022) and Boese and Wilson (2023) stress that elections allow citizens to exercise political authority through participation and contestation. Contemporary scholars such as

Chiamogu and Chiamogu (2025) and Madueke (2025) similarly regard elections as instruments for expressing political preferences and ensuring democratic legitimacy. International IDEA (2024) and OpenStax Political Science (2022) further define elections as periodic, competitive, and inclusive processes through which citizens select representatives and governments.

Overall, elections are more than voting exercises; they are institutional mechanisms for political participation, representation, accountability, legitimacy, and democratic stability (Norris, 2015; Birch, 2018; Heywood, 2021; International IDEA, 2024).

Concept of Electoral Violence

Electoral violence refers to the use or threat of force, intimidation, coercion, harassment, or aggression to influence electoral participation, processes, or outcomes. Norris (2015) describes it as actions involving threats or force that compromise electoral integrity, while Birch and Muchlinski (2017) view it as politically motivated violence employed to gain electoral advantage. Similarly, Sisk (2017) links electoral violence to competition for political power and access to state resources.

International organizations provide broader definitions. The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES, 2020), and African Union (2022) define electoral violence as acts or threats of harm occurring before, during, or after elections and targeting voters, candidates, electoral officials, institutions, or electoral infrastructure. Boese and Wilson (2023), the International Republican Institute (IRI, 2023), and the National Democratic Institute (NDI, 2023) further emphasize that electoral violence undermines participation and democratic competition.

Contemporary perspectives recognize that electoral violence extends beyond physical attacks to include psychological intimidation, hate speech, voter suppression, disinformation, and structural coercion (International IDEA, 2024). Chiamogu and Chiamogu (2025), and Madueke (2025) argue that electoral violence is often employed by political actors to manipulate electoral outcomes and gain political advantage. Thus, electoral violence is widely regarded as a major obstacle to electoral integrity, voter participation, democratic legitimacy, and democratic consolidation (International IDEA, 2024; NDI, 2023; Madueke, 2025).

Concept of Voter Turnout

Voter turnout refers to the proportion of eligible or registered voters who participate in elections by casting ballots. It is one of the most important indicators of political participation, democratic engagement, and electoral legitimacy. Norris (2015) defines voter turnout as the percentage of eligible citizens who vote in an election, while Cancela and Geys (2016) and Stockemer (2017) view it as a measure of civic engagement and citizens' attachment to democratic institutions.

Scholars such as Van Deth (2021), Blais (2018), Birch (2018), and Franklin (2020) emphasize that voter turnout reflects citizens' willingness to influence governance through electoral participation. Likewise, Dalton (2021), and Heywood (2021) regard voter turnout as a key expression of democratic citizenship and political engagement. International organizations, including International IDEA (2024), UNDP (2022), and NDI (2023), define voter turnout as the percentage of eligible voters who cast ballots and consider it an important indicator of democratic legitimacy, electoral integrity, and public confidence in political institutions.

Chiamogu and Chiamogu (2025) further argue that voter turnout represents the practical expression of democratic rights and provides insights into the level of democratic consolidation within a society. Overall, voter turnout is widely recognized as a measure of political participation, democratic legitimacy, civic responsibility, and public confidence in electoral institutions (Chiamogu & Chiamogu, 2025).

Empirical Review

Ola (2018) examined the impact of electoral violence on voters, society, and Nigeria's political system using secondary data from scholarly publications. The study found that electoral violence undermines democratic processes and contributes to the proliferation of arms, thereby threatening political stability.

Ogboma (2024) assessed voter participation in the Bwari Area Council during the 2023 presidential election. Using electoral records and survey evidence, the study found that only a small proportion of registered voters participated in the election. Factors identified as responsible for low turnout included distrust in electoral institutions, fear of intimidation, and inadequate voter education. While the study focused on voter apathy in Bwari Area Council, the present study examines the broader impact of election violence on voter turnout in Nigeria.

Birch and Muchlinski (2017) investigated the relationship between electoral violence and voter participation across emerging democracies. Using quantitative analysis of electoral violence and turnout data, the study found that violence significantly reduces voter participation by creating fear and insecurity among citizens. The authors recommended stronger electoral security measures and prosecution of perpetrators of election violence.

Bekoe (2018) examined the effects of electoral violence on democratic participation in West Africa, including Nigeria. Through qualitative analysis of election reports and observer missions, the study found that recurring violence discouraged voter participation and weakened confidence in electoral institutions. The study recommended electoral reforms and improved collaboration between electoral management bodies and security agencies.

