

## BULLETIN OF GEOGRAPHY. SOCIO-ECONOMIC SERIES

journal homepages:  
<https://content.sciencedo.com/view/journals/bog/bog-overview.xml>  
<http://apcz.umk.pl/czasopisma/index.php/BGSS/index>

# Determinants of voter turnout in Nsukka Council of Enugu State, South Eastern Nigeria

Cletus Famous Nwankwo <sup>CDFMR</sup>

University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Faculty of the Social Sciences, Department of Geography, e-mail: [cletus.nwankwo@unn.edu.ng](mailto:cletus.nwankwo@unn.edu.ng)

### How to cite:

Nwankwo, C.F. (2019). Determinants of voter turnout in Nsukka Council of Enugu State, South Eastern Nigeria . *Bulletin of Geography. Socio-economic Series*, 45(45): 109-124. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.2478/bog-2019-0027>

**Abstract.** Voting is becoming of significance in Nigeria, as in many other countries in Africa. Although Nigerian electoral politics has attracted full attention from scholars, there is little research on the factors that determine voter turnout in the country at the local level, especially the South-East geopolitical zone (GPZ). This paper is a stepwise logistic regression analysis of the determinants of voting in Nsukka council in Enugu State, South-East GPZ of Nigeria. The results show that age (0.230), education (0.532), marital status (1.355), political trust (1.309) and partisanship (-0.570) are significant predictors of voter turnout. The effect of age, education, marital status and political trust on voting is positive and statistically significant, but partisanship has a statistically significant negative relationship with voting ( $p < 0.01$ ). The paper highlights the importance of local level geographical differentials in the factors influencing voting in Nigeria.

### Article details:

Received: 4 January 2019  
 Revised: 2 March 2019  
 Accepted: 27 March 2019

### Key words:

voter turnout  
 Voting,  
 Nigeria; elections,  
 democracy

### Contents:

1. Introduction .....	110
2. Theoretical perspectives .....	112
3. Methodology.....	115
4. Results .....	117
5. Discussion .....	120
6. Conclusion .....	121
References .....	121

## 1. Introduction

A system of “rule by the people” is the most basic principle upon which democracy functions. Thus, the share of the population participating in the “ruling” through voting in elections is of interest, as it is the essential measure of performance of a democracy (Nwankwo and Okafor, 2017). The bedrock of modern democracy is elections, and low voter turnout rates might suggest that elections are no more considered fundamental to political life. Democracies advance the principle of political equality through the idea of voting and that all individuals are equal, each having just one vote (Kuenzi and Lambright, 2007). However, low voter turnout frequently means that there is unequal participation, in which participation is lopsided against those with lower socio-economic status (Lijphart, 1997). Voting is increasingly becoming of great significance in Nigeria, as in many other countries in Africa, because elections are the means to attain positions of power and the distribution of a state’s resources (Nwankwo, 2018).

The manifestation and factors of voter turnout in African democracies have received increased scholarly attention, albeit relatively little compared with studies in the Western world and other regions. It has been argued that several of the important results of the research on voter turnout in other parts of the world manifest in Africa. The institutional and political context that influences individuals’ tendencies to vote has been highlighted. In this respect, the factors that influence voter turnout in sub-Saharan Africa’s multiparty democracies are: concurrency of presidential and legislative elections; the type of electoral formula; media exposure; and the number of polls a state has had (Kuenzi and Lambright, 2007). Kuenzi and Lambright (2011) demonstrate that among the well-known predictors of voting, age and support for democracy are significant positive predictors of voter turnout and, importantly, mobilisation agents are essential in influencing who votes, as party identification is a core factor of voting. Therefore, while political parties may have poor democratic records, they facilitate getting people to turn out in many African countries including Nigeria.

Resnick and Casale (2011) show that older African citizens tend to vote more and express a higher degree of partisanship than their younger population. This finding is in tandem with results from studies in Western democracies, but the point of departure is that young Africans are not more likely to protest than older people. Resnick and Casale (2011) argue that these results bring into question the notion that youth are more likely to protest when they are frustrated and cast doubt on the validity of the electoral process as a vital channel for demonstrating the political choices of young Africans. Another demographic factor that has been found to shape voter turnout is gender. Amoateng, Kalule-Sabiti and Heaton (2014) show that, in general, women are two thirds as likely to turn out as men, with the gender gap in turnout varying extensively across African countries through time.

It has been established at least in Western democracies that the socio-economic status (SES) of individuals, e.g., education, income and occupation, are positively related to their rate of turnout. Some studies in Africa have supported this assumption of the SES model of voting, (e.g., Amoateng et al. 2014; Larreguy and Marshall, 2017) but others find the contrary (e.g., Kuenzi and Lambright, 2007; 2011; Isaksson, 2014; Nwankwo and Okafor, 2017). Earlier studies indicate that conversely to the anticipated result based on the SES model, Africans of lower SES are significantly more likely to vote than those of higher SES (Kuenzi and Lambright, 2007; 2011) and resource-poor Africans vote more than the resource-rich (Isaksson, 2014). One could have been sceptical of this finding given that the studies are based on aggregate data that cut across many countries. However, this result has been supported by the work of Nwankwo and Okafor (2017), who investigated the determinants of voter turnout using individual-level data in Nigeria and argue that the reason for this contradiction is the influence of vote-buying that sways people of lower SES to vote.

Amoateng et al. (2014) provide evidence that in Africa higher levels of voting are found among more educated and employed people. Based on a study of the impact of the Universal Primary Education programme on political participation in Nigeria, Larreguy and Marshall (2017) provide evidence that education has a positive influence on voting. The study demonstrates that better-educat-

ed citizens (those who have primary and secondary schooling) engage more in critical forms of political participation, e.g., interest in politics, voting and community participation. This result is most robust among minority groups and those in heterogeneous areas lacking own-group identification and no growing backing for political violence. Here, the connection between having no increased support for political violence and the effect of education on turnout is at best not clear, however.

Mac-Ikemenjima (2017) analysed the connection between fear of violence and youth voter turnout in sub-Saharan Africa and shows that the relationship is negative after controlling for socio-economic factors and partisanship, which suggests that fear of violence could be a factor in elucidating youth voter turnout. Bekoe and Burchard (2017) show that, on aggregate, pre-election violence has no significant influence on voter turnout, but violence may be used to lower participation, to assemble supporters, or to chastise election winners. Electoral malpractices such as violence and rigging have been argued to be relevant to the waning of trust in the electoral process among Nigerians (Nwankwo et al., 2017; Nwankwo and Okafor, 2017). Thus, it can be inferred that people of higher SES may not support political violence and, because there is relatively no pre-election or electoral violence, their level of turnout increases.

