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## **HUMAN INSECURITY AND THE CHALLENGE OF VOTER TURNOUT AT ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA, 1999-2019**

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### **Abstract**

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*Nigeria's Fourth Republic has successively witnessed decline in voter turnout at elections. This is in spite of the humongous amount of money expended on the conduct of elections in the country. Although authors have explored the situation, human insecurity as a causative factor of the phenomenon seems not to attract their attention. This paper therefore explores human insecurity in Nigeria and the seeming intractable challenges it poses to voter turnout at elections in the country. Analytical research method was employed for this study and the social contract theory espoused as a framework of analysis. The study found that human insecurity permeates Nigeria's landscape as people are constrained by lack of economic wherewithal to meet life's basic necessities and the fear of the avalanche of criminal elements in the country and even government security agents to turnout for elections. This, the paper found, has negatively impacted voter turnout as the percentages of voter turnout has declined from 52.26 percent in 1999 to 34.95 percent in the 2019 general elections. The paper concludes that voter turnout at elections in Nigeria may further decline if human insecurity in the country continues unabated. The paper recommends productive engagement of Nigeria's most active population and redistribution of state resources to tame the clamour for resource control which often results to conflicts and/or crises that snowballs into human insecurity and consequently scare people away from elections.*

**Keywords:** Elections, human insecurity, voter turnout, social contract, Nigeria

## **Introduction**



The global embrace of democracy as the most accepted form of government has led to periodic conduct of elections which is considered as the festival of democracy at various levels of governments in countries that have adopted this largest political participation ensured form of government. But recession of democracy across the globe, including the big democracies like the United States as witnessed in their declining voter turnouts is noticeable. According to Andza and Akuva (2019, p.264), “voter turnout is the total number of eligible voters that come out for an election versus the total number of eligible voters as registered in a country’s voter’s register or the estimated voting age population of a country which is fundamental in determining whether the turnout is low or high.”

The importance of high voter turnout is to the effect that it increases the strength of citizenship and quality of democratic civic life as high voter turnout is a reflection of the ideas and perspectives of the citizens which are transmitted to the political arena (Andza & Akuva, 2019). High voter turnout also reflects the legitimacy of the elected governments and the degree of acceptance of government decisions and programmes. It is against this background that electoral umpires, political parties, civil society organizations and even intergovernmental organizations, the world over, engage in voter education of countries’ voting population to encourage large turnout at elections. The huge amount of money spent on voter education has particularly swollen the budget of electoral umpires. In Nigeria, the electoral umpire’s budget, especially in general election years, have been higher than most subnational governments in the country. This is evident from Nigeria’s Independent National Electoral Commission’s (INEC) request of N305 billion to conduct the 2023 general election in addition to the N40 billion allocated to it annually (Ukpe, 2021).

In spite of the huge monies expended on elections, Nigeria’s voter turnout has been receding since the recommencement of democracy in the country in 1999. Akinpelu (2020) stated that Nigeria’s presidential elections voter turnouts have receded from 52.26 percent in 1999 to 34.95 percent in 2019. Other categories of elections in the country have witnessed lower voter turnouts; and as Nwozor (2017, p.7) averred that “what makes democratic governments more accountable

and, thus differentiates them from authoritarian, fascist or other forms of unacceptable regimes, including military regimes, is the “people factor”, that is, the active participation of the people in the emergence of leaders, through election.”

This explains why elections are still being periodically held in the country in spite of their expensiveness and the receding voter turnout. While the receding voter turnout in the country cannot be attributed to a single reason, human insecurity presents a holistic and persuasive elucidation of this unfortunate scenario. For Lonergan et al (2000), human insecurity has to do with military threats as well as resource scarcity, rapid population growth, human rights abuses, and outbreaks of infectious diseases, environmental degradation, pollution, and loss of biodiversity. Human insecurity is restraints by fear, restraints by want resulting in inability to live a dignified life. Human insecurity pervades Nigeria’s scenery as it is evident in the country’s Fragile State Index score of 98.5 percent in 2022 (World Population Review, 2022). Not only that, Nigeria also has a dismal score of 2.71 percent in the Global Peace Index. This ranks her as 146<sup>th</sup> out of 163 independent nations and territories measured of their peacefulness in 2021 (Statista, 2022). It is against this background that this paper seeks to explore the prevalence of human insecurity in Nigeria to bring to the fore, the challenge(s) it poses to voter turnout in the country.