Omotola (2023) analyzed electoral violence and political participation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Using election reports and voter turnout statistics, the study found that persistent violence contributed significantly to declining voter turnout between 1999 and 2019. The study recommended the establishment of an Electoral Offences Commission and stricter sanctions against sponsors of electoral violence.

Nwangwu and Ononogbu (2021) examined the influence of electoral violence on voter behaviour in Nigeria. Using survey data from selected states, the study found that exposure to electoral violence reduced citizens' willingness to participate in elections. The authors recommended enhanced voter protection and improved election security arrangements.

Afolabi and Ojo (2021) investigated the relationship between political violence and electoral participation in Nigeria between 2011 and 2019. Employing correlational analysis, the study established a significant negative relationship between electoral violence and voter turnout, with violence-prone areas recording lower participation rates than peaceful areas.

Hassan and Ibrahim (2023) examined electoral violence and voter turnout during Nigeria's 2023 presidential election. Using survey data and regression analysis, the study found that violence and insecurity significantly reduced voter turnout by creating fear and weakening public confidence in election security. The study recommended stronger security deployment, voter education, and prosecution of electoral offenders.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Frustration–Aggression Theory developed by Dollard, Miller, Doob, Mowrer, and Sears (1939) and later refined by Berkowitz (1962). The theory posits that frustration resulting from blocked expectations, perceived injustice, or deprivation often generates aggression. When individuals or groups are prevented from achieving desired goals, feelings of anger and resentment may lead to violent behaviour.

The theory is relevant to the study because it explains the occurrence of electoral violence in Nigeria. During elections, political actors and voters often develop expectations regarding electoral outcomes. When these expectations are threatened by perceived manipulation, exclusion, intimidation, or electoral malpractice, frustration may result in aggressive actions such as voter intimidation, attacks on polling units, ballot-box snatching, and post-election violence. Given the high stakes associated with political office in Nigeria, some politicians employ violence as a strategy for securing electoral advantage or contesting unfavourable outcomes (Omotola, 2023).

The theory also explains declining voter turnout. Citizens who perceive elections as lacking credibility or believe that their votes cannot influence outcomes may become frustrated and withdraw from the electoral process. Electoral violence further increases insecurity and fear, discouraging citizens from participating in elections. Consequently, frustration generated by electoral irregularities and violence often manifests in voter apathy, political disengagement, and low voter turnout (Birch & Muchlinski, 2017). The theory is therefore useful for understanding the relationship between election violence and voter turnout in Nigeria, particularly during the 2023 General Election.

Methodology of the Study

This study adopts a descriptive research design and relies exclusively on secondary sources of data to examine the relationship between election violence and voter turnout in Nigeria between 1999 and 2023, with particular emphasis on the 2023 General Election. The design is appropriate because it facilitates the systematic examination of trends and patterns without manipulating variables.

Data were obtained from official reports of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), election observation reports, government publications, academic journals, textbooks, newspaper reports, electoral databases, and publications of civil society organizations and international agencies concerned with elections and democratic governance. The use of secondary data was considered suitable because the study covers a long period (1999–2023), making primary data collection impractical and costly.

The study employed qualitative content analysis to examine and interpret information obtained from documentary sources. Data were reviewed, categorized, and analyzed in line with the objectives of the study, while trend analysis was used to examine changes in electoral violence and voter turnout across successive elections. The study covers all general elections conducted between 1999 and 2023, namely 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019, and 2023, with special attention to the 2023 General Election.

Although secondary data provide access to credible historical information, limitations such as variations in reporting standards, possible underreporting of incidents, and institutional biases were encountered. To minimize these challenges, information from multiple credible sources was cross-checked and compared to ensure consistency, validity, and reliability of findings.

