



The 2019 General Election in Gombe State: An Analysis of the Voting Pattern, Issues, Impacts and its Implications

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Keywords:

Election
Gombe State
Impact
Implication
Voting pattern.

Accepted: 19 September 2019

Published: 30 September 2019

Abstract

The 2019 General Election in Nigeria is the six General Election in the Fourth Republic and in Gombe State of Nigeria. The Election presented a peculiar voting pattern in the State for the first time in its history which made the study a unique and an interesting one. Election is usually accompanied with fears, anxieties, speculations and uncertainties in developing democracies like that of Nigeria and its peers. The study critically investigated the 2019 General Election in Gombe State specifically in terms of voting pattern, the issues that emanated and the impacts of the issues as well as the implications on the future of election and politics in the State. The research used both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The primary sources consist of an in-depth interview with some selected stakeholders in the area of study. The secondary sources are the existing literature on the subject matter of study. The data obtained were discussed, analysed and interpreted using content analysis where coding was made for a particular group of data on related issues. The work discovered that the 2019 General Election in Gombe State was peaceful and successful but the voting pattern indicated the influence of some factors such as money, religion and media in shaping public opinion for choosing leaders at different levels and there is a benefit politically from the voting pattern but specifically, there is an important lesson to learn from the outcome of the Election. The research recommends among others that there is need for massive political education to eschew ethnic, religious and indiscriminate voting in the future.

Funding: This study received no specific financial support.

Competing Interests: The author declares that there are no conflicts of interests regarding the publication of this paper.

1. Introduction

Election is perceived in political arena as the most important democratic event which enable for a peaceful change of leadership. It offers the opportunity for the electorates to express their will and respond to policy choice by endorsing the ruling party or leader or rejecting him all through the ballot revolution. Election in Nigeria has been a business of politics with myriads of challenges, success stories and obstacles. General Election in Nigeria usually is heralded with fears, anxieties, uncertainties, intimidations, excessive use of money, bribery, corruption, rigging, misconducts, irregularities, logistic problems and other issues related to that (Sule, Azizuddin, Sani, & Mat, 2018). General Election has been taking place in Nigeria since 1959 during the preparations for the emergence of political independence. Nigeria witnessed three failed Republics from 1960 to 1999. The Fourth Republic was ushered in on May 29th 1999 when the military regime of General Abdulsalami Abubakar transferred power to the civilian regime of Olusegun Obasanjo. Since 1999, Nigeria has been sailing through the waves of the ocean of democratic experiment amidst varieties of challenges (Falola & Heaton, 2008). From 1999 to 2019, Nigeria has had six uninterrupted General Elections and twenty (20) years of unprecedented democratic rule for the first time in the history of the country (Sule, 2019).

Gombe State is one of the 36 States in Nigeria that were created in 1996 during the military regime of General Sani Abacha and is located in the centre of Northeast geo-political zone. The resurgence of democracy

in 1999 paved the way for political activities in the State including elections and political appointments at the local, state and national level. Gombe State is one of the States that recorded impressive electoral results and a voting pattern that is interesting in the recently concluded 2019 General Election. A Presidential, Gubernatorial, Senatorial, House of Representatives and State House of Assembly Elections were conducted on 16th February and 2nd March respectively.

This study is a thorough investigation of the voting pattern in Gombe State based on the examination and analysis of the results of the various electoral offices. The study includes the issues that accompanied the pre-election, election conduct and post-election activities, challenges, successes and impacts that are recorded. In doing so, it is germane to discuss succinctly matters that are related to the elements of election in Nigeria as presented in the literature.

2. Literature Review

In this section, some vital issues that are related to the topic of discussion are reviewed critically to enable for the identification of the research gap and contribution to knowledge. It has been observed by the researcher that studies that are concerned with election and democratic issues in Gombe State are not only inadequate but are practically non-existent. This is the purpose of this work, to fill the existing gap and make an academic contribution. The literature section was reviewed thematically under the following sub-headings: background of the area of study; the concept of election; general election in Nigeria; voting pattern and voting behaviour in Nigeria and the 2019 General Election.

2.1. Background of the Area of Study: Gombe State

Gombe State is located in the centre of Northeastern part of Nigeria and is one of the 36 States in the country with its capital in Gombe; one of the ancient cities of Gombe Emirate that formed the State and its surroundings today. Gombe got its state on October 1st 1996 by the Abacha Military Regime and it is nicknamed "Jewel in the Savannah". The State is neighbouring five Northeastern States of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Taraba and Yobe. The State is a savannah area with an area of 20, 265 km² and an estimated population of 3.6 million according to the projection of the 2006 population census. The State has two major climatic conditions: the rainy and dry season. The rainy season starts normally in May and ends in October while the dry season starts in November and stretched up to April sometimes. In between the two seasons, there is intermittent harmattan weather.

The State has eleven local government areas which are: Akko, Balanga, Billiri, Dukku, Funakaye, Gombe, Kaltungo, Kwami, Nafada, Shongom and Yamaltu/Deba. The State is divided into three Senatorial zones with Gombe, Kwami, Funakaye, Dukku and Nafada in Gombe North, Akko and Yamaltu/Deba Gombe Central and Balanga, Billiri, Kaltungo and Shongom in Gombe South. The State has multi-ethnic groups composition with dominant Fulani group followed by other major ethnic groups such as Hausa, Tera, Bolewa, Kanuri, Tangale and Waja. The State had two military Governors and four elected civilian Governors from 1996 to the present. The civilian elected Governors emerged from 1999 to 2019. The State is blessed with diverse resources such as coal, uranium, zinc, gypsum, limestone and others. In addition, the State has a large arable farming land and it is agrarian in nature with peasant farming occupying about 60% of the inhabitants. The State has the presence of two big dams one in Cham and the other in Dadin Kowa suitable for irrigation farming, sourcing of potable drinking water and generation of electricity for public consumption. The State also possesses many tertiary institutions of learning, a tertiary institution of healthcare services and other notable institutions (Sule, 2014).