The study of factors in voter turnout in Nigeria is of great importance because despite being Africa's largest democracy, with over 180 million people (Nwankwo, 2018), voter turnout in Nigeria's recent elections, as shown in Fig. 1, has decreased steadily since 2003 (Nwankwo and Okafor, 2017). However, there is geographical variation in voter turnout across the country with the South-East and South-South GPZs experiencing high voter turnout in 2011 (Aiyedogbon and Omotola, 2012) but the South-East recorded a sharp decrease in the 2015 election (Fig. 2). High voter turnout gives legitimacy to the electoral process and even the democratic government. Although Nigerian electoral politics has attracted full attention, from the analysis of voting choice pattern (Nwankwo, 2019a) to party system fragmentation (Nwankwo 2019b) and studies of spatial dimensions of voter apathy and non-voting (Taiwo and Ahmed, 2015; Ojo, Ibeh and Kiegehe, 2018) at the national and aggregate level, there is

little research on the factors that determine voter turnout in the country, especially at the local individual level.

The recent decline in voter turnout in the South-East GPZ has attracted little research attention, and this present study is an attempt to examine the factors influencing voter turnout in a local council in the area. This study is critical because of the significant gap in the literature on electoral participation in Nigeria – there is little research on the local level analysis of voter turnout. Nwankwo et al. (2017) examined the factors influencing voter abstention in the South-East zone of Nigeria and argue that socio-economic factors, social trust and a weak institutional framework are among the factors shaping voter abstention. Similarly, Chiamogu and Chiamogu (2018) critically studied the factors associated with voter turnout in the 2017 gubernatorial election in Anambra State, South-East GPZ Nigeria and argue that a lack of trust in government and political processes and the increased presence of security agents significantly impacted voter turnout negatively.

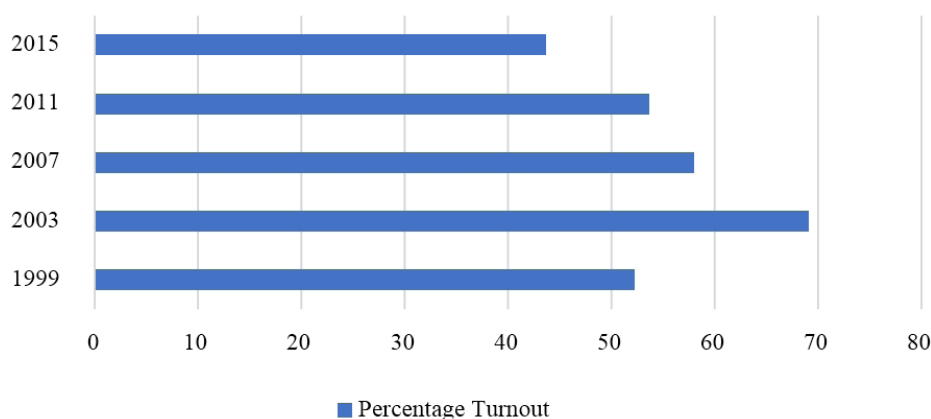
While the works of Nwankwo et al. (2017) and Chiamogu and Chiamogu (2018) provide some primary analysis of voter abstention and turnout respectively in the South-East GPZ of Nigeria, this present study examines – among other determinants of voting – the effect of factors (partisanship, life satisfaction, membership to non-political organisation) that have not been considered by previous studies in the South-East GPZ of Nigeria. Partisanship or support for a political party has been a core predictor of voter turnout established in the literature on voter studies, and most studies in Africa have confirmed its influence on voting (Ishiyama and Fox, 2006; Kuenzi and Lambright, 2007; 2011). The impact of life satisfaction on voter turnout has not been investigated in Nigeria, and although membership to a non-political organisation has been examined by Nwankwo and Okafor (2017) at the national level, the local level manifestation of the factor needs more attention.

Thus, compared with previous studies in Nigeria, the research is pertinent, as it engages a ward-level survey that can provide a more detailed analysis of the individual-level manifestation of determinants of voter turnout which the aggregate data cannot provide. The primary research was conducted in the

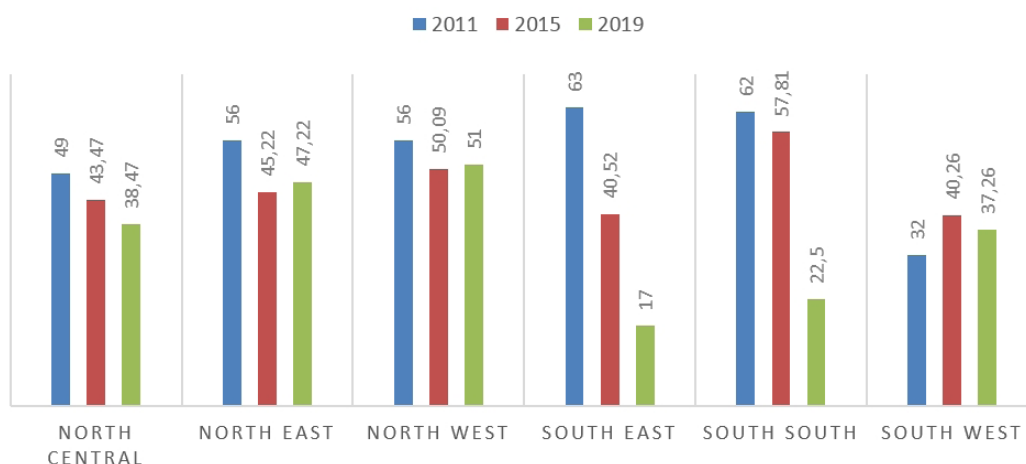
20 wards in Nsukka council in Enugu State and the analysis utilised stepwise logistic regression, which makes it possible to control for other factors when determining the influence of specific variables one at a time. The paper demonstrates that age, education, marital status, political trust and partisanship are the core predictors of voting in the study area and highlights the importance of local level geographical differentials in the determinant of voter turnout in Nigeria. The next section discusses the theoretical background of the study, followed by the methodology. The results are then discussed, followed by the discussion and conclusion.