Findings and Discussion

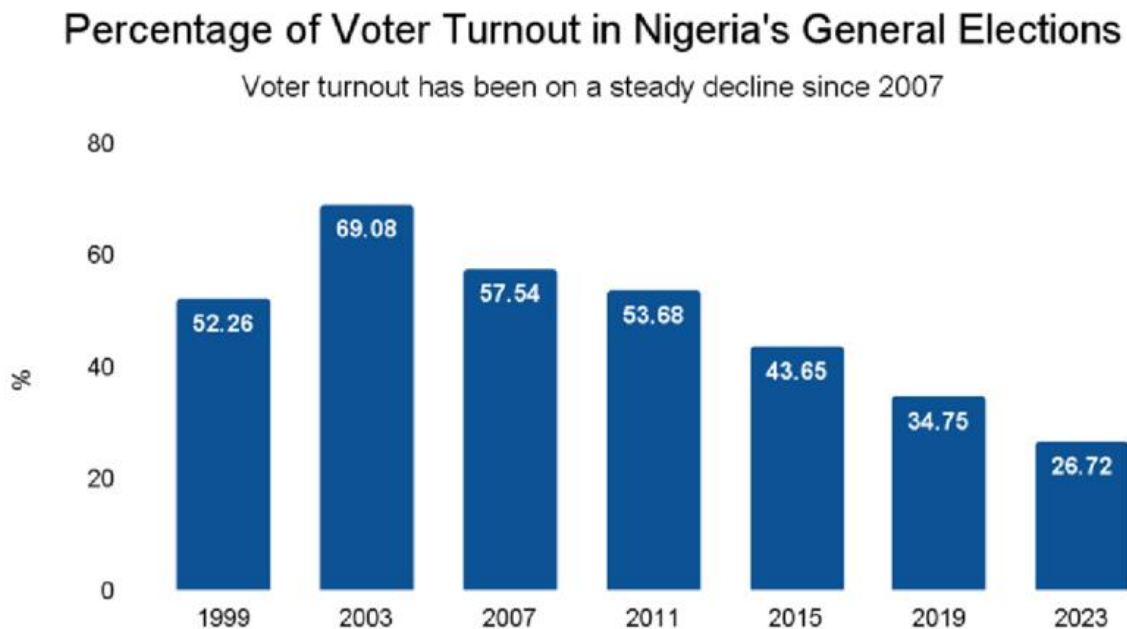
Nigeria Electoral Voter Turnout Trends

Nigeria has experienced significant changes across different election periods since 1999. The early post military elections recorded relatively high voter participation because many citizens were enthusiastic about the restoration of democracy and were willing to contribute to the country's political transition. In most democratic societies, voter turnout is commonly regarded as an important indicator of civic engagement and citizens' involvement in governance.

The study further revealed a relationship between electoral fraud and voter turnout, indicating that increasing electoral irregularities often contribute to declining participation in elections. As public confidence in the electoral process weakens, many citizens become discouraged from exercising their voting rights.

For example, the 2003 general election recorded voter turnout above 60 percent, reflecting considerable public interest in the electoral process at the time. However, subsequent elections witnessed a gradual decline in participation. By 2019, voter turnout had fallen to approximately 35 percent, while the 2023 general election recorded an even lower turnout of about 29 per cent of registered voters.

Fig 1: Percentage of Voter Turnout in Nigeria's General Elections



Source: INEC; IDEA | Chart: Dataphyte

Figure 1 shows a consistent decline in voter turnout in Nigeria's general elections from 1999 to 2023. While voter participation was relatively high in the early years of the Fourth Republic, peaking above 60 percent in 2003, it gradually decreased in subsequent elections, reaching about 29 percent in 2023. This trend suggests declining public confidence in the electoral process, likely influenced by electoral violence, irregularities, and growing voter apathy.

The figure further indicates that increasing voter registration has not translated into higher electoral participation. Despite the growth in the number of registered voters over the years, a smaller proportion of citizens have continued to cast their ballots. This pattern highlights the need for reforms aimed at improving electoral credibility, strengthening security during elections, and restoring public trust in democratic institutions.

Major Causes of Electoral Violence during the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria

The findings of this study reveal that electoral violence during the 2023 General Elections was driven by political, institutional, socio-economic, and security-related factors. Reports from INEC, the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU-EOM), and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) documented incidents of voter intimidation, attacks on polling units, destruction of electoral materials, harassment of election officials, ballot-box snatching, and clashes among supporters of rival political parties (EU-EOM, 2023; NDI & IRI,

2023). A major cause of electoral violence was intense political competition among the leading parties. The emergence of the Labour Party as a strong challenger alongside the APC and PDP increased political tensions and heightened the desperation of political actors to secure electoral victory (EU-EOM, 2023). Political thuggery and voter intimidation also contributed significantly to violence. Election observers reported cases of voter harassment, disruption of voting processes, and suppression of voters in highly contested states such as Lagos, Rivers, and Kano (NDI & IRI, 2023). The study further identified electoral irregularities and disputes arising from election administration as important triggers of violence. Technical challenges associated with the BVAS and IReV systems, delays in result transmission, and allegations of non-compliance with electoral guidelines generated dissatisfaction and heightened tensions among stakeholders (EU-EOM, 2023; NDI & IRI, 2023). Weak enforcement of electoral laws was another contributing factor. The persistent failure to prosecute electoral offenders has fostered a culture of impunity, encouraging violence and other forms of electoral misconduct (International Crisis Group, 2023). Finally, ethnic and religious polarization, alongside prevailing insecurity such as banditry, insurgency, kidnapping, separatist agitations, and communal conflicts, created an environment conducive to electoral violence and disruptions during the elections (EU-EOM, 2023; NDI & IRI, 2023).