The area of study is politically known as a PDP dominated State previously. The PDP was the ruling party for straight 16 years at the national level since 1999 until its defeat in the 2015 General Election. The State fall under the control of PDP since 2003. The voting pattern in Gombe State was dominated with political thuggery where a group of local armed thugs called the "Kalare Boys" were used by politicians in Gombe State to intimidate and harass the opposition. The State is divided into three geo-political zones. It has been discovered that while the Gombe North and Gombe Central zones alternate their voting from the former ruling APP to PDP and to CPC, the Gombe South zone maintain a unilinear voting pattern in which the PDP continue to unchangeably dominate all the elective seats in the zone (Sule, 2014). This is an interesting political development in this study because the trend and pattern changed in the 2019 General Election which invited for a research to identify how and why the changes occurred.



Figure-1. Map of Gombe State showing the eleven local government areas and the state capital.

Source: Google map 2019.

2.2. Conceptualising Election

An election is considered as the backbone of a democratic rule and it is the system or an institution that sustains democracy and provides a healthy competition for power and control of the government. An election is a periodic event that is prepared in which an individual is elected or voted for a given office (Kapur, 2009). A periodic election is an accepted norm and a standard of global practice and a process that determines who gets power or controls the machinery of policymaking. An election has been the normal practice in which modern representative democracy operates (Almond & Verba, 1963).

An election is the engine room of any democratic system and without it, there will be no democracy. Election offers freedom of choice and the ability of the voters to hold their leaders accountable. Election matters most for both the rulers and the voters. An election has been seen as an organised event in which somebody is chosen by vote for something, especially a public office (Kapur, 2009). Periodic elections are accepted global method by which individuals in each society determine how and by whom its affairs would be conducted. The legitimacy of any government can be derived from the will of the people as expressed in, credible, free and fair election periodically. Election has been the usual mechanism by which representative democracy operates since the seventeenth and eighteenth century (Almond & Verba, 1963).

An election is viewed as a legitimising institution functioning to give elected leaders the wire withal to govern. Democracy necessitates participation, equality in voting, citizen understanding and control over the political agenda. This system is based on elected representation, fair and frequent elections, freedom of expression, associational autonomy and inclusive citizenship (Dahl, 2000). Thus, elections are the necessary requirement for a healthy democracy and the survival of democratic rule depends solely on the ability of any democratic system to undertake an election that is acceptable in the society.

Election in Nigeria has a long history. It has two major phases. It started in the colonial era when the British Colonial Administration of Hugh Clifford introduced the vacancy for the representation of the black Africans in a direct popular election. Since that period, election continued to take place in the colony until the 1959 General Election which ushered in political independence. Despite the intermittent military coups and counter-coups in the 1960s, 70s, 80s and even 90s, election has been taking place in the country whenever the

civilian government is allowed to operate as in the case of the First Republic (1960-1966), Second Republic (1999-1983), Aborted Third Republic (1990-1991, popularly tagged aborted because the military regime of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida initiated a transition to civilian rule in 1990 where election for political offices took place at various levels but the final Presidential Election in June 1991 was annulled thus, terminating the Republic) and the Fourth Republic (1999-2019) (Sules, Mohd, & Mat, 2017). In Gombe State, election started taking place from 1999 because the State emerged in 1996 under military rule and the transition to democratic rule in 1999 set the pioneer stage for election in the State. Since 1999, six consecutive General Elections took place in Gombe State in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019. That of the 2019 is a watershed in the political history of Gombe because of the voting pattern and the outcome.

2.3. General Election in Nigeria

Election in Nigeria relies on two major legal documents which are the 1999 Constitution as Amended and the Electoral Act 2010. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is the agency that is saddled with the responsibility of the conduct of elections and other related matters such as registration and de-registration of political parties, regulating the conducts and activities of contestants and political parties and designing regulations for the electorates towards the conduct of the election proper. The INEC has been perceived as one of the challenges of electoral conduct in Nigeria due to alleged corruption, partiality, irregularities, shoddy preparations and lack of expertise and professionalism among others (The Centre for Public Policy Alternatives (CPPA), 2015).

Election took place in the Fourth Republic six times in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and recently in 2019 (Sule, 2019). In 1999, the military administration of General Abdulsalami Abubakar set a quick transition to civilian rule in which fifty-seven million three hundred and sixty-nine thousand and five hundred and sixty (57, 369, 560) were registered as valid voters and three parties of the Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) were registered by the newly established electoral body, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). In 2003, another General Election took place which set the foundation for the consolidation and sustenance of democracy in Nigeria in the 21st century. The APP transformed itself into All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and had the strong politician joining the race in person of former General Muhammadu Buhari. Other parties were registered too such as All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), United Nigeria Peoples Party (UNPP), Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) and many others but the contest at all levels remained between the ruling PDP and the opposition ANPP (Sule et al., 2018).

In 2007, more parties were registered which officially turned Nigeria into a permanent multi-party system in the Fourth Republic. The tradition was maintained in which 18 candidates contested for the post of the President but the contest was a straight battle between the ANPP's Muhammadu Buhari and PDP's Umaru Musa Yar'adua. The PDP secured 69.82% of the votes while the ANPP scored 18.72% amidst controversy of massive rigging. At the state level, the PDP maintained its tight hold on power winning 25 seats, ANPP won 7, Action Congress (AC) which metamorphosed from AD won 1, APGA 1, LP 1 and PPA 1. In the National Assembly, at the Senatorial chamber, PDP won 85 seats, ANPP 16, AC 6, AP 1 and PPA 1. In the House of Representatives, PDP won 263 seats, ANPP 63, AC 30, PPA 3 and LP 1 (Sule et al., 2018).

In the 2011 General Election, additional parties were registered including the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) of Muhammadu Buhari. As usual, while there are 20 contestants, the PDP scored 58.89% and the CPC candidate scored 31.98% of the votes. In the Governorship election, the PDP won 23 seats, ACN 6, ANPP 3, APGA 2, CPC 1 and LP 1. Similarly, in the National Assembly, the PDP maintained dominance in the Senate with 64 seats, ACN 21, ANPP 11, CPC 8, LP 3, APGA 1 and DPP 1. In the House of Representatives, the PDP secured 203 seats, ACN 69, CPC 38, ANPP 28, LP 8, APGA 7, AP 5, DPP 1 and PPN 1. The Election was accompanied with a terrible post-election violence as a result of perceived rigging of the outcome of the Election by voters in Northern part of the country from the ruling PDP (Sule et al., 2018).