## 2. Theoretical Perspectives

In a democracy, voting is the bedrock of political participation, although there are other ways citizens participate in politics, such as the signing of petitions, political campaigns, political advocacy and protests, among others. Research on voter turnout has been influenced by several models, including the rational choice model, the political efficacy model and the socio-economic model (Nwankwo and Okafor, 2017). The rational choice model (RCM) explains how the connection between ex-



**Fig. 1.** Percentage voter turnout in Nigerian presidential elections from 1999 to 2015. Data Source: Nwankwo, Okafor and Asuoha (2017)



**Fig. 2.** Percentage voter turnout in Nigeria by GPZ Data Data Source: Nwankwo et al. (2017) for 1999 to 2015; Sahara Reporters (2019) for 2019

pected utility and outcomes influences preferences for immediate actions. RCM stipulates that a person chooses results with greater efficiency over outcomes with lesser utility and prefers to engage in activities that yield more highly valued outcomes (Aldrich, 1993). Thus, the RCM of voting argues that rational actors calculate the costs and benefits of political participation before deciding to participate, and if the benefits outweigh the costs, then you can expect the individual to vote, or to abstain if otherwise (Downs, 1957; Franklin, 2004; Aldrich, 1993; Nwankwo and Okafor, 2017).

The RCM indicates that only individuals who envisage the gains they will obtain to surpass the outlays they have to pay will turn out to vote. Nevertheless, voters often do not reason rationally, and rationality invariably gives way to reality, because individuals still vote although they are aware of the costs of voting being higher than the benefits. Consequently, the RCM of voting has faced criticism because people envisaging higher prices of voting than benefits still turn out (Jung, 2017). A critical explanation of the betrayal of the assumption of rationality by reality is the influence of partisanship – usually specified as an individual's psychological bonds to a political party or parties (Dalton, 2008). Scholars have argued that partisanship is one of the steadiest predictors of voter turnout (e.g., Adams and Merrill III, 2003; Lewis-Beck et al., 2008; Singh, 2011). Given that individuals with a firm psychological attachment to a party tend to be robustly enthusiastic about partaking in elections (Jung, 2017), it is pertinent to include the variable measuring partisanship in the analysis.

Nwankwo and Okafor (2017) have shown that political trust is the most significant factor that determines individuals' likelihood of turnout in Nigeria. This finding emphasises the political efficacy model (PEM) of political participation. According to the PEM, individuals' orientation, such as political interest, trust in government, and civic duty, are crucial determinants for voter turnout (Moeller et al., 2014). The most consistent result from these sets of indicators is the significant relationship between political trust and participation in electoral politics (Carreras and Castañeda-Angarita, 2014; Nwankwo and Okafor, 2017). The socio-economic model (SEM) of voter turnout indicates that socio-economic status (SES) can determine individual partic-

ipation in political activities. The SEM suggests that people with a high level of SES, such as education, occupation and income, are more likely to adopt psychological orientations that motivate them to turn out. This model was first expounded by Verba and Nie (1972) as an explanation of mass political behaviour. Carreras and İrepoğlu (2013) note that the SEM has indicated continuously that education and income have a positive relationship with voter turnout at the individual level. Prominent studies such as Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) and Leighley and Nagler (1992) show that people with higher SES are more likely to turn out than those that are less educated and poorer.

Most studies outside Africa indicate that individuals with a higher SES tend to have higher levels of electoral participation as they have better information and have more free time to turn out (e.g., Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980; Blais, 2000). In Africa, however, studies indicate that socio-economic factors do not have a significant positive relationship with turnout (e.g., Kuenzi and Lambright, 2007; Nwankwo and Okafor, 2017) especially income and occupation (Nwankwo and Okafor, 2017). Given that the work of Kuenzi and Lambright (2007) focused on many countries, and Nwankwo and Okafor (2017) focused on Nigeria without examining the influences of turnout at the local level in detail, it is essential to investigate the effect of SES at the local level, as this present study seeks to do. It is known that education is the SES that is most strongly correlated with voter turnout (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980; Blais, 2000) and it is also the primary determinant of earnings and social status (Card, 2001; Gallego, 2010). Moreover, educational indicators can be better compared than other SES factors, such as income (Gallego, 2010). Thus, education is the main SES factor considered in this study although income is included in the analysis to account for the variable for economic wellbeing, as shall be justified later in this section. As a variant of the SEM, some literature emphasises socio-economic distress as a determinant of political participation. For example, it is argued that socio-economic pain is the prime basis for political involvement, although different kinds of strain drive participation (e.g. Klandermans, van der Toorn and van Stekelenburg, 2008). Notwithstanding, a common ground of the two theses is the emphasis on



relative deprivation or objective material conditions. In this sense, a person's feeling of discontentment with her/his life provides an important rationale for political participation (Giugni and Grasso, 2016).

The different strands of mobilisation theorisation, such as resource mobilisation theory (McCarthy and Zald, 1977) and new social movement theory (Touraine, 1981), have challenged these earlier socio-economic distress theses, arguing that the distressed individuals' experience has less bearing on participation than several types of resources, e.g., civic skills, money, time, and access to networks, via which people can be drafted for political actions. Among these resources, civic skills are the most vital for swaying political participation. This argument was developed in the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM) as expounded by Verba et al. (1995) and Putnam (2000). In the CVM, the gaining of public skills occurs in non-political institutions, such as religious institutions, workplaces and voluntary organisations (Verba et al. 1995). The study draws on these arguments on political participation and includes variables measuring individuals' levels of life satisfaction and economic well-being (income) and membership in a non-political voluntary organisation.

The study also incorporates demographic variables: gender, marital status and age – which are predictors of turnout. It has long been argued that differences exist between the sexes in voting: women tend to have lower levels of electoral participation (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980). The lower levels of engagement among women have been ascribed to structural and situational factors, social norms, or women's late enfranchisement (Franklin, 2004; Mayer, 2010). It has been argued that the gender gap in voter turnout has decreased in established democracies as new cohorts of women have entered the electorate (Verba et al., 1997) or even reversed in several developed countries (Norris, 2002). Nonetheless, Kostelka, Blais and Gidengil (2019) have shown that women tend to vote equally with men in first-order elections but less in second-order elections. Studies in Nigeria differ regarding the gender gap in voter turnout; some find higher levels of participation among men (e.g., Taiwo and Ahmed, 2015) while others find no significant difference (Nwankwo and Okafor, 2017). In this study, the traditional argument regarding gen-

der and voter turnout is followed, and it is hypothesised that being male has a higher influence on participation than does being female.