Table 1: Major Causes of Electoral Violence during the 2023 General Elections

Causes of Electoral Violence	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Intense Political Competition	275	26.2
Political Thuggery and Voter Intimidation	238	22.6
Electoral Irregularities and Result Disputes	195	18.5
Weak Enforcement of Electoral Laws	128	12.2
Ethnic and Religious Polarization	109	10.4
Insecurity and Criminal Activities	107	10.1
Total	1,052	100

Source: Compiled from Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC, 2023); European Union Election Observation Mission (2023); International Crisis Group (2023).

Table 1 indicates that intense political competition was the leading cause of electoral violence during the 2023 General Elections, accounting for 275 incidents (26.2%). The highly contested nature of the election increased political tensions and heightened the desperation of political actors to secure victory (EU-EOM, 2023). Political thuggery and voter intimidation ranked second with 238 incidents (22.6%), reflecting the continued use of violence, harassment, and voter suppression to influence electoral outcomes (NDI & IRI, 2023). Electoral irregularities and result disputes accounted for 195 incidents (18.5%), largely arising from challenges associated with election administration, including BVAS and result transmission issues (EU-EOM, 2023). The table further shows that weak enforcement of electoral laws contributed 128 incidents (12.2%), while ethnic and religious polarization accounted for 109 incidents (10.4%). Insecurity and criminal activities recorded 107 incidents (10.1%). These findings suggest that electoral violence during the 2023 elections resulted from a combination of political competition, institutional weaknesses, identity-based divisions, and prevailing security challenges.

Impact of Electoral Violence on Nigerian Democracy

Table 2: Analysis of Death Toll in General Elections in Nigeria (1999-2023)

S/N	Election Type	Death Toll	States Affected
1	1999 General Election	Not Certain	Violence was recorded in states like Ondo, Osun and Ogun
2	2003 General Election	100	Violence was recorded in states across six geo-political zones of the country.
3	2007 General Election	300	Violence recorded across the six geopolitical zones of the country
4	2011 General Election	800	Post-electoral violence in some northern states of Bauchi, Gombe, Kaduna was recorded resulting to the death and destruction of properties worth millions of Naira
5	2015 General Election	106	Violence was recorded across states in the six geo-political zones of the country. the South-South was however the main theatre of violence
6	2019	629	Violence was recorded in states like Benue, Kano, Rivers, Akwa-Ibom, Delta and Kogi. Besides, the death, properties worth millions of Naira were destroyed.
7	2023	161	Violence was recorded in states like Rivers, Benue, Delta, Osun, Katsina, Cross Rivers, Nasarawa, Ebonyi, Sokoto, Lagos, Taraba, Kogi, Ondo, Gombe and Abia states

Source: John Campbell (2019) and updated by the Author (2025).

An assessment of the indicators of free and credible elections such as active civil society participation, high voter turnout, and the absence of electoral disputes and post-election violence suggests that Nigeria's democratic system is still developing. The study observed that electoral violence and the lack of transparent electoral processes have contributed to declining citizens' participation in elections. Table 3 further illustrates the pattern of voter participation in Nigeria from 1999 to 2023.

Table 3: Analysis of Citizen's Participation and Its Trends from 1999 -2023

S/N	Election Type	Estimated Population	Total No. of Registered	Total No. of Actual Voters	Voter Turn Rate (%)
1	1999 General Election	123,000,000	57,938,945	30,280,052	52.26%
2	2003 General Election	137,202,644	61,567,036	42,018,735	69.08%
3	2007 General Election	148,294,028	61,567,036	35,397,517	57.49%
4	2011 General Election	165,463,745	73,528,040	39,469,484	53.68%
5	2015 General Election	190,671,878	67,422,005	29,432,083	43.65%
6	2019 General Election	200,960,000	82,344,107	28,614,190	34.75%
7	2023 General Election	227,882,945	93,469,008	23,377,466	29%

Source: Compiled by the Author (2026)