The 2015 General Election came up with a surprise and a history-making in Nigerian politics. It was the first time that an opposition political party succeeded in defeating the ruling party. Fortunately, the Election was adjudged the most fair and credible in the Fourth Republic since 1999. There were many contestants as it was the usual tradition. This time, Muhammadu Buhari contested under the platform of the All Progressives Congress (APC) which was a merger of four mega parties and a faction of the PDP. Muhammadu Buhari of the APC secured 53.96% of the votes while his opponent President Jonathan scored 44.96%. In the Governorship election, out of the 31 seats contested, APC won 19 while the ruling PDP won 12. In the National Assembly, APC in the Senate won 60 seats while the PDP won 49 seats. In the House of Representatives, APC won 225 seats, PDP 125 and other parties secured 10 (Sule et al., 2018). The Election was commended, praised and regarded as credible by analysts, voters, the electoral body itself, international observers and political parties and contestants' altogether.

The 2019 General Election deepened democratic practice in Nigeria and kept the hope of continuous civilian rule in the country. Like other elections in the past, it was accompanied with imbroglios and political confusion in addition to tension and perceived violence and threats. The INEC registered 93 political parties and 73 of them contested for the Presidency but the contest was a clear battle between the ruling APC of

Muhammadu Buhari and the major opposition PDP of Atiku Abubakar. The results indicated that the APC candidate secured 55.54% of the total votes, the PDP scored 41.18% while other parties scored 3.28% (Sule, 2019). In the Governorship election, election was held in 29 states out of the 36 and the ruling APC won 15 while the main opposition PDP won 14. In the National Assembly, at the Senate chamber, the APC won a total seat of 65, PDP 43, YPP 1 making a total of so far as declared by the INEC during the time of writing this research. One seat is not yet declared. In the House of Representatives, APC has 217 seats, PDP 115, APGA 9, ADC 3, PRP 2, AA 2, SDP 1, ADP 1, LP 1 and APM 1. Eight (8) are yet to be finally awarded during this investigation. The results in general indicated a landslide victory for the ruling APC. Many cases of the Election Petition Tribunal were before the various courts currently listening to the complains of the runners-up including the Presidential, many Gubernatorial Elections, National Assembly and State Houses of Assembly. Some of the winners may likely lose their seats after the final verdict.

The 2019 General Election in Gombe State is a departure from the other previous Elections in the State because of the nature, dimension, pattern and the outcome of the Election. In 1999, the APP swept the State with majority votes at both the Governorship and State House of Assembly Elections. From 2003, the State joined the comity of the States under the rule of the PDP which was the party that controlled the country conveniently. From 2003, the State continued to be under the dominant rule of the PDP at all levels including the Presidential, National Assembly, Governorship, State House of Assembly, Chairmanship and Councillorship elections up to 2015 when the opposition APC won the Presidential Election in the State and most of the National Assembly seats with some few State House of Assembly seats. The State, like in 1999, became a minority opposition in national politics where the State is controlled by PDP but the national politics is dominated by APC. In 2019, the trend was changed in which the ruling APC at the national level swept the Presidential Election in 9 out of the 11 local governments, won the governorship seat in a landslide victory, won all the 9 National Assembly seats and won 19 out of the 24 State House of Assembly seats (International Republican Institute, 2019). This scenario invited for a keen interest in studying and analysing this pattern of voting in 2019 to determine how and why it happened the way it did.

2.4. Voting Pattern and Voting Behaviour in Nigeria

Election in Nigeria usually has the political culture and voting pattern of ethnicity, religion and regionalism which is part of the issues that are bedeviling the successful choice of good leaders in the country (Abdullahi, 2015). Closely related to the above is the politics of winning at all cost where elections in Nigeria are marred with rigging, violence, manipulation of results and intimidation of opposition and their supporters using the apparatus of security personnel and political thugs (Auwal, 2015). Election in Nigeria took the dimension of money politics where vote buying, godfatherism, bribery, corruption, overspending, violation of electoral rules and other irregularities affected the process and its outcome (Sule, Azizuddin, Sani, & Mat, 2017; Sule et al., 2018). The phenomenon of money politics reached its zenith in Nigerian politics where in the 2015 Presidential Election.

History is one of the major factors behind the voting pattern in Nigerian politics and electoral process. Nigeria as it is today was a formation of an arbitrary colonial interest where the British colonisers decided in 1914 to amalgamate the Northern and Southern Protectorates under Governor Lord Lugard and named it the British Colony of Nigeria. After political independence, the multi-ethnic, multi-religious and contiguous regions that formed the present-day Nigeria failed to melt into national integration. The populace identifies their ethnic identities as more important than national unity (Falola & Heaton, 2008).

Voters' turnout determines the voting pattern of the electorates also during a Presidential Election in this country. Political apathy is recorded in General Elections in Nigeria because of the attitude of the political office holders who promised earth and heaven to the voters during electioneering campaign and after assumption of power, reneged against their promises and transformed themselves into emperors who enrich themselves from the public treasury at the expenses of developmental projects (Sule et al., 2017). Voting pattern in Nigeria can take three major approaches; the sociological, party identification and rational choice (Mudasiru, 2015).

Voting pattern in Gombe State has no any formal study so far conducted. In essence, this study might be the pioneer in this perspective but it is clear and analogical to draw from the national experience above because the voting behaviour and political culture in the country is permeative and unilateral. It can be witnessed based on direct participatory observation from the author and the interviews conducted in this work that Gombe State has the voting pattern of political violence, manipulation of electoral process, rigging and subversion of the process, intimidation and harassment of opposition, money politics, bribery and corruption, ethnic, religious and geo-political zone sentiments, clientelism and patrimonialism. The State is configured into two main religions, Islam and Christianity with the majority of the populace being Muslims. Additionally, the State is divided into the Fulani/Hausa majority ethnic group and other minority ethnic groups. Voting in an election in the State takes these elements into consideration always. Religion, ethnic groups and political geography determines who gets power.