Marital status is said to affect electoral participation behaviours (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980). Generally, it is argued that married people have higher participation levels than unmarried people (Verba et al., 1995), but it has not been entirely straightforward (Miller, Shanks and Shapiro, 1996), and it has been argued that marriage makes no difference (Highton and Wolfinger, 2001). Even though married people tend to have higher levels of turnout, it has been shown that turnout rate drops when a spouse dies (Wilensky, 2002). Also, divorcees and separated people tend to have lower voting rates than when they were married because ending a marriage is a traumatic course that often disrupts usual practices, e.g., voting (Wallerstein and Kelley, 2008). Thus, this study does not anticipate that voting rates between never-married people and previously married people will be significantly different and hypothesises that married people will tend to vote more than unmarried people. Overall, gender and marital status are not good predictors of turnout compared with age (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980). Nonetheless, their influence on voter turnout is tested in the study.

Age is an essential socio-demographic characteristic of voters, and it is envisaged that older eligible voters are more likely to turn out than younger people because they do not get disorientated as younger voters do when confronted with different party policies and programmes (Carreras and İrepoğlu, 2013). The better political experience that older citizens have enables them to analyse the various programmes and policy issues political parties are offering as solutions to the difficulties they face (Carreras and İrepoğlu, 2013). In the Nigerian milieu, these theories can provide explanations as to why people turn out to vote and why others abstain. The validity of the core variables of these models is tested in this study. The variables drawn from the models to explain voter turnout in the study area and their corresponding hypothesis are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Variables considered in the study

Variables	Hypothesis
Political Trust	The higher trust individuals have in government, the more likely they will turn out.
Education	The higher education level individuals have, the more likely they will turn out.
Income	The higher income level individuals have, the more likely they will turn out.
Life satisfaction	The higher life satisfaction level individuals have, the more likely they will turn out.
Membership to a non-political organisation	Individuals who are a member of a non-political organisation are more likely to turn out.
Partisanship	Individuals who support a political party are more likely to turn out.
Marital Status	Married individuals are more likely to turn out.
Age	Older people are more likely to turn out than younger people.
Gender	Males have a higher propensity to turn out.

### 3. Methodology

This study was conducted in the Nsukka local council, one of the councils in Enugu State, Nigeria (Fig. 3). The area takes its name from the Nsukka township, which hosts the University of Nigeria. Nsukka council has twenty electoral wards, as shown in Table 2, and according to the 2006 National Population Census it has a population of 309,448 with an estimated population of 405,527 in 2015 (Nwankwo et al., 2017). The study engages a cross-sectional survey in the 20 wards of Nsukka council. Data for the study were collected using copies of a questionnaire during a field survey in all the wards in Nsukka council. Trained research assistants (students from the Departments of Geography and Political Science at the University of Nigeria) who are resident in Nsukka helped to administer the questionnaire.

There is no information on the number of registered voters by ward, but it is expected that the wards with more polling units will have more registered voters. Thus, the number of participants selected for the study was distributed proportionally according to the number of polling units in each ward (see, INEC 2015) as indicated in Table 2. This study adopts the voting age population (VAP) of the study area as the sample frame because measuring

the level of voter turnout with only the number of registered voters will not account for those who are eligible but refrain from voting, which is the crux of this research. Thus, the targeted participants were individuals who are eligible to vote (i.e.  $\geq 18$  years old). The VAP of the study area is 204,791 (Nwankwo et al., 2017). The Taro Yamane (1967: 886) formula was used to determine the sample size for the study:

$$n = N / (1 + N [(e)]^2) \quad (1)$$

*Note:  $n$  is required sample size,  $N$  is the population of the study area (i.e. 204,791),  $e$  is precision level (0.05 is used)*

The calculation gave a sample size of 400 from 204,791 VAP, but 25% more than the minimum needed participants were interviewed (i.e.  $400 + 100 = 500$ ) to account for missing questionnaires during administration. The 500 participants were interviewed proportionately across the wards (see Table 2). The criteria for selection were eligibility to vote (i.e., 18 or older), availability at the time of the survey and disposition to partake in the study (Ezeibe et al., 2017). The study follows the approach used by Nwankwo and Okafor (2017) in which the questionnaire was administered in randomly selected households on a street to avoid haphazard administration and to recognise the areas covered. However, only one questionnaire was administered in a

household to permit more comprehensive coverage of respondents from varied backgrounds (Nwankwo and Okafor, 2017). The survey was administered from November to December 2018, and 434 (86.8%) were recovered.

The dependent variable was voting and was set as a dichotomous variable. The independent variables were placed into a categorical scale or were dichotomous, depending on the nature of the variables, as presented in Table 3. The participants were asked: “Would you vote if the general elections were held today?” with “Yes” and “No” response options provided in the questionnaire. Other questions that will reveal the data needed from the participants were also listed on the questionnaire with the response option to choose from. For example, for political trust, the participants were asked: “How much

do you trust the government?” with three response options provided, *viz.* “No trust”, “Little trust” and “High trust”. Stepwise logistic regression was used to establish the influence of the variables in Table 1 on voter turnout. The stepwise logistic regression was used because it can produce a predictive model that is parsimonious and accurate by excluding variables that do not contribute to explaining differences in the dependent variable.

Stepwise logistic regression is like stepwise multiple regression because it regresses multiple variables while simultaneously removing those that are not important, leaving the variables that best explain the distribution. Thus, it is designed to find the most parsimonious set of predictors that are most effective in predicting the dependent variable by adding the covariates to the logistic regression

