

POLITICAL APATHY IN NIGERIA, CAUSES AND IMPLICATIONS: THE EBONYI STATE EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

This study examined the causes and implications of political apathy in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. It was conducted within selected Local Governments in Ebonyi State. The objective of the study was to establish measures that would help improve political participation in the state. The study adopted the social contract theory and employed a survey research design. Both primary and secondary sources of data were explored, and the chi-square statistical formula was used for data analysis. Findings revealed that the rate of political apathy in Ebonyi State is alarming. Several factors, including poor leadership and inadequate political orientation, were identified as major causes. This situation was found to be detrimental to both political and economic development. The study concluded that citizens in the state do not inherently dislike politics but need sufficient motivation and reasons to participate. Therefore, the researcher recommended intensive public orientation on the importance of political participation, the establishment of people-oriented leadership, and improved security measures during and after elections to curb the trend of political apathy.

Keywords: Democracy, Gender Disparity, Political Apathy, Social Contract

Introduction

Nigeria today is practicing democracy. Democracy is the government of the people in which the supreme power is vested in the people or in representatives of the people who are chosen or elected by the people themselves under a free and fair electoral system. The expectation, hence, is that the people of Nigeria and Ebonyi State in particular should be actively involved in the process of setting or organizing the government. Unfortunately, the reverse seems to be the case. Political participation is the involvement of the citizens in the political system. Eakin cited in Adelekan (2010) described political participation as the process through which the individual plays a role in the political life of his society and has the opportunity to take part in deciding what common goals of the society are and the best way of achieving these goals. According to Akamare (2003) political participation is an aspect of political behaviour and it focuses on the way in which individuals take part in politics. It is a voluntary activity and one may participate directly or indirectly. The various ways by which the people can be involved in the political system include selection or election of political leaders, formulation of policies, community activities and other civic engagements.

Political apathy according to Pasek (2011) is the indifference on the part of any citizen of any country with regard to their attitude towards political activities. It may be described as a latent or an expressed reluctance to be politically involved or an outright negative attitude towards political involvement. Political apathy has also been defined to imply evident withdrawal from the political life of the

community to which an individual belongs. This habit often times manifests in form of lack of interest in all objects and symbols of politics and it is also regarded essentially as a manifest at form of political behaviour.

Nkwede (2014), noted that an individual's political apathy begins with lack of understanding of politics and government to a certain degree, and that makes it more difficult for that individual to see the value in universal suffrage. Political apathy can be seen to some degree in every society, be it in the developed world or the developing nations, but the degree to which it prevails differs between countries. In Nigeria, and particularly in Ebonyi State, the degree of political apathy is very alarming. In a *Daily Trust* report of April 2017, it was noted that candidates of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) for chairmanship and councillorship election in the 13 local government areas and 171 wards in the state. However, the election was reported to have witnessed low turnout and apathy. Citizens simply do not turn out for the elections as they should. In most polling units, electoral officers are seen sitting around the electoral materials waiting for voters. These supposed voters preferably stay back in their homes taking the opportunity of the day to have rest in their homes. They do not see any reason whatsoever, to come to the polling unit to vote. When interviewed, the presiding officer for Effium Ward II, Peter Idika, decried the low turnout of voters for the election. "We received the materials for the election on time yet the people are nowhere to be seen. They just trickle in and leisurely.

Review of Related Literature

Political apathy according to Pasket (2011) is the indifference on the part of any citizen of any country with regard to their attitude towards political activities. Nkwede (2014), observes that political apathy is the gap between the government and the citizens of a nation with regards to their attitude on what rules and criteria the nation is running. It can also be looked upon as the public and/or individual indifference towards political events and movements. In sum, it is the lack of care, concern or disregard of matters of politics. He observed that apathy in politics is antithetical to democracy and inimical to national transformation. Onyemenam (2014) described political apathy as lack of interest or concerns for persons, situations or phenomena in general or in particular. Politically the most important trait of the apathetic individual is his passivity or abstention from political activity.

Ojo (1954) describes political apathy as latent or an expressed reluctance to be politically involved or an outright negative attitude towards political involvement. He further posits that, it may also imply evident withdrawal from the political life of the community to which an individual belongs. This habit often times manifests in form of lack of interest in all objects and symbols of politics and it is also regarded essentially as a manifest form of political behaviour.