This paper is divided into seven sections. Introduction is the first section, followed by conceptual discourse which is the second section. Section three is the theoretical framework while section four is an overview of human insecurity in Nigeria. Section five focuses on the challenges of human insecurity to voter turnout in Nigeria. Section six is the conclusion and the recommendations are in section seven.

### **Conceptual Discourse**

For a clearer understanding of the subject under investigation, key concepts such as election, human insecurity and voter turnout are highlighted and discussed in this section.

### ***Election:***

According to Dickerson et al as cited in Osinakachukwu and Jawan (2011, p. 130), election is defined as “a post mortem that investigate the record of office holders whose actual performance may have little to do with promises made when they were previously elected”. The import of this definition is found in its purpose of investigating the records of elected office holders to ensure that their performance is in tandem with their promises prior to seeking office. This investigation can only be properly done when there is large voter turnout. Anything short of this will just be a semblance of the investigation and the result may not even represent the true nature of reality. As it were, elected office holders may be allowed to continue in office in spite of their inability to keep to their promises prior to their elections. For Oni (2016, p. 229), election is a “popular means of attaining governmental power in modern political system by which people cast votes for their preferred candidates or parties in a competitive manner”. Though this definition is concise and apt, its soul which is the popularity of attaining governmental power and competitiveness is lost in an event of low voter turnout as experienced in Nigeria. Genuine popularity and competitiveness cannot be found in a situation where barely 30 percent of the registered voters turn out for elections. According to Okoye (2003, p. vii), election “involves the participation of the people in the act of electing their leaders and their participation in governance”. This is consistent with the Economist Intelligence Unit’s major indicators for measuring the index of democracy around the world. Political participation includes a broad range of activities through which people develop and express their opinions on the world and how it is governed, and tries to take part in and shape the decisions that affect their lives which culminates in their turnout for elections.

### ***Human Insecurity***

On human security, Jolly et al (2006) focused on the protection of fundamental freedoms that are the “essence of life” and also protecting people from critical and pervasive threats. Human insecurity is conceived as the absence of protection of the necessary liberties that are the soul of life and the vulnerability of the people to grave and prevalent threat. Nigeria’s inability to meet the United Nations requirement of one policeman to 400 people is just one indicator of the

severe shortage of protection of Nigerians from fundamental freedoms that are the soul of life amidst grave and prevalent threats. To Leaning, Arie and Stites (2004), human insecurity can be understood in the context of the absence and/or shortage of basic material needs necessary for survival such as shelter, food, water and safety and the psychological and social context in which issues of the sense of home, a link to community and a positive and hopeful sense of the future face grave threat. This notion of human insecurity is in sync with what is deduced from Jolly's *et al* (2006) concept of human security. Kumar (2021) avers that human insecurity entails deprivations, impeding rights and freedoms as well as the absence of policies and programmes that protect people from uncertainties and unpredictable events that could threaten their peaceful survival and dignity. According to Ogwumike and Ozughalu (2018), there is a pronounced deprivation in education, health, nutrition, protection, water and sanitation in Nigeria which lends credence to Kumar's definition of human insecurity. There are also serious issues of human rights violations as well as the absence and/or ineffective policies and programmes that protect people from uncertainties and unpredictable events which perhaps, explain why Nigerians fail to turnout *en masse* for elections hence the definition's importance and its adoption in this paper.