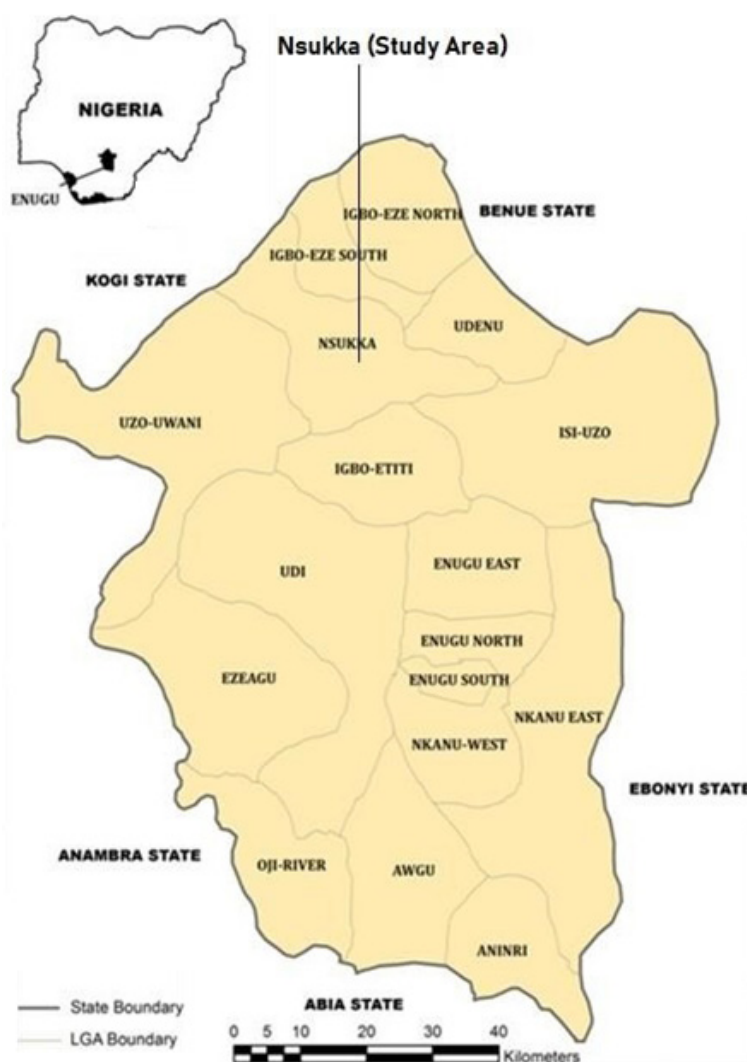


Fig. 3. Enugu State showing Nsukka council



**Table 2.** Sampling scheme of the study

Wards	No. of Polling Unit	Sample Size	Questionnaires Returned
Agbemebe/umabor	14	25	20
Akalite	20	36	27
Akpa/ozzi	8	14	14
Alor-uno	6	11	11
Ede-nta	11	20	18
Ede-ukwu	11	20	17
Edem-ani	11	20	17
Eha-ndiagu	14	25	21
Eha-uno	12	21	18
Ejuona/uwani	17	30	26
Ibagwani/ibagwaga Okpaligbo	14	25	21
Ibeku	18	32	26
Ihe	16	28	25
Mkpunano	15	27	21
Nnu	15	27	23
Obimo/ikwoka	13	23	21
Obukpa	10	18	17
Ogbozalla/idi	25	44	38
Okpuje/okutu/anuka	11	20	20
Owerre/umuoyo	20	36	33
<b>Total</b>		<b>500</b>	<b>434</b>

equation one at a time using the statistical criterion of reducing the 2-Log Likelihood error for included variables. Given that the models are nonlinear, an explanation of the impact of a specific factor concerning probability change was given to adequately evaluate the influence of the variables on turnout (Nwankwo and Okafor, 2017). The mean differences in predicted values of the probability produced by possible changes in the covariates of interest were referred to (Górecki, 2011, cited in Nwankwo and Okafor, 2017). The predicted probability of each covariate was estimated while holding the other co-

variates constant at their sample mean (Pollock III, 2015). Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) were employed for the analyses.

#### 4. Results

Table 4 presents the logistic regression estimates of the equations explaining voter turnout in the study area. The logistic regression predictive model excludes four variables, namely gender, income, life

**Table 3.** Coding of variables

Variables	Coding
Dependent variable	1 = voted and 0 = did not vote
Education	No education = 0, primary to secondary education = 1, OND, NCE to BSc = 2, PGD to PhD = 3.
Age (years)	18–29 = 1, 30–41 = 2, 42–53 = 3, 54–65 = 4, 66–77 = 5
Gender	Gender: Male = 1, Female = 0
Political trust	No trust for government = 0, little trust of government = 1, high trust of government = 2.
Income	low income (up to 50,000 Naira) = 1, Moderate income (51,000 to 119,000) = 2, high income (120,000 and over) = 3.
Partisanship	Party member or support a party = 2, not partisan = 1
Membership of non-political organisation	member = 2, non-member = 1
Marital status	Married = 2, not married (never married, divorced, widow(er), separated, etc.) = 1
Life satisfaction	low life satisfaction = 1, moderate life satisfaction = 2, high life satisfaction = 3

satisfaction and membership of a non-political organisation from the model, indicating that they do not contribute to explaining differences in the dependent variable. The model shows that five variables are essential determinants of voter turnout in the study area, namely education, age, political trust, marital status and partisanship. Thus, the results show that education, age, political trust, partisanship and marital status are core predictors of voting, as their effects on voter turnout are significant at the 95% confidence level. When the logistic regression coefficient (log odds) is greater than zero and the odds ratios are higher than one, the relationship between the dependent and independent variable is positive, with an odds rate less than one showing a negative association and equal to one showing no connection (Pollock III, 2015). Thus, the odds ratios show that education, age, political trust and marital status (i.e., being married) have a positive influence on voting as their specific odds rate is higher than one. Gender, partisanship and membership to a non-political organisation have a negative effect on voter turnout, as their odds ratios are less than one. Interestingly, the result indicated that although the respondents have some psychological attachment to political parties, that does not translate to voting; instead, partisanship has an inverse effect on voter turnout.

Furthermore, the results show that citizens at one level of education (people with a graduate de-

gree such as HND or bachelor's degree) are 1.703 times more likely to vote than individuals at the next lower level (primary or secondary school certificate) of education. Age also has a robust influence on the odds of voter turnout with a 1.259-fold increase in the likelihood of voting as age increases to the next category. Political trust and being married show a very robust influence on the probability of voting, with respondents being 3.703 and 3.875 times more likely to turn out than those having less faith in government and not being married, respectively. The percentage change in the odds for each unit of the covariates of voting shows that a one-unit increment in being married and having trust in government increases the likelihood of voting by 287.5% and 270.3% respectively, while for education and age the equivalent effects are 70.3% and 25.9%, respectively. As Table 5 shows, people who have high trust in government have the most substantial predicted probability of voting, with 33.36%. Highly educated people have 21.99% of the predicted probability of voting, while married individuals have a predicted probability of 20.12%. Age and partisanship have a very low predicted probability of voting, with 12.97% and 8.15% respectively. These results suggest that controlling for other factors, individuals with higher trust for the government, and those who are educated and married have a high propensity to turn out in the study area.