Table 3 shows a steady decline in voter turnout in Nigeria since the return to democratic rule in 1999. Voter participation peaked at 69.08 percent in 2003 but declined progressively to about 25 percent in the 2023 General Election, despite continuous growth in the number of registered voters. This trend suggests weakening public engagement in the electoral process. The decline is

linked to factors such as electoral violence, electoral irregularities, insecurity, and declining confidence in electoral institutions. Repeated incidents of vote buying, ballot snatching, disputed results, and election-related violence have discouraged many citizens from participating in elections. The relationship between electoral violence and voter turnout is particularly evident. Elections characterized by high levels of violence, such as those of 2011 and 2019, were followed by significant declines in voter participation. Electoral violence creates fear and uncertainty, making many citizens reluctant to visit polling units or engage in political activities. The 2023 General Election recorded the lowest voter turnout in Nigeria's Fourth Republic despite over 93 million registered voters. This suggests that low participation was influenced not only by violence but also by cumulative public dissatisfaction arising from electoral irregularities, insecurity, and declining trust in democratic institutions. Overall, the findings indicate a strong inverse relationship between electoral violence and voter turnout. As electoral violence and institutional challenges persist, voter participation continues to decline, posing a significant threat to democratic consolidation and electoral legitimacy in Nigeria.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between election violence and voter turnout in Nigeria between 1999 and 2023, with particular emphasis on the 2023 General Election. The findings revealed a steady decline in voter turnout across successive elections, despite increasing voter registration and electoral reforms. While voter participation was highest in 2003, turnout fell significantly and reached a historic low during the 2023 General Election, suggesting that registration alone does not guarantee electoral participation. The study further established that electoral violence remains a persistent feature of Nigeria's electoral process. Incidents of voter intimidation, attacks on polling units, electoral disruptions, and other forms of violence have contributed to fear, insecurity, and declining public confidence in elections. These factors, alongside electoral fraud, vote buying, logistical challenges, and weak institutional trust, have collectively discouraged voter participation and weakened electoral credibility. The findings also support the assumptions of the Frustration–Aggression Theory, which explains how frustrations arising from electoral irregularities, insecurity, political exclusion, and perceived manipulation of electoral outcomes can generate both electoral violence and voter withdrawal from the political process. The study therefore demonstrates that electoral violence and low voter turnout are interconnected challenges that undermine democratic participation. The study concludes that electoral violence remains a major obstacle to democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Its persistence weakens electoral legitimacy, reduces citizen participation, and erodes confidence in democratic institutions. Strengthening electoral security, transparency, accountability, and public trust is therefore essential for promoting peaceful elections and improving voter turnout in future electoral cycles.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to strengthen the electoral process and promote greater voter participation in Nigeria. These recommendations are directed toward the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), political parties, security agencies, and other stakeholders involved in electoral administration.

The study recommends that the Federal Government, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the Nigeria Police Force, and other security agencies should strengthen election security architecture through the implementation of the provisions of the Electoral Act 2022 and the National Security Strategy. Security agencies should adopt

intelligence-driven election policing, deploy personnel to identified flashpoints before elections, and ensure rapid response mechanisms during electoral periods. This will help guarantee voter safety and encourage greater participation in future elections.

The study further recommends that INEC fully implement the technological innovations provided for in the Electoral Act 2022, including the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the electronic transmission of results. Furthermore, greater transparency should be introduced into the result collation and announcement processes. Strengthening public confidence in electoral administration will improve citizens' willingness to participate in elections.

The study recommends that the National Assembly should expedite the establishment of an Electoral Offences Commission as recommended by the Justice Mohammed Uwais Electoral Reform Committee and supported under ongoing electoral reform initiatives. A specialized institution dedicated to investigating and prosecuting electoral offenders would strengthen accountability and deter electoral misconduct.

INEC, the National Orientation Agency (NOA), civil society organizations, and political parties should intensify voter education and civic engagement programmes in line with the National Policy on Civic Education. Public enlightenment campaigns should focus on the importance of voting, electoral rights, and democratic participation, particularly among youths and first-time voters.

Government agencies, electoral stakeholders, and civil society organizations should institutionalize peace-building initiatives before, during, and after elections. The implementation of the National Peace Policy and the strengthening of the National Peace Committee's activities should be prioritized to promote peaceful political competition and reduce voter fear.

Law enforcement agencies and the judiciary should ensure strict enforcement of electoral laws, particularly the provisions of the Electoral Act 2022 relating to electoral offences.

Political parties should strengthen internal democratic practices and adhere strictly to the provisions of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Electoral Act 2022 regarding candidate selection and party primaries.

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