### ***Voter Turnout:***

The Cambridge Dictionary defines turnout as the number of people present at an event, especially the number who go out to vote at an election. This definition is vague to the extent that one cannot properly distinguish between legible and illegible number of the people that turnout to vote at an election. It is in a bid to bridge this gap that the International IDEA (2016, p. 17) defines voter turnout as "the extent to which eligible voters use their vote on Election Day". The total eligible voters are therefore the yardstick to measure the extent of voter turnout which could be low or high. Andza and Akuva (2019, p. 264) conceptualizes voter turnout more profoundly as "the total numbers of eligible voters that come out for an election versus the total number of eligible voters as registered in a country's voters' register or the estimated voting age population of a country which is fundamental in determining whether the turnout is low or high."

In other words, voter turnout measures the percentage of voters that have actually taken part in an election (the proportion of eligible voters who actually cast their vote). The significance of this definition is to the effect that it has not only explained who a voter is but it also set parameter for gauging the extent of voter turnout and/or political participation.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper adopts Thomas Hobbes's Social Contract Theory in explaining the cause(s) of human insecurity and the challenges it poses to voter turnout at elections in Nigeria. The social contract theory is a product of inquiry founded on scientific reasoning as against the theological or religious based thinking of the pre-enlightenment period of which Hobbes was a principal proponent. Lloyd and Susanne (2020) aver that the social contract theory was first formulated by Hobbes in 1651 and the theory was later improved by John Locke and Jean Jacque Rousseau. The theory is an attempt to justify political principles or arrangements by appeal to the agreement that would be made among suitably situated rational, free, and equal persons.

The focus of the social contract theory is on how members of some society have reason to endorse and comply with the fundamental social rules, laws, institutions, and/or principles of that society (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2021). The major assumptions of the social contract theory as postulated by Thomas Hobbes are that "there was no social or political organization in the state of nature and it was a state of perfectly private judgment, in which there was no agency with recognized authority to arbitrate disputes and effective power to enforce its decisions" (Lloyd & Susanne, 2020, p. 3). He also contend that, such a "dissolute condition of masterless men, without subjugation to the laws and coercive power to tie their hands from rapine, and revenge would make impossible all of the basic security upon which comfortable, social, civilized life depends" (Lloyd & Susanne, 2020, p. 3). Life in the Hobbesian state of nature was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" (Hobbes, 1965, p.97).

However, Hobbes as cited in Laskar (2013) contended that because of man's desire for security and order so as to secure self-protection and self-preservation

and to avoid misery and pain, man entered into a covenant. The entering into a covenant led to the voluntary surrendering of all their rights and freedoms to some authority by this contract who must command obedience. In return therefore, this mightiest authority is to protect and preserve their lives and property which led to the emergence of the ruler or monarch, who shall be the absolute head. Hobbes' absolutism is most precisely found in his assertion as cited in Laskar (2013, p. 2) that, "law is dependent upon the sanction of the sovereign and the Government without a sword are but words and of no strength to secure a man at all."

The prevailing human insecurity in contemporary Nigeria is similar to the Hobbesian state of nature where there was perfectly private judgment in which there was no agency with recognized authority to arbitrate disputes and effectively enforce its decisions. There abound perfectly private judges which have sent some people to their graves and have brought hardship to many. The raiding of villages by Bandits, Boko Haram terrorists, the Eastern Security Network, among other criminal gangs where fatalities are recorded are clear cases of private judgment and enforcement of decisions. In some parts of Nigeria, people are levied or taxed by bandits and/or militia gangs for allegedly committed offences and some people are more comfortable taking their cases to these "private judges". Though there are a good number of recognized security agencies in the country to arbitrate disputes with seemingly effective power to enforce their decisions, they have been overwhelmed by the rate of criminal activities in the country. Life, for some people in Nigeria, therefore has become solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. Some people live in places that are deserted with few possessions in unpleasant conditions without a clear thought of what the future holds for them because of frequent invasions by bandits. This explains the short life expectancy in the country which the World Bank (2022) indicated was 54.68 years in 2019, the least in West Africa. Nigerians are now more concerned with meeting their physiological needs and the fulfillment of safety and security needs. Turning out for elections therefore occupies the lowest rung on the hierarchy of their needs hence the ebbing of voter turnout in the country.