2.5. The 2019 General Election

In the 2019 General Election, ninety-three (93) political parties were registered. The INEC declared that all the parties were duly registered but not all of them contested at all levels. Some of them contested for the post of the Presidential Election, Senate, House of Representatives, Governorship and State House of Assemblies. For instance, seventy-three political parties contested in the 2019 Presidential Election which are A, AA, AAC, AAP, ABP, ACD, ACPN, ADC, ADP, AGA, AGAP, ANDP, ANN, ANP, ANRP, APA, APC, APDA, APGA, APM, APP, ASD, AUN, BNPP, CC, CAP, CNP, DA, DPC, DPP, FJP, FRSH, GDPN, GPN, HDP, ID, JNPP, KP, LM, LP, MAJA, MMN, MPN, NAC, MCNP, NCP, NDCP, NDLP, NEPP, NFD, NIPP, NNPP, NPC, NPM, NUP, PCP, PDP, PPA, PPC, PPN, PT, RAP, RBNP, RP, SDP, SNC, SNP, UDP, UP, UPN, WTPN, YES and YPP (Sule, 2019). Out of the above-mentioned parties, only two fought fiercely for the seat which is the APC and the PDP. Many of the other parties are perceived as prompting for either APC or PDP or seeking for political bargain in stepping down for the major party. Many parties stepped down for either the APC candidate or the PDP candidate few weeks or days before the final election. The performance of Nigerian political parties in the 2019 Presidential Election is presented in Table 1 for easy illustration and clarification.

Table-1. Showing the 2019 presidential election results.

S/No.	Parties	Votes won	Percentage
1.	APC	15, 191, 847	55.69%
2.	PDP	11, 262, 978	41.28%
3.	Others	826, 419	3.03%
4.	Total	27, 281, 244	100%

Source: Sule (2019).

The above statistics depict a surprising voting turnout for the parties in which out of the 73 contesting parties, two parties of the APC and PDP secured 96.97% of the total votes while the remaining 71 parties ended up with only 3.03%. This shows that the APC and PDP performed excellently but the other parties performed poorly and have proved to be liabilities in the ballot papers of the INEC and a tedious work for the voters in the polling units.

The above performance in the Presidential Election is similar to what is obtainable in the National Assembly Election. In the Senate, only three (3) parties were able to win a seat out of the total registered 93 parties which means that 90 parties are now totally not represented in the upper chamber. The pattern of distribution of the seats according to parties' performance is presented in the chart below.

Performance of parties



Figure-2. The national assembly election 2019: The senate.

Source: INEC (2019), retrieved from www.inecnigeria.org. Computation made by the researcher.

In the house of representatives, there is more efforts of parties in terms of performance but still the two major parties; APC and PDP are the significant ones in this perspective. Table 2 shows the pattern of the parties' output in the election.

The Governorship Election in 2019 revealed further that only two parties performed well. There are total of 29 states in which the Election hold out of the 36 States in the Federation. APC and PDP are the only parties that secure seats at Governorship level without any party winning a single seat out of it. At the State House of Assembly level, the seats in the 29 States were mostly shared among the ruling APC and PDP in their respective controlled states. Few parties recorded some seats like NNPP in Bauchi State which won one State House of Representatives seat. The result is displayed in Figure 3.

Table-2. The house of representatives' election results in 2019.

S/No.	Parties	Seat won	Percentage
1.	APC	223	61.94%
2.	PDP	117	32.50%
3.	APGA	9	2.50%
4.	ADC	3	0.83%
5.	AA	2	0.56%
6.	PRP	2	0.56%
7.	SDP	1	0.28%
8.	LP	1	0.28%
9.	ADP	1	0.28%
10.	APM	1	0.28%
Total	10	360	100%

Source: INEC (2019), retrieved from www.inecnigeria.org. Computation into percentage made by the researcher.

Results of 2019 gubernatorial election in Nigeria

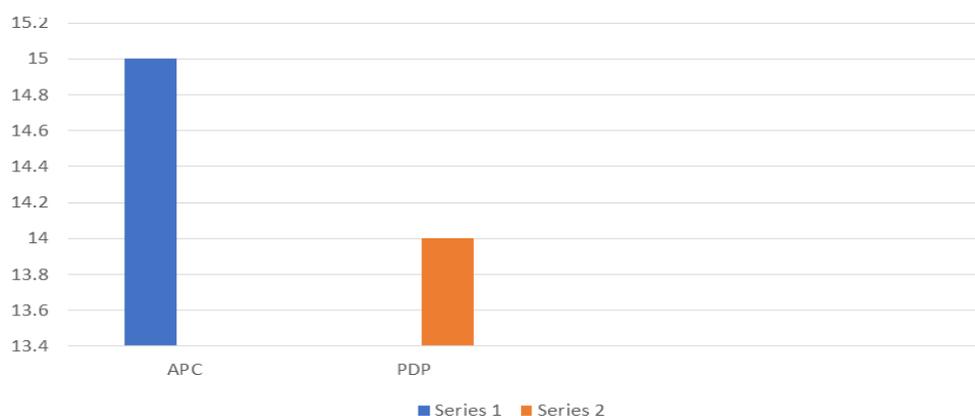


Figure-3. 2019 Governorship election result according to the performance of political parties.

Source: INEC 2019, retrieved from www.inecnigeria.org

In essence, the overall performances of the parties indicated that only two parties deserved to participate in the electoral contest in the 2019 General Election if true notion of party politics and power struggle which is the aim of any party is taken into consideration. The results and analysis of the 2019 General Election in Gombe State were presented, discussed, analysed and interpreted in the discussion section.