Political apathy is a feeling of disinterest in the sense of politics or apathy towards politics. It can consist of interest apathy, voter apathy, and information apathy. It can be categorized as the indifference of an individual and a lack of interest in participating in political activities. This includes lack of interest in elections, political events, public meetings, and voting. Political apathy can lead to low voter turnout and stagnation in a state's government. Political apathy can lead to a loss of democracy and respondents mentioned it can also have social and psychological damage due to lack of personal political interaction. According to North American Review, lack of participation can lead to "political ills" such as corruption and dishonesty among politicians as they are not held accountable. Political apathy is found mostly among younger voters, the poor, and minority groups.

Nkwede (2014) noted that the levels and distributions of political apathy are often hard to accurately

assess but it can be measured in a given culture by the amount of the citizen's political involvement, knowledge or activity. Political apathy can be seen to some degree in every society, be it in the developed world or the developing nations, but the degree to which it prevails differs between countries. For a nation to develop, and to have its laws function to the fullest, there must be a high level of political awareness, such that the ruled and the rulers will serve as a check on one another.

Political apathy is common among most Ebonyians and it keeps increasing every year. The most common is lack of interests and voter apathy. Political apathy in Nigeria and Ebonyi in particular is expressed in so many different ways: Many Nigerians refuse to belong or support any political party; the low turnout of Nigerians who are eligible to vote for the voter's registration process; the poor turnout of voters during elections; most Nigerians are not interested in protesting against bad governance and leadership in the country.

Nkwede (2014) noted that avalanche of reasons have been established as the major causes of political apathy. They include *inter alia*:

Gender Disparity: In a democratic centralism, apathy is mostly witnessed where a particular gender is dominated and discriminated against. Nwori (2011) asserts that women in this regard are mostly affected. In some quarters, only men are allowed to exercise their franchise while women feel naturally that politics is meant for the male folk. For this reason, the age-long exclusion of women in political matters has deepened the nonchalant attitudes of women towards politics.

Lack of Political Education and Orientation: Political apathy is pronounced when people are not adequately informed about political activities. Studies have shown that poor political orientation is one of the major factors responsible for high rate of political apathy in Nigeria. It is obvious that when people are not politically conscious, they lack political information, which would enable them develop interest and participate favourably in the decision-making.

Bad Governance: Another cause of political apathy is bad governance. This of course results to loss of confidence in government activities. In the developing democracies, maladministration, high handedness of government and bad policies had been the major source of discouragement to political participation. More often than not, political leaders who were elected into positions of trust fail to live up to their expectations.

Unfulfilled Promises: The hope of the electorates is always raised high during the political campaign. But these campaign promises are always swept under the carpet. These unfulfilled promises at times dampen the citizens' zeal to participate in subsequent electoral processes. Ipso Facto, political participation can only be high if the citizens have the feelings that specific government policies and programmes that have direct impact to their well-being are adequately implemented to the later.

Thuggery: In a political system where thuggery is prevalent, there is the likelihood that citizens' participation will drastically reduce. This stems from the fact that citizens would not like to mortgage their life for election since their lives are at stake if they venture into the business of participating or voting during elections.

Rigging: Another cause of political apathy is the issue of rigging. Studies have shown that in a political process where citizens' votes do not count, it makes it politically and practically nonsensical for the electorates to troop out en masse for the exercise of their franchise. Political participation is high in a system where citizens' votes are protected and counted.

Poverty: Nwori (2011) contends that politics by the belief of many people is a game of the affluent who

can afford to undertake and fund political activities directly or indirectly. Of a truth, the cost of championing a political campaign in Ebonyi State and Nigeria in general is alarming. Therefore, people shy away from politics when they lack the financial wherewithal to engage in one political business or the other. This corroborates the idea that politics cannot be played in the sea of poverty.

Parochialism: This suggests a situation where individual or group orientation or attitude to politics does not transcend beyond local interest. In this dimension, such people or group do not always have any inclination outside their immediate community. Egwu and Egwu (2003) opined that such groups do not relate positively to national issues, national questions and policies nor do they see themselves as being affected by them. These categories of people indeed are found mostly in the rural setting such as in Ebonyi State, where the illiteracy level is still very high.