It must be noted that man's desire for security and order so as to secure self-protection and self-preservation and to avoid misery and pain which led him to enter into a covenant has been ostensibly defeated in Nigeria. Despite surrendering all their rights and freedoms to some authority who command obedience by Nigerians, the authority has not lived up to its responsibilities of protecting and preserving their lives and property. There are palpable restraints by wants and restraints by threats of which turning out for election is inclusive and inability of Nigerians to live dignified lives. Because of the profound grief, continuous fear, insecurity and danger of death in the country, Nigerians have opted to stay away from elections hence the declining voter turnout in the country. The implication of this is aptly captured by Andza and Akuva (2019, p.274) when they stated "the attempt to minimize the influence of political parties on elected political office holders and/or check their excesses by initiating the recall process cannot even be contemplated when turning up for secondary elections is not a priority for the people. This implies that no matter the excesses of the elected representatives, they cannot be held to account for such by way of recall.

This means that these government officials have become or are heading to become absolute rulers as conceived by Hobbes without responsibility. This perhaps, explains non-recall of even one elected representative irrespective of dozens of *prima facie* cases of wrong doings established against some of them since the Fourth Republic began in 1999. Rather, some have, several times found themselves back in their elected positions and in some instances, gone into higher offices.

### **An Overview of Human Insecurity in Nigeria**

As the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (1994, pp. 24-25) noted, "the list of threats to human security is long but most can be considered under seven main categories: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security". It is therefore on this categorisation that human insecurity in the country is analysed. All the categories of human insecurity have continued to deteriorate since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999. Economic insecurity



which entails “lack of an assured basic income, usually from productive and remunerative work, or in the last resort from a publicly financed safety net” (UNDP, 1994, p. 24) is pervasive in Nigeria. This is reflected in the level of unemployment and underemployment in the country which are indicative threats of economic insecurity. One cannot glowingly talk about achieving a minimum standard of living without being gainfully employed and/or secured by some kind of social security. The National Bureau of Statistics as cited in Iyatse (2021) indicates that in the fourth quarter of 2020, unemployment in the country was 33.3 percent while underemployment was 22.8 percent. This shows that, a very reasonable percentage of the population of the country is threatened by lack of purchasing power which translates into deprivation of the basic necessities of life. This is inconsistent with the spirit of human security.

Food insecurity, as one of the categories of human insecurity, is also prevalent in Nigeria. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) (2002, p. 27) defines food security as a situation where “all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life”. This situation is far from being met in Nigeria which means, there is food insecurity in the country and people are more concerned with achieving their food needs than voting during elections. The Bi-annual Cadre Harmonized Framework as cited in the Guardian Newspaper of November 8, 2021 more profoundly noted the pervasiveness of food insecurity in Nigeria when it projected that 16.8 million people will either be at crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity in Nigeria between June and August, 2022. This projection is even conservative because most households’ food security is achieved at great expense to their resources thereby exposing these households to risk of being food insecure. Besides, physical access to food is also threatened by a number of challenges which include but not limited to armed banditry, high cost of transportation, multiple taxation during harvest and post-harvest losses, and the deplorable state of Nigerian roads.

Nigerians also face health threats as a category of human insecurity. Health insecurity to Werthes et al (2011) is the threat from major causes of death,



including mainly infectious and parasitic diseases. Prominent among the infectious and parasitic diseases that are prevalent in Nigeria are tuberculosis and malaria. Ugwu and Agbo (2021) aver that Nigeria is first in Africa with the highest tuberculosis burden. Data obtained from the World Bank (2022) also supports this as it reveals that there is a prevalence rate of 219 per 100, 000 people in 2020 in Nigeria. No other country is in that range in Africa. Malaria incidences in Nigeria per 1, 000 populations at risk in 2018 as stated by the World Bank (2022) were 291.9. This implies that the country has 25 percent of malaria cases worldwide. Kolawole, as cited in the Vanguard Newspaper of January 24, 2020, averred that 85, 690 people died as a result of malaria related illnesses in Nigeria in 2017 and over N300 billion is spent in the country annually on malaria treatment.