3. The Framework of Analysis: Rational Choice Theory of Election

The Rational Choice Theory of Election is a Political Economy approach towards explaining the permutations of voters' choice in an election based on the benefits that are accrued to the pattern and choice in their voting. It is an attempt to perceive election as an economic bargain which is utilised through a rational choice based on scale of preference and opportunity cost of the party or politician that is selected or elected in the process. The behaviour of both the candidates and the electorates are measured in economic terms and material benefits that are obtained through the process of election. The Theory is an offshoot of the Theory of Consumer Behaviour in Economics which explains the rationality in the attitudes of consumers of goods and services and the behaviour of the manufacturers in their efforts to maximise profit in a competitive environment. Downs (1957) and Arrows (1957) are credited as the philosophers behind the emergence of the Rational Choice Theory of Election. The electorates are regarded as consumers of goods and services who seek maximum utility in their votes for or against a particular party or candidate while the politicians are considered as manufacturers who seek to maximise profit in a competitive environment through seeking the support of the voters for electoral promises that are beneficial either in cash, kind, policy choice preferences, appointments, nepotism, kickbacks and other clientel and patronage system of reward.

It is assumed that if rational choice and the concept of utility can explain the behaviour of consumers in an open market, Rational Choice Theory of Election can explain the attitudes of politicians and voters in the political battle during election exactly in the economic model situation. The Theory established a correlation between consumers of goods and services and their wise choices with that of electorates and their rational choices during an election on one hand and the competition between the manufacturers in a perfect market and politicians in a multi-party environment (Arrows, 1957; Downs, 1957).

There are two major factors in explaining the criteria for Rational Choice of Election: the evaluative and non-evaluative measures. The evaluative measure is built on the choice of a party or candidate based on regime performance and policy choice. The non-evaluative measure is anchored on voting based on clientelistic considerations such as ethnicity, religion, regionalism, patronage, family ties, material benefits and rewards and other personal considerations ahead of performance (Lindberg & Morrison, 2008). Farber (2009); Animashaun (2015); Sule et al. (2018) and Sule et al. (2018) believed that both the evaluative and non-evaluative measures influenced the outcome of elections in Nigeria during the Fourth Republic. In Rational Choice Theory of Election, "Swing Voting" may occur. Swing voting is a voting pattern based on certain criteria or rationality in new democracies like that of Nigeria in which political parties and candidates that can give maximum satisfaction to the voters' ethnic identity, Clientalism, religious benefit and other benefits motivate voters to vote for them instead of public common goods (Lindberg & Weghorst, 2010).

The Rational Choice Theory of Election is a good explanation of the voting pattern in Gombe State during the 2019 General Election and can be applied successfully in supporting the literature context and the discussions section because despite the fact that the choice was narrowed down naturally between the two major contenders in the APC and PDP, many supporters and voting bloc voted not because of the perception of the common public goods but rather in return for anticipation of personal benefits from their preferred candidates such as ethnic favour, religious considerations and personal benefits. In another way, many voters elected their leaders in the General Election in 2019 in Gombe State based on perceived performance, policy choice preferences and anticipation of the common public goods for all.

4. Methodology

The research used a qualitative approach as a research design for data collection and analysis. A qualitative approach entails the use of strategies and paradigms for gathering a large group of qualitative data from the selected targeted informants who possess a quality information on the subject matter of study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Creswell, 2014; Lune & Berg, 2017; Sharan, 2009). There are basically five types of qualitative approach to research which are the narrative, case study, ethnography, phenomenology and grounded theory. This study is specifically a qualitative case study because it is an examination of the case of 2019 General Election in a particular area of study and taking into cognisance the case of voting pattern and the issues that resulted from it.

The work used both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data consist of three major sources which are; an in-depth personal interview with some selected informants on the area of study, direct participant observation and data from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The informants were selected from six (6) categories according to their relevance and possession of quality information that are reliable and classified. Category A is politicians in which six (6) of them were selected from the five major parties that contested for various positions in Gombe State at the State and National Assembly Elections. Some of the interviewees are victorious in the Elections while some are runners-up. A candidate in the All Progressive Congress (APC) was chosen, a candidate from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), a contestant from the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), a contestant from the Social Democratic Party (SDP), a candidate from the Democratic Peoples Party (DPP) and a candidate from the New Nigerian Peoples Party (NNPP).

The second category is party executives in which two (2) were selected one from the APC and the other from the PDP based on the performance of the parties because the other parties failed to win a single seat in the State. In the third category, the INEC officials, three (3) senior officials in the INEC Headquarters in Gombe State were selected for the interview. The fourth category is the academicians where three (3) informants were selected from Gombe State University and Federal University Kashere who are experts in the field of election. The fifth category is the religious clerics where four (4) were selected two from the Muslim clerics and two from the Christian side. The last category is the civil societies/non-governmental organisations that monitored the election in which four (4) of them from different organisations were selected. This makes a total of twenty-two (22). The selection has made the criteria of the minimum and maximum requirement for a qualitative interview in which Sharan (2009) suggests a minimum of four (3) and a maximum of twenty (20) while Creswell (2014) suggested a minimum of eight (8) and a maximum of thirty (30). The criteria for the selection were based on accessibility, relevance and possession of the vital information needed. Questionnaire was used in the interview in which semi-structured questions were prepared to allow for flexibility and saturation point. The Table 3 shows the summary of the selected informants according to the categories.

The direct participant observation is the direct involvement of the researcher in the process of the electoral conduct and also a keen follower of the unfolding events during the build up to the 2019 General Election in the State from the party primaries to the final election. The information obtained from the INEC were the official results of the Presidential, National Assembly Elections, Gubernatorial and State House of Assembly Elections. The secondary data involved books, journal articles, newspapers and internet sources.

The data obtained were presented in the discussion section, analysed and interpreted for findings. The discussions were made using content analysis where data were grouped into categories of themes and

discussed thematically together with the existing knowledge on the subject matter and the application of the adopted theory for strengthening the analysis. The research utilised heavily the use of simple statistics tools especially tables in presenting the results of the various elections at all levels in the state for a simple percentage and for an easy grasp of the voting pattern. The informants' views were integrated in the discussions together with the applicability of the adopted theoretical framework.

Table-3. Showing the selected informants, their categories and frequency.