Table 4. Logistic regression estimates of determinants of voter turnout

	Variables	Log Odds	S.E.	Sig.	Odd Ratios	Percentage change
Step 1 <sup>a</sup>	Political Trust	0.586	0.132	0.000	1.796	79.6
	Constant	-0.517	0.126	0.000	0.597	-40.3
Step 2 <sup>b</sup>	Political Trust	1.363	0.266	0.000	3.906	290.6
	Marital Status	1.424	0.389	0.000	4.155	315.5
	Constant	-3.209	0.753	0.000	0.040	-96.0
Step 3 <sup>c</sup>	Education	0.551	0.190	0.004	1.735	73.5
	Political Trust	1.341	0.265	0.000	3.824	282.4
	Marital Status	1.340	0.389	0.001	3.818	281.8
	Constant	-3.712	0.776	0.000	0.024	-97.6
	Education	0.549	0.191	0.004	1.731	73.1
Step 4 <sup>d</sup>	Political Trust	1.309	0.265	0.000	3.703	270.3
	Partisanship	-0.533	0.205	0.009	0.587	-41.3
	Marital Status	1.339	0.388	0.001	3.813	281.3
	Constant	-2.886	0.830	0.001	0.056	-94.4
	Education	0.532	0.193	0.006	1.703	70.3
	Age	0.230	0.087	0.008	1.259	25.9
Step 5 <sup>e</sup>	Political Trust	1.309	0.269	0.000	3.703	270.3
	Partisanship	-0.570	0.207	0.006	0.566	-43.4
	Marital Status	1.355	0.393	0.001	3.875	287.5
	Constant	-3.468	0.871	0.000	0.031	-96.9

*N* = 434;  $\chi^2$ : 23.045; degrees of freedom = 1; *p*-value = 0.003; 2LL: 539.492;

Nagelkerke *R*<sup>2</sup> = .170; Cox & Snell *R*<sup>2</sup> = .127; percentage correctly predicted = 62.2

Thus, the study provides some support for the political efficacy model of voting and the socio-economic model. However, it found no substantial support for the civic voluntarism model, as the analysis shows that membership of a non-political organisation has neither a significant effect on turnout nor a high predicted probability. It also finds no support for the new strand of socio-economic distress thesis that emphasises the influence of relative deprivation or real material conditions on voting, as life satisfaction does not significantly predict voter turnout in the study area. Overall, the strength of the influence of the explanatory variables on voter turnout is weak with a Cox and Snell *R*<sup>2</sup> of 0.127

and Nagelkerke *R*<sup>2</sup> of 0.170. However, the maximum likelihood estimation (MLE), i.e., the initial model estimating the likelihood of turnout without considering the covariates returned a -2-log likelihood of 539.492, and after the covariates were included in the model, it returned a -2-log likelihood of 598.662, indicating that there is an improvement of 59.170, which is significant at the 99% confidence level. Thus, even though the power of the model in explaining voter turnout in the study area is generally weak, compared with a model that did not include the predictors, it improves our ability to predict the likelihood of voting.

Table 5. Predicted probabilities for the determinants of voter turnout in the study area

Covariates	Education	Age	Political Trust	Partisanship	Marital Status
Predicted probabilities	21.99	12.97	33.36	8.15	20.12

## 5. Discussion

This study sought to investigate the determinant of voter turnout at the local level in the South-East GPZ of Nigeria based on primary research in Nsukka council of Enugu State. The paper found support for most of the findings of studies on voter turnout in other parts of Africa and other world regions. It shows evidence for the political efficacy model, the socio-economic model and the effect of some demographic factors, particularly age and marital status. Previous studies on the determinants of voter turnout in Nigeria and other countries in Africa show little support for the socio-economic model of voting (Kuenzi and Lambright, 2007, 2011; Isaksson, 2014; Nwankwo and Okafor, 2017). However, this paper found some support for it, though not all socio-economic factors are good predictors of voting. Only education has a robust positive effect on turnout. The influence of this socio-economic factor on turnout seems to suggest that there could be geographical differentials in the elements of voting in Nigeria because previous studies that found little support for socio-economic factors were conducted at the national level (Nwankwo and Okafor, 2017) and cross-country (e.g., Kuenzi and Lambright, 2007, 2011; Isaksson, 2014).

The study finds support for the studies that provide evidence that higher levels of voting are found among the more educated in Africa (Amoateng et al., 2014) and specifically in Nigeria (Larreguy and Marshall, 2017). Although Nsukka is itself a centre for education, given the presence of the University of Nigeria, the population of the South-East GPZ of Nigeria have higher socio-economic statuses than other GPZs in the country (Madu, 2006, 2010). Thus, the socio-economic effect of the South-East population could have been neutralised by the people of other zones in the country-wide and cross-country studies. Therefore, there is a need for consideration of geographical differences in local level factors of voting in Nigeria and Africa at large. This paper provides a very strong support for studies emphasising the influence of political trust on voting (e.g., Carreras and Castañeda-Angarita, 2014; Moeller et al., 2014) and specifically in Nigeria (e.g., Nwankwo and Okafor, 2017) including a few that focus on the South-East GPZ of Nige-

ria (Nwankwo et al., 2017; Chiamogu and Chiamogu, 2018).

The findings are consistent with previous studies that argue that membership of a non-political organisation does not have a significant effect on turnout in Nigeria (Nwankwo and Okafor, 2017) and cast doubt on the suitability of the civic voluntarism model (Verba et al., 1995; Putnam, 2000) in the analysis of voter turnout in the study area. The study finds the contrary to studies showing a significant difference in gender effect on turnout rates. For example, Amoateng et al. (2014) show that in general women are two thirds as likely to turn out as men, with the gender gap in turnout varying extensively across African countries through time. This paper finds gender to have no significant effect on voting. Nonetheless, it is consistent with previous studies that show that older African citizens tend to vote more (Resnick and Casale, 2011), but whether older citizens express a higher degree of partisanship than the younger population is beyond the scope of this article. However, it found evidence for the influence of partisanship, but it has a negative relationship with turnout, suggesting that although the people in the study area do have some support for a specific political party, it does not translate to voting on Election Day. This finding is incredible given the growing support for partisanship as a core predictor of political participation in Africa (Ishiyama and Fox, 2006; Kuenzi and Lambright, 2007, 2011). Contextually, the rebirth of the Biafra independence movement can be a very potent factor here, as the pro-Biafra independence movement in South Eastern (South-South GPZ and South-East GPZ) Nigeria has consistently called for an election boycott in the region since 2015. In Enugu State of South-East GPZ, most of the voters have supported only one party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) since the return to democratic rule in 1999 at all levels. So, while the people in the study area have some degree of psychological attachment to the PDP, the attachment does not necessarily sway them to turn out on Election Day.