Another category of human insecurity faced by Nigerians is environmental insecurity. Werthes, et al (2011) aver that environmental security is operationalized by the percentage of population that is affected by disasters and the mean of percentage of population with access to clean water and the percentage with access to improved water sanitation. Nigeria is not prone to being affected by disasters in comparison to some other countries; frequent massive floods have hit the country in recent times. Usigbe (2021) contends that between 2012 and 2020, Nigeria lost 627 people to flood; 3, 921, 202 people were affected, \$17 billion was lost in damages in 2012 and 27 states in the country were projected to be affected by flood in 2021. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) (2022, p. 1) also held that “the number of people affected by widespread flooding across Nigeria in 2022 has risen to over 3.2 million, with over 600 fatalities and over 1.4 million people are displaced”. Flood has also made nonsense of improved water sources which have made some people to contend with distances of more than 30 minutes to get potable water. This is inconsistent with the World Health Organization (WHO) standards. This has led to shortage of basic water services in the country which the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF, n.d.) contends that only 26. 5 percent of the country’s population use improved drinking water sources and sanitation facilities.

Nigerians also confront palpable threats from physical violence but these threats are actually carried out on some people. The sources of these threats and/or violence include but are not limited to Boko Haram terrorists, bandits, the Eastern Security Network/IPOB, criminal gangs, cultists, militias, and political thugs. The threats of and/or violence occasioned by these sources have led to the death of 39, 055 people between 2018 and 2020 (Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme, 2018, 2019, & 2020). Also, 8, 661 people were abducted in the country between 2015 and the first half of 2021 (Nigeria Security Tracker (NST) cited in Adebajo, 2021). As at November 30, 2021, all the threats and violence occasioned by these sources accounted for 3, 015, 619 IDPs while 303, 963 people have found refuge in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger (United Nations High Commission for refugees (UNHCR), 2021).

Community insecurity is evident in Nigeria as some people face threats and/or have lost traditional practices and membership in certain groups such as the family, community, organization, ethnic group from which people derive cultural identity. Refugees and IDPs have become the largest victims of community insecurity that have pervaded Nigeria. The 3, 015, 619 IDPs and the 303, 963 Nigerians who have taken up refuge in contiguous countries face diverse threats. They have been denied basic human rights; they face more threats of physical violence; malnutrition, lack of access to clean water and sanitation.

Political insecurity is also pervasive in Nigeria. There is government repression, systematic violation of human rights, torture, ill treatment, disappearances, and threats from militarization in Nigeria. Protest, which is a democratic right, is repressed in the country. Nigerian highways are full of security check points where road users face harassment. The electorate is also scared to come out for political and social events for fear of being abducted by bandits and/or harassed by security personnel and/or political thugs.

### **The Challenges of Human Insecurity to Voter Turnout at Elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic**

The prevalence of economic insecurity in the country which manifest in lack

of assured basic income has made the exorbitant cost of nomination and expression of intent forms unaffordable by some intending aspirants within the parties. This, as Egobueze and Ojirika (2017) noted, shut these aspirants out of the process and made some of the intending aspirants, their supporters and sympathizers complacent about participating in the democratic process including turning out for elections. This has led to low voter turnout at elections in the country. The prevalence of economic insecurity in the country has deprived eligible voters from travelling to their registration centres to obtain their voters' cards to vote at elections. The percentage of unemployment and underemployment is between 33.3 percent and 22.8 percent, respectively and this constitutes the most active voting age population in the country. But the issue is compounded because they have dependents.