S/No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Politicians	6	27.27%
2.	Party executives	2	9.09%
3.	INEC senior officials	3	13.64%
4.	Academicians	3	13.64%
5.	Religious clerics	4	18.18%
6.	Civil societies	4	18.18%
7.	Total	22	

Source: Field survey 2019.

5. Discussion and Findings

In this section, the data obtained from the field were presented in groups, discussed, analysed and interpreted according to the issues raised in the research. The existing literature was used to support the findings.

5.1. The 2019 General Election in Gombe State: Pattern of Voting and Results

The 2019 General Election took place in Gombe State at different levels from the Presidential, National Assembly, Gubernatorial and State House of Assembly Elections. The total number of all the contestants in the State at all levels was estimated at over 253 contestants in approximately 73 parties. The total number of registered voters is 2, 394, 393, total number of Permanent Voters Card collected stands at 1, 335, 223 and the percentage of voter turnout in 2019 was estimated and approximated at 45.25. The results showed that the voting pattern was influenced by some factors as presented Table 4.

Table-4. The 2019 presidential election result in Gombe State according to eleven (11) local governments.

S/No.	LGAs	APC	PDP	Difference	Total
1.	Akko	65, 252 (78.68%)	17, 684 (21.32%)	47, 568 (APC)	82, 936
2.	Balanga	29, 697 (67.02%)	14, 614 (32.98%)	15, 083 (APC)	44, 311
3.	Billiri	15, 331 (41.82%)	21, 328 (58.18%)	5, 997 (PDP)	36, 659
4.	Dukku	32, 010 (81.15%)	7, 435 (18.85%)	24, 575 (APC)	39, 445
5.	Funakaye	36, 032 (77.57%)	10, 421 (22.43%)	25, 611 (APC)	46, 453
6.	Gombe	86, 162 (91.86%)	7, 634 (8.14%)	78, 528 (APC)	93, 796
7.	Kaltungo	20, 944 (50.25%)	20, 733 (49.75%)	211 (APC)	41, 677
8.	Kwami	36, 317 (84.59%)	6, 614 (15.41%)	29, 703 (APC)	42, 931
9.	Nafada	15, 417 (72.69%)	5, 902 (27.31%)	9, 515 (APC)	21, 319
10.	Shongom	9, 642 (42.83%)	12, 871 (57.17%)	3, 229 (PDP)	22, 513
11.	Yamaltu/Deba	56, 157 (80.96%)	13, 248 (19.04%)	42, 909 (APC)	69, 405
12.	Eleven LGAs	402, 961 (72.71%)	138, 484 (24.99%)	APC Won	541, 445

Source: INEC (2019) retrieved from www.inecnigeria.org.

Table-5. Summary of the 2019 presidential election results in Gombe State.

S/No.	APC	%	PDP	%	Others	%	Total valid votes
1.	402, 961	72.71	138, 484	24.99	12, 758	2.30	554, 203

Source: Sule (2019).

The results Table 4 indicated that President Muhammadu Buhari of APC won the Presidential Election in Gombe State in a landslide victory for the second time of his fifth contest. In 2003, 2007 and 2011, he contested and lost to PDP serially. In 2015 and 2019 he won. The implication is that the major opposition PDP was denied the 25% requirement in the State due to the massive support received by the APC Presidential candidate. A total number of 73 candidates contested for the Presidential seat. Few parties secured little votes which made an insignificant percentage of 2.3%. An interesting fact in the 2019 Presidential Election in Gombe State is the size of the State which is among the 6th smallest States in the country in terms of population but, the scores of the APC Presidential candidate is more than the aggregate scores of the entire South West geo-political zone which is 259, 780 and is approximately equivalent to the aggregate scores of the APC Presidential candidate in the South East which is 403, 968 with just an insignificant difference of 1, 007 higher in the South East result than that of Gombe State.

Table-6. The detail result of the 2019 national assembly election in Gombe State.

S/No.	Constituency	APC	PDP	Total
1.	Gombe North (Senate)	152, 546 (63.41%)	88, 016 (36.59%)	240, 562
2.	Gombe Central (Senate)	110, 116 (73.47%)	39, 760 (26.53%)	149, 876
3.	Gombe South (Senate)	80, 549 (55.99%)	63, 312 (44.01%)	143, 861
4.	Gombe/Funakaye & Kwami (Reps)	173, 466 (75.13%)	57, 365 (24.87%)	230, 881
5.	Dukku/Nafada (Reps)	40, 122 (65.14%)	21, 474 (34.86%)	61, 596
6.	Akko (Reps)	57, 490 (66.75%)	28, 631 (33.25%)	86, 121
7.	Yamaltu/Deba (Reps)	45, 315 (59.83%)	30, 420 (40.17%)	75, 735
8.	Balanga/Billiri (Reps)	45, 112 (51.29%)	42,834 (48.71%)	87, 946
9.	Kaltungo/Shongom (Reps)	35, 316 (56.98%)	26, 661 (43.02%)	61, 977

Source: INEC (2019) retrieved from www.inecnigeria.org.

The number of seats won from the Table 6 statistics are presented in Table 8. Consideration is given only to the two major contenders of APC and PDP. There were other parties that contested such as PRP, NNPP, DPP, SDP, APGA, ABP and many but their results were insignificant to make any impacts from the above results even if they are included. This explains why the concentration remains with the two parties mentioned above.

Table-7. The summary of the national assembly election result in Gombe State.

S/No.	No. of seats	Percentage
Senate		
APC	3	100%
PDP	0	0%
Others	0	0%
Total	3	100%
Members	House of	Representatives
APC	6	100%
PDP	0	0%
Others	0	0%
Total	6	100%

Source: INEC (2019) retrieved from www.inecnigeria.org.