## 6. Conclusions

In conclusion, this study has investigated the determinants of voter turnout in Nsukka council of Enugu State, South-East GPZ of Nigeria and tests the effect of age, education, marital status, political trust, income and life satisfaction, gender, partisanship and membership of a non-political organisation on the likelihood of turnout. The finding is that only age, education, marital status, political trust and partisanship are core predictors of voter turnout in the study area. All these five factors are statistically significant, but among the five elements, only partisanship has a negative effect on voting. The study provides some support for the political efficacy model of voting and the socio-economic model. Among the socio-economic variables tested in the study, only education was found to be significant. Thus, it cast doubt on the socio-economic distress thesis that emphasises the influence of relative deprivation or real material conditions on voter turnout.

The study found no substantial support for the civic voluntarism model. Compared with previous studies that found little support for the socio-economic model of voting in Nigeria, this paper finds the contrary and notes that the local level geographical differentials in the factors influencing voting may have caused the disparity. Thus, it argues for the consideration of geographic differences in local level factors of voting in Nigeria, and in Africa at large. Since the core predictors of voter turnout in the study area related to the political efficacy (political trust) and socio-economic factors, it could be argued that the decline in voter turnout in the South-East GPZ is a function of the people's disaffection with the government, and a response to government's neglect of the zone in terms of socio-economic growth drivers such as road and education infrastructure. Indeed, among the people of South-East GPZ, there has been a feeling that the federal government of Nigeria is marginalising the zone (Nwankwo, 2017). This feeling has led to agitation for political inclusion, for the government's attention to be devoted particularly to the decaying infrastructure in the area, or for complete separation from Nigeria (Nwankwo, 2017). Thus, policy-wise, this study implies that there is a need to

attend to the seeming cause for disaffection in the South-East GPZ: inadequate political inclusion, and the need for improvement to the infrastructure, e.g., the Enugu-Onitsha expressway, among others.

## References

- Adams, J. and Merrill III, S. (2003). Voter turnout and candidate strategies in American elections. *The Journal of Politics*, 65(1): 161-189. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2508.t01-1-00008>
- Aiyedogbon, G. and Omotola, J. S. (2012). Political participation and voter turnout in Nigeria's 2011 elections. *Journal of African Elections*, 11(1): 54-73. <https://eisa.org.za/pdf/JAE11.1%20.pdf#page=62>
- Aldrich, J.H. (1993). Rational choice and turnout. *American journal of political science*, 246-278. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2111531>
- Amoateng, A.Y. Kalule-Sabiti, I. and Heaton, T.B. (2014). Gender and changing patterns of political participation in sub-Saharan Africa: evidence from five waves of the Afrobarometer surveys. *Gender and Behaviour*, 12(3): 5897-5910. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC154466>
- Blais, A. (2000). *To Vote or Not to Vote?: The Merits and Limits of Rational Choice Theory*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Bekoe, D.A. and Burchard, S.M. (2017). The contradictions of pre-election violence: the effects of violence on voter turnout in Sub-Saharan Africa. *African Studies Review*, 60(2): 7392. <https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2017.50>
- Card, D. (2001). Estimating the return to schooling: Progress on some persistent econometric problems. *Econometrica*, 69(5): 1127-1160. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0262.00237>
- Carreras, M. and Castañeda-Angarita, N. (2014). Who votes in Latin America? A test of three theoretical perspectives. *Comparative Political Studies*, 47(8): 1079-1104. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0010414013488558>
- Carreras, M. and İrepoğlu, Y. (2013). Trust in elections, vote buying, and turnout in Latin America. *Electoral Studies*, 32(4): 609-619. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2013.07.012>
- Chiamogu, A.P. and Chiamogu, U.P. (2018). Voter Turnout and the 2017 Gubernatorial Election in Anambra State: A Critical Analysis. A paper to be presented



- at the 31st Annual Conference of the Nigerian Political Science Association (NPSA) holding at the Aka-nu Ibiam International Conference Centre Abakaliki from 26 - 29th March 2018.
- Downs, A.** (1957). *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. Harper, New York.
- Dalton, R.J.** (2008). *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, fifth ed. CQ Press, Washington, D.C.
- Ezeibe, C.C. Nzeadibe, T.C. Ali, A.N. Udeogu C.U. Nwankwo, C.F. and Ogbodo, C.** (2017). Work on wheels: collective organising of motorcycle taxis in Nigerian cities. *International Development Planning Review*, 39(3): 249-273. <https://doi.org/10.3828/idpr.2017.10>
- Fagunwa, T.C.** (2015). Voter Apathy and Nigeria's Electioneering Process: A Synopsis On The 2015 General Elections. <https://www.inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Conference-Paper-by-Christopher-Lambiko-Fagunwa.pdf>
- Franklin, M.N.** (2004). *Voter turnout and the dynamics of electoral competition in established democracies since 1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gallego, A.** (2010). Understanding unequal turnout: Education and voting in comparative perspective. *Electoral Studies*, 29(2): 239-248. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2009.11.002>
- Giugni, M. and Grasso, M.T.** (2016). How civil society actors responded to the economic crisis: The interaction of material deprivation and perceptions of political opportunity structures. *Politics and Policy*, 44(3): 447-472. <https://doi.org/10.1111/polp.12157>
- Highton, B. and Wolfinger, R.E.** (2001). The first seven years of the political life cycle. *American Journal of Political Science*, 202-209. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2669367>
- Hooghe, M. and Marien, S.** (2013). A comparative analysis of the relation between political trust and forms of political participation in Europe. *European Societies*, 15(1): 131-152. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2012.692807>
- Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC. (2015). Enugu State Directory Of Polling Units. Revised January 2015. Available at: [http://www.inecnigeria.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/04/PU\\_Directory\\_Revised\\_January\\_2015\\_Enugu.pdf](http://www.inecnigeria.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/04/PU_Directory_Revised_January_2015_Enugu.pdf) [Accessed 12 September 2018].
- Isaksson, A.S.** (2014). Political participation in Africa: The role of individual resources. *Electoral Studies*, 34: 244-260. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2013.09.008>
- Ishiyama, J. and Fox, K.** (2006). What Affects the Strength of Partisan Identity in Sub-Saharan Africa?. *Politics and Policy*, 34(4): 748-773. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-1346.2006.00039.x>
- Jung, D.J.** (2017). Irrationalizing the rational choice model of voting: The moderating effects of partisanship on turnout decisions in Western and post-communist democracies. *Electoral Studies*, 50: 26-38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2017.09.005>
- Klandermans, B. Van der Toorn, J. and Van Stekelenburg, J.** (2008). Embeddedness and identity: How immigrants turn grievances into action. *American Sociological Review*, 73(6): 992-1012. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F000312240807300606>
- Kostelka, F. Blais, A. and Gidengil, E.** (2019). Has the gender gap in voter turnout really disappeared?. *West European Politics*, 42(3): 437-463. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2018.1504486>
- Kuenzi, M. and Lambright, G.M.** (2007). Voter turnout in Africa's multiparty regimes. *Comparative Political Studies*, 40(6): 665-690. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0010414006288969>
- Kuenzi, M. and Lambright, G.M.** (2011). Who votes in Africa? An examination of electoral participation in 10 African countries. *Party Politics*, 17(6): 767-799. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1354068810376779>
- Larreguy, H. and Marshall, J.** (2017). The effect of education on civic and political engagement in nonconsolidated democracies: Evidence from Nigeria. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 99(3): 387-401. [https://doi.org/10.1162/REST\\_a\\_00633](https://doi.org/10.1162/REST_a_00633)
- Leighley, J.E. and Nagler, J.** (1992). Socioeconomic class bias in turnout, 1964–1988: The voters remain the same. *American Political Science Review*, 86(3): 725-736. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1964134>
- Lewis-Beck, M.S. Nadeau, R. and Elias, A.** (2008). Economics, party, and the vote: Causality issues and panel data. *American Journal of Political Science*, 52(1): 84-95. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2007.00300.x>
- Lijphart, A.** (1997). Unequal participation: Democracy's unresolved dilemma presidential address, American Political Science Association, 1996. *American political science review*, 91(1): 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2952255>
- Madu, I.A.** (2006). Spatial inequality in Nigeria: the imperative of geographic perspectives in the development process. *Journal of Social and Economic*