Postponement of elections at short notifications affect voter turnout negatively. Many voters see the postponement as double expenses to commute to voting centers and therefore refrain from going to vote. Most scholars have explained that voters often prioritize their resources to achieve physiological needs (given the fact that food insecurity is also prevalent in the country) than saving money to travel to vote at elections as many times as it may be rescheduled. In Nigeria, the instances of rescheduling elections began in 2011. In that year, voting had actually started in some parts of the country but the electoral umpire announced the postponement of the election by two days. This affected the conduct of all the other elections in the country. Again in 2015, elections were postponed by six weeks and in 2019, just a few hours to the commencement of the February 16 election, the electoral body shifted the election by one week and this affected the dates of the conduct of state elections in the country. The postponement of elections made the electorate lose confidence in the electoral system. So, the electorates often divert their time and resources to other personal venture on their farms, workshops and stores rather than go to polling booths to cast their votes on election days. Illnesses such as malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDs, among others have incapacitated some people and prevented them from going out for elections in the country. Other voters simply avoid the voting centers because of contagious diseases. They deliberately stay away from voting centers for fear of contracting these infectious diseases. The outbreak of the Corona

Virus (Covid-19) disease impacted negatively on voter turnout in the country. In spite of the control galvanized at the medical and governmental levels to contain the spread of corona virus many people stayed away from elections centres to protect their lives from the dreaded virus because the virus kept changing variants and no drug has yet been developed to cure it. Therefore, health insecurity as a category of human insecurity poses a serious challenge to voter turnout in the country.

Environmental insecurity, a component of human insecurity, also poses a grave challenge to voter turnout in Nigeria. Elections are for the living and as such, the lives claimed by natural disasters such as flood, for instance, and even the bereaved, prevent massive turnout for elections. This is because they may not be in the right frame of mind to engage in other things but grieving about their losses. It is also imperative to note that Nigerians displaced by either natural disasters or violent conflicts and have been confined to IDP camps may have lost their voters' cards; have not been able replace them; and therefore unable to turnout for elections. Though Section 26 subsection (a) (i) of the Electoral (Amendment) Act 2015 provides for IDPs to vote at elections, the challenges associated with political perception and distrust over transmission of results across state borders and constituency boundaries, interstate IDPs franchise is only limited to presidential elections (Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (2018). Some registered voters have become refugees in other countries and cannot afford to return to Nigeria to vote on election days. This problem has also contributed to the declining voter turnout in the country.

The incidences of threats and physical violence by Boko Haram terrorists, bandits, the Eastern Security Network/IPOB, criminal gangs, cultists, local militias, and political thugs discourage many voters from coming out for elections in Nigeria. In Nigeria, election periods have recorded extreme cases of violence such as the burning to death of the Kogi State People Democratic Party (PDP) woman leader, Mrs. Salome Abuh in her home at Ochadamu, Ofu Local Government during the November 16, 2019, Kogi State Governorship elections. Unfortunately, perpetrators of the horrible act have not faced the full wrath of the law.

Political insecurity is prevalent and poses a grave challenge to voter turnout at elections in the country. The fear of government repression, systematic violation of human rights, torture, ill treatment, disappearances, and threats from militarization have jointly made many people stay away from elections in the country. The deployment of fearsome-looking and intimidating security personnel to election centers have scared Nigerians from participating in elections in the country. In the November 6, 2021, Anambra State Governorship election, the Vanguard Newspaper of October, 29, 2021 reported that the police was going to deploy 34, 587 personnel including two DIGs, five AIGs, 92 other top officers and three helicopters. This is in addition to the 20, 000 Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) and unspecified number of soldiers deployed for the same election (Olorok, Adepegba, Adedipe, Okafor, and Ede, 2021). Available records showed that only 253, 388 voters which represents 10.27 percent out of the 2, 466, 638 registered voters in Anambra State turned out for the election. It is not unlikely that the heavy presence of security personnel scared the people from coming out to vote (Vanguard Newspaper November 10, 2021).