Forms of Political Apathy in Nigeria

There are five forms of political apathy. They are very common among citizens of Nigeria as a whole and Ebonyians in particular. They are: No interest in registration of voters; Ignoring electoral activities; Ignoring elections; Showing no interest in protecting the electoral process; Showing no political position.

No Interest in Registration of Voters: Every election procedure consists of several steps. Each step is extremely important because it can influence the results and define the winner of the elections. It is important to register voters and this is the first step. If you don't want to be serious and help with the registration process, you show political apathy. You cannot treat this process as something unimportant. Devoting some of your time to the registration can make it faster and more accurate.

Ignoring Electoral Activities: The second step involves understanding who candidates are and what political parties are possible leaders in the country or state. It involves a number of activities such as political campaign, political campaign, political debates, meeting with people etc. If you ignore these events, you express your political apathy.

Ignoring Elections: The third main step is the process of election. Some people believe that their vote changes nothing. What do they do? Exactly! They ignore the election and simply do not vote. This is political apathy. They fail to realize that sometimes, one voice can change history.

No Interest in Protecting the Electoral Process: The electoral process is very sensitive to manipulations. It is not a secret that every political party wants to lead the country or state. Some parties are willing to buy votes and manipulate the whole process of elections. Staying indifferent and not helping to protect each vote is political apathy. It is important to protest any type of malpractices in the election process from the very beginning to the end.

Showing no Political Position: What does political position mean? It is your vision of the future of your country which you can express by belonging to a political party. This is how you can express yourself, voice your political position and influence others to stop being politically indifferent.

Consequences of Political Apathy to Democracy in Nigeria

Political participation expressed through election is a scientific and logical conclusive procedure for the selection of persons, to fill certain offices or positions through choices made freely by electorates who are qualified to vote in a community under the rules and procedures of the electoral system. The right to participate is an essential system. The right to participate is an essential element of democratic process.

Withdrawals from political activities always have a devastating effect in the political system (Nkwede, 2014). These include:

- Apathy leads to inability to effect the desired change in the body politics. When individuals or groups perceive areas that needs change in the government of a state or group and refuse to criticize or vote in an election, such change can never take place, except by voting the administration out of power.
- Apathy result to poor turnout of voters during elections.
- Apathetic behaviour gives room for mediocrity in public offices, especially as the few who participate actively in politics capitalize on the opportunity to fix in people of their choice.
- Apathy can lead to the emergence of irresponsible administration particularly as those who actively participate in politics may decide to form a clique to run the government the way it suits them (Nkwede, 2014).

For Alozie (2014), political apathy has the following consequences:

Threat to democracy: When a politician wins an election in a high voter apathy political election, such a winner wins with the minority vote. Such a vote does not give the winner the confidence that they are popular political representative in a given area.

Elections are not representative: Results of elections are supposed to be based on majority feelings. With political apathy, such is difficult.

Hindrance to good governance and decision-making: When elected political leaders win with a minority vote, such leaders feel reluctant to mobilize majority citizens in the area who might not have voted for him or her. As a result, such political leaders fail to organize good governance or community development related meetings in the local communities as most of the residents might not be coming to such meetings as they feel that the political representative concerned is not a leader of their choice, and is not popular in the area.

Retards community and national development processes: Instead of a political leader to concentrate on spending more time justifying that they are the current ward councillor, member of parliament or a current president.

With political apathy, most elected political leaders at whatever level of political representation rarely or never go back to their respective areas to consult and work with the electorate on local community or national socio-economic needs and challenges.

High voter apathy is a vote of no confidence in political representatives as most citizens feel there is little or nothing they benefit from spending time and energy voting for someone who might benefit more from politics while voters get poor and poorer every year. Increased high voter apathy can erode checks and balances, accountability, rule of law; this leads to bad governance.

The Nature of Political Apathy in Ebonyi State

Democracy as a concept may be defined as a system of government under which the people exercise the governing power either directly or through representatives periodically elected by the same people. Hence, Abraham Lincoln sees democracy as a government of the people, by the people and for the people.