- Development*, 8(2): 105. [http://www.isec.ac.in/JSED/JSED\\_V8\\_I2\\_105-120.pdf](http://www.isec.ac.in/JSED/JSED_V8_I2_105-120.pdf)
- Madu, I.A.** (2010). The structure and pattern of rurality in Nigeria. *GeoJournal*, 75(2): 175-184. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-009-9282-9>
- Mac-Ikemenjima, D.** (2017). Violence and youth voter turnout in sub-Saharan Africa. *Contemporary Social Science*, 12(3-4): 215-226. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21582041.2017.1369558>
- Mayer, N.** (2010). *Sociologie des comportements politiques*, Paris: Armand Colin.
- McCarthy, J.D. and Zald, M.N.** (1977). Resource mobilization and social movements: A partial theory. *American journal of sociology*, 82(6): 1212-1241. <https://doi.org/10.1086/226464>
- Miller, W.E. Shanks, J.M. and Shapiro, R.Y.** (1996). *The new American voter* (pp. 47405-7103). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Moeller, J. De Vreese, C. Esser, F. and Kunz, R.** (2014). Pathway to political participation: The influence of online and offline news media on internal efficacy and turnout of first-time voters. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 58(5): 689-700. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0002764213515220>
- Norris, P.** (2002). 'Women's Power at the Ballot Box', in Rafael Lopez Pintor and Maria Gratschew (eds.), *Voter Turnout from 1945 to 2000: A Global Report on Political Participation*. Stockholm: IDEA, 95–104.
- Nwankwo, C.F.** (2017). Political Geography: Meaning, History and Basic Concepts. *Readings in Human Geography*. Port-Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press Ltd, 109-128.
- Nwankwo, C.F. and Okafor, U.P.** (2017). Voting in Nigeria: Determinants of Turnout in the 2015 Presidential Election. *Statistics, Politics and Policy*, 8(2): 249-260. <https://doi.org/10.1515/spp-2017-0010>
- Nwankwo, C.F. Okafor, P.U. and Asuoha, G.C.** (2017). Principal Component Analysis of Factors Determining Voter Abstention in South Eastern Nigeria. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, 10(3): 249-273.
- Nwankwo, C.F.** (2019a). The spatial pattern of voter choice homogeneity in the Nigerian presidential elections in the fourth republic. *Bulletin of Geography. Socio-economic Series*, 43(43): 143-165. <https://doi.org/10.2478/bog-2019-0010>
- Nwankwo, C.F.** (2019b). Religion and Voter Choice Homogeneity in the Nigerian Presidential Elections of the Fourth Republic. *Statistics, Politics and Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1515/spp-2018-0010>
- Nwankwo, C.F.** (2018). Vote Buying in the 2018 Governorship Election in Ekiti State, Nigeria. *Open Political Science*, 1(1): 93-97. <https://doi.org/10.1515/openps-2018-0005>
- Ojo, A. Ibeh, S.C. and Kieghe, D.** (2018). How Nigeria's 2015 presidential election outcome was forecasted with geodemographics and public sentiment analytics. *African Geographical Review*, 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19376812.2018.1447976>
- Pollock III, P.H.** (2015). *The Essentials of Political Analysis*. Washington, DC: Cq Press.
- Putnam, R.D.** (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Resnick, D. and Casale, D.** (2011). *The political participation of Africa's youth: Turnout, partisanship, and protest* (No. 2011, 56). Working paper/World Institute for Development Economics Research.
- Sahara Reporters (February 26, 2019). DATA: Nigeria's Presidential Election Records Lowest Voter Turnout In 20 Years. Available at: <http://saharareporters.com/2019/02/26/data-nigeriaspresidential-election-records-lowest-voter-turnout-20-years>. Accessed 27 February 2019.
- Singh, S.** (2011). Contradictory calculi: Differences in individuals' turnout decisions across electoral systems. *Political Research Quarterly*, 64(3): 646-655. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1065912909357177>
- Taiwo, O. J. and Ahmed, F.** (2015). Geographical analysis of voter apathy in presidential elections between 1999 and 2011 in Nigeria. *African Geographical Review*, 34(3): 250-268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19376812.2015.1009381>
- Touraine, A.** (1981). *The voice and the eye: An analysis of social movements*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Verba, S. and Nie, N.H.** (1972). *Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality*. New York, Harper and Row.
- Verba, S. Schlozman, K.L. and Brady, H. E.** (1995). *Voice and equality: Civic voluntarism in American politics*. Harvard University Press.
- Verba, S. Burns, N. and Schlozman, K.L.** (1997). Knowing and caring about politics: Gender and political engagement. *The journal of politics*, 59(4): 1051-1072. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2998592>
- Wallerstein, J.S. and Kelly, J.B.** (2008). *Surviving the breakup: How children and parents cope with divorce*. Basic books.

- Wilensky, H.L.** (2002). *Rich democracies: Political economy, public policy, and performance*. California: University of California Press.
- Wolfinger, R.E. and Rosenstone, S.J.** (1980). *Who Votes?* New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Yamane, T.** (1967). *Statistics, An Introductory Analysis*, 2nd Ed., New York: Harper and Row.