Media reports have revealed that most people stay away from election centers on election days to avoid losing their lives, abduction, and/or sustaining debilitating injuries that may impact negatively on household income and family welfare. This has affected Nigeria's electoral process and pluralism which seeks to determine whether elections are competitive in that, electors are free to vote. The Economist Intelligent Unit (2008, 2012, 2016, & 2020) indicates that Nigeria's score of electoral process and pluralism for 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 which are election years in the country were 3.08, 5.67, 6.08, and 5.17 on the scale of 0 to 10, respectively. Though from 2011, the country has maintained a more than 50 percent score in its electoral process and pluralism, it must be noted that there are 12 questions on the Economist Intelligent Unit's questionnaire that jointly determine the electoral process and pluralism of a country. Nigeria has performed fairly in some but citizens cannot freely vote because of significant threats to their security from state or non-state actors.

Human insecurity is also implicated in the effort at achieving a parallel proportion of the population of voter turnout to registered voters in Nigeria's national, local and off-session elections. For the presidential elections, Akinpelu (2020) indicated that out of the 57, 938, 945 registered voters in the country in 1999, only 30, 280, 052 turned out for the election which represents 52.26 percent. This shows a 47.74 percent gap shortfall to achieve parallel proportion of the registered voters. The 2003 presidential elections left a 30.92 percent gap to be covered to achieve equilibrium with registered voters in the country as it was 42, 018, 735 out of the 60, 826, 022 registered voters that turned out for the election. The gap to achieve equilibrium between voter turnout and registered voters further widened to 42.48 percent in the 2007 presidential elections as 35, 419, 262 voters out of the 61, 566, 648 registered voters turned out for the election. In the 2011 presidential election, 46.33 percent gap was left to be filled to achieve evenness between voter turnout and the number of registered voters in the country as 39, 469, 484 of the 73, 528, 040 registered voters turned out for election which represents 53.67 percent. The gap between voter turnout and registered voters in the country further widened in the 2015 presidential election as only 29, 432, 083 of the registered 67, 422, 005 voters turned out for the election which represent 43.65 percent. This left a wide gap of 56.35 percent. For the 2019 general elections, INEC registered 84, 004, 084 voters in the country but only 29, 364, 209 voters turned out for the election which represents 34.95 percent. This left a gap of 65.05 percent to achieve parallel proportion of voter turnout and registered voters in the country.

## **Conclusion**

The foregoing shows that human insecurity is prevalent in Nigeria. This is evident from economic insecurity, food insecurity, health insecurity, environmental insecurity, personal insecurity, community insecurity, and political insecurity. The paper established that human insecurity poses a serious challenge to voter turnout at elections in the country as people are constrained by lack of economic wherewithal and the fear of violence by criminal elements. They are also scared to turnout for elections by the dreadful appearances of government security agents. Attaining a parallel population of voter turnout with the number of registered voters in this country is still a far cry because the factors responsible

for it are prevalent and are on the increase in the country. In other words, voter turnout in Nigeria may further decline if the menace of human insecurity in the country is not urgently addressed. To that extent, the challenges of human insecurity to voter turnout in the country are real and visible.

## **Recommendations**

1. Nigerian government should create jobs and provide the enabling environment for people to engage in profitable productive ventures to reduce soaring unemployment and underemployment in the country. This will free Nigerians from lack of money for taking care of their basic needs because the traps that have prevented many voters from turning out for elections in the country. It will also reduce the demand for resource control which is a recipe for youth restiveness and related crimes.
2. Nigerians should be sensitized to relocate from disaster prone areas. They should also be educated to desist from activities that promote flood disasters in the country.
3. The Nigerian security architecture should be overhauled and repositioned to be accountable for their operations so that impunity can be eliminated its ranks. This will address the issues of human rights violations, torture, ill treatment, disappearances, and threats from militarization that has kept some Nigerians away from elections.



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