The Table 7 indicated an unprecedented voting pattern and a result that has not been witnessed before in the history of general election in Gombe State. One party, the APC swept away all the 3 Senatorial seats and proceeded to claim all the six seats of the Members Federal House of Representatives. The voting pattern revealed a change in a political tradition and a conservative voting pattern in Gombe South geo-political zone which has been constantly voting for PDP since 1999 but especially from 2003 to 2015. The zone's voting pattern has been easily predicted in the previous elections even before the election time. However, a combination of ethnic and religious factors played an important role in the voting pattern. Some of the interviewers consulted narrated that the PDP candidates in the Senatorial election is a Muslim and religious factor was used in choosing the opponent from the APC who is a Christian because the zone perceived itself as a Christian dominated region. In the House of Representatives, the PDP candidate in Balanga/Shongom was perceived as a Fulani man who is also a Muslim and that has been the protest of the people there for voting the APC. This means hadn't it been the PDP fielded the Christian candidates, it might win. But another factor is the fact that the region studied the political situation and identified where the pendulum swings clearly in the build up to the 2019 General Election. They aligned themselves with the ruling party conveniently to avoid being doubling as a minority in an opposition mood.

The above governorship election results in Gombe State indicated an entire new dimension in voting pattern where for the first time in fifteen years the PDP was not voted by the electorates in Gombe South geo-political zone. Some of the reasons according to some of the informants were the perception in the area that the PDP candidate was a conservative Fulani man who has no regard for the minority ethnic groups in the State especially in the Southern part of the State. One of the informants narrated that they had once made an agreement with him for a Ministerial slot when he was the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives in Abuja but he defaulted in his promises. Other factors are the political machinations and calculations which indicated that the APC candidate was getting an upper hand in the political permutations and they are afraid to be in a meaningless opposition where they may not get a better bargain politically in addition to the secure of the National Assembly seats sealed for them by the APC based on their religious sentiments. In the State House of Assembly Election, the APC also secured a landslide majority victory in the 24 seats as presented below in the Table 10.

Table-8. The results of the 2019 gubernatorial election in Gombe State according to local government areas.

S/No,	LGAs	APC	PDP	Difference	Total
1.	Akko	58, 479 (65.48%)	30, 832 (34.52%)	27, 647 (APC)	89, 311
2.	Balanga	30, 926 (62.96%)	18, 192 (37.04%)	12, 734 (APC)	49, 118
3.	Billiri	18, 612 (50.75%)	18, 063 (49.25%)	549 (APC)	36, 675
4.	Dukku	27, 302 (61.89%)	16, 807 (38.11%)	10, 495 (APC)	44, 109
5.	Funakaye	29, 191 (59.32%)	20, 020 (40.68%)	9, 171 (APC)	49, 211
6.	Gombe	68,384 (75.92%)	21, 693 (24.08%)	46, 691 (APC)	90, 077
7.	Kaltungo	26, 744 (54.57%)	22, 259 (45.43%)	4, 485 (APC)	49, 003
8.	Kwami	30, 539 (62.61%)	18, 240 (37.39%)	12, 299 (APC)	48, 779
9.	Nafada	9, 018 (33.46%)	17, 937 (66.54%)	8, 919 (PDP)	26, 955
10.	Shongom	13, 463 (50.89%)	12, 993 (49.11%)	470 (APC)	26, 456
11.	Yamaltu/Deba	51, 521 (66.59%)	25, 852 (33.41%)	25, 669 (APC)	77, 373
12.	Total	364,179 (59.76%)	228, 868 (36.57%)	APC Won	593, 047

Source: INEC (2019) retrieved from www.inecnigeria.org.

Table-9. The summary of the 2019 gubernatorial election result in Gombe State.

S/No.	APC	%	PDP	%	Others	%	Total
1	364, 179	59.76%	228, 868	36.57%	847	0.14%	593, 894

Source: INEC (2019) retrieved from www.inecnigeria.org.

Table-10. The results of the 2019 state house of assembly election in Gombe State.

S/No.	Parties	Seat	Percentage
1.	APC	19	79.17%
2.	PDP	5	20.83%
3.	Others	0	0.00%
4.	Total	24	100%

Source: INEC (2019) retrieved from www.inecnigeria.org.

The above results again indicated a voting pattern of what is known as “SAK” syndrome which was a replica of what was obtained in Kano in 2003 and in Bauchi in 2007 where one dominant party was voted throughout all the electoral levels and all the offices. Even the southern part of the State which has been traditionally voting for PDP since 2003 this time around voted for APC as an opposition party in the State.

The overall results indicated a response to policy choice of the former ruling PDP and a Rational Choice approach towards voting where the voters voted using both the evaluative and non-evaluative measures. Some voted out of ethnic, religious and personal benefits while others thought that the opposition APC might present to them better than what the PDP was doing in terms of welfare as observed by some of the informants.

5.2. Issues, Impacts and Implications of the 2019 General Election

The 2019 General Election in Gombe State presented some issues, impacts and implications for future general election in the State. Some of these issues and impacts were presented and succinctly discussed below:

1. Money politics: it has been observed by the researcher, narrated by the informants and reported by observers such as Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room (2019); European Union (2019); National Democratic Institute (2019) International Republican Institute (IRI) and many others that money politics and excessive spending by the two major parties of APC and PDP across the nation at various electoral offices is one of the challenges faced by the 2019 General Election. In Gombe State, while it is still undisclosed, there was a revelation from one of the informants in this research that the APC and PDP spent billions of Naira especially during the Gubernatorial Election far above the spending limit (Sule, 2019). The money spent were used in vote buying, bribery, corruption and sponsorship of the contestants. Some studies (Sule et al., 2018) disclosed that money politics is one of the major obstacles towards a credible election in Nigeria. the studies further revealed that the electoral body; the INEC failed to live up to its expectations in terms of monitoring the financial activities of parties during the 2015 General Election and that the trend may continue in 2019 which exactly occurred. This justified the Rational Choice Theory of Election because the use of money in politics is Clientelism which gives special regard to personal material benefit than the common public good.
2. Religious influence: the 2019 General Election in Nigeria in general and in Gombe State in particular witnessed an unprecedented event of the influence and public perception agenda-setting by religious clerics from both the Muslim and Christian parts. This has been reported by NCSSR (2019); EU (2019); National Democratic Institute (2019) and IRI (2019). Additionally, the informants that were consulted believed that religious clerics played a vital role in shaping public opinion towards voting in the way they voted during the election. Even within the Islamic context, there was a sharp division between those who identified a particular party and its candidates at all levels as puritans and

demonised other candidates as evil and corrupts according to some of the informants. The implication is the division and the seeds of discord sown during the election which will have a long-term effect on the followers of the religion. This has been confirmed by [Lindberg and Weghorst \(2010\)](#) in their analysis of Rational Choice Theory that “Swing Voting” can take place under rationalism where some considerations such as religion and ethnic groups are regarded first and material benefits ahead of others.

3. Bribery and corruption: it is observed by most of the informants that bribery and corruption occurred in the 2019 General Election in Nigeria and in Gombe State from the party primaries to the General Election proper. In the case of Gombe State, some of the informants disclosed that they have witnessed directly the distribution of money during the party primaries depending on the candidates and the parties to the range of N50, 000, N100, 000 and N200, 000. During the conduct of the General Election in Gombe State, the INEC officials, ad-hoc staff such as returning and collation officers were bribed with hundreds of thousands of Naira as narrated by some of the informants during an interview. This scenario has been reported by many observers such as [European Union Election Observer Mission \(2019\)](#); [Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room \(2019\)](#) and others. This has corroborated the position of Rational Choice Theory of Election that sometimes non-evaluative considerations or performances are the decisive factors in shaping the voters’ choice of candidates especially when material benefits come into the scene.
4. The media: media both broadcasting and electronic have played a significant role in influencing the outcome of the 2019 General Election in Gombe State. Propaganda and campaign were massively taken into the public arena through the use of different media advertisement and public persuasion techniques. The winning party; the APC proved to be better in this regard and many informants suggested that it was one of the main factors that handed it the landslide victory in the recently concluded 2019 General Election in the State. It is also recommendable that the media was given a freehand in the State and the candidates secured equal access in non-governmental owned media houses, added some of the informants. This has also been reported by most of the observers especially the [EU \(2019\)](#) that there was a remarkable improvement in the freedom of the media and access of candidates towards the utilisation of the media. The Theory of Rational Choice is again supported by this assertion because media is just a good example of how the manufacturers used aggressive advertisements to woo customers to patronise their products just the way politicians market their manifestoes.
5. Geopolitical interplay: the three Senatorial zones in the State for the first time in the history of the State decided to unanimously vote for the same party at all levels except the Presidential Election in which the PDP won with an insignificant number in Gombe South zone because of religion and the same religious factor made them to discard their long-held tradition of indiscriminate voting of PDP for APC candidates. The zones are now harmonised but there is a lesson and a message for the other two zones to learn in this voting pattern. This is one of the arguments of Rational Choice Theory that “Swing Voting” is obtainable in developing democracies where the electorates vote based on religious factor than performance. Most of the informants supported this view.
6. National politics: the voting pattern and outcome of the 2019 General Election in Gombe State indicated that the State has succeeded in extending its politics into the mainstream national politics as it used to do during the PDP days. This means the State is versatile and it has the acumen of political strategy for melting quickly in national politics more than the entire South East which has been reserving itself for many decades from the centre politics. The State will benefit more in terms of policies, programmes and appointments from the central government in the next years coming as did Bauchi in 2015. This is the opinion of most of the consulted informants.
7. Incompetent representation: as a result of the “SAK” syndrome in which more than 95% of the voters in Gombe State voted for one party without any consideration to quality and credibility, many incompetent incapable representatives emerged in both the National Assembly representatives from the State and in the State House of Assembly. The concomitant repercussions of this indiscriminate voting are poor representation, misrepresentation and suppression of vibrant leadership and representation. Some of the States like Kano which practised this syndrome in 2003 and Bauchi in 2007 regretted their actions. Gombe State will also regret its own voting pattern in this regard in terms of representation especially in the segment of the lawmakers locally and nationally. These have been the sum of the views of most of the consulted informants.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

The paper concludes that the 2019 General Election in Gombe State is a remarkable and a significant change in the voting process, voting behaviour and voters’ attitudes towards the choice of their leaders. However, there are issues and challenges that are not beneficial to the people of the State especially in terms of strategising towards a better political bargain and mutual benefits that will ensure the proper representation of the interest of the electorates by voting for the most qualified representatives instead of the indiscriminate

voting pattern witnessed in the 2019 General Election. Such issues as money politics, bribery and corruption, religious manipulation were few of the serious challenges that bedeviled the 2019 General Election in Gombe State and which should be taken care of in the future general elections.

The study identified that the voting pattern is seriously influenced by major factors or determinants of power in Nigeria which include religion, ethnicity and geopolitical interplay. Rationality in voting was taken as the primordial benefits that each geopolitical zone will benefit from. Furthermore, it has been concluded that the voting pattern in the 2019 General Election will definitely have an influence in the future of General Election in the State. While religion and ethnicity will continue to play an important role in determining who wins or gets power in the State, a political arrangement that will possibly violates the traditional zoning arrangement of power in the State may get eroded. For instance, the Governor usually emerges from either Gombe North or Central and a Muslim constantly while the Deputy Governor permanently so far emerged from Gombe South and a Christian. This arrangement can change in the next election because voting alone religious and ethnic line will have the majority to elect comfortably for their leaders without regard to zoning. The seemingly minority Gombe South can have their way into the mantle of leadership if they play their politics well by a cosmopolitan arrangement if they prove to the other geopolitical zones that religious discrimination is not the decisive factor in their votes. But this may take a longer time while there may be possibility that Gombe North or Gombe Central can produce both the Governor and his Deputy if the game of number is considered.

The research therefore recommends the following: preparation for future general election should start now and immediately for bargain with the present and intending contestants towards what we feel is better and can serve our interest better; we should use the opportunity offered to us by political awareness and create an avenue for engaging the anticipated future contestants and choosing the best from among them. Good, competent, educated and patriotic citizens should be encouraged to participate actively in politics; voter awareness and public campaign should be further intensified to eschew the evil of money politics, vote buying, bribery and corruption and the electoral reforms should be undertaken immediately to cater for monitoring of campaign finances and other related issues.

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