The fundamental underlining factor in this definition is popular participation of the people. Democracy seeks to ensure that the people participate actively in making and implementation of policies (government) that directly and indirectly affects their lives and welfare. This also explains the origin and reason for the adoption of democracy by all well-meaning modern states, which is *demokratia* - “rule of the people”, and from Greek city-state of Athens where democracy emerged as a check on despotic aristocracy, dictatorship, monarchy, oligarchy and feudal system. Democracy entails a system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives. In modern usage it is a system of government in which citizens exercise power directly or elect representatives from among themselves to form a governing body, such as a permanent. Democracy is therefore, sometimes referred to “rule of the majority”. It arose as a check against oppressive governments and has as one of its significance, the production and defense of human rights as in the United Nations Human Rights Declaration of (1945). These rights are important to democracy because they make possible free discussion and continuous participation of the people in government at all times.

For democracy to work successfully in any society, the citizen therein must imbibe certain habits, attitudes and values congenial with democracy. In other words, there must be an ethic of popular political consciousness and the need for democratic habits in the lives of the people. This participation is essential in a democratic system because it requires increased influence and control. It also demands increased empowerment especially in political term, which means freedom to choose and change government at every level. Again, it is a fundamental duty of the citizen in a democratic political system to obey the rules and laws of the land, exercise franchise by voting at elections. Also in a democracy, the citizenry has a duty to check the excesses of their elected representative and hold them accountable for their actions and inactions. In a nutshell, the modern ideas of democracy are based on the principle of free and fair regular elections, a broad suffrage and the existence of a political party or parties capable of forming an alternative government. Most importantly, all sections of society must participate in the political process while the political leaders apart from representing the views of the electorate must be drawn from all social, economic, religious, and ethnic groups within the society. Unfortunately, despite the emphasized importance of active citizens' participation to democracy, the right to participation in politics is not exercised by all who possess it; the number of non-participants is increasing by the years. This is the case in Ebonyi State. Studies have shown that the attitude of the people with regards to political activities is very far from what is acceptable. The nature and rate of political apathy in the state is entirely unacceptable. A student union leader in Ebonyi State, Mr. Joshua Onwe, National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) Zone B, External Affairs Director, has decried the spate of apathy in the state in an interview with *Vanguard* (22 March, 2018). According to him, it is the citizens' civic duty to participate in the political and electoral processes to choose credible and selfless leaders. Onwe, a law student at Ebonyi State University (EBSU) Abakaliki, noted that the failure of the eligible electorate to actively participate in the political process could lead to the emergence of bad and non-credible leaders. Onwe decried the political apathy among youths, stressing that their involvement in politics was needed to build strong and economically virile nation.

Indeed, the apathy in the state is detrimental. According to the Ebonyi Resident Electoral Commissioner, Prof. Godswill Obioma, only 30% of eligible voters participate in the electoral process in the state. Obioma explained that the voting strength of the state in the 2015 general election stood at 1,074,273.

It was Bertolt Brecht that observed that the worst illiterate is the political illiterate. He explained that the illiterate does not know that from his political ignorance is born the numerous illnesses that can afflict any given society. The prostitute, the abandoned child, jobless man, and the worst thieves of all – the bad politician. The consequences of not participating is conscious and eats the fabric of ethics and

development of the state. It has birthed a pain so intense a pain of dashed dreams and crucified hopes. And while it seems like the people's representatives in government houses have secretly sworn to dispense outrageous suffering and injustice to the common man, he goes about concerning himself with just his business without realizing that the true power begs to be reclaimed. Owing to this, it is safe to assert that this state of ours is not ruined by the bad but by the good who fails to do nothing. Really, every Ebonyian should know that just like bad governance, political apathy is one of the major challenges of democracy and its dividends in the state.

Though we not get all we work for, that which we get is what we have worked for. The task of nation-building is a very difficult one, however, this dream can only be fulfilled through a fearless and patriotic participation in political activities in the state.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the social contract theory. Social contract theory is associated with modern moral and political theory and is given its first full exposition by Hobbes (Leviathan, 1651). After Hobbes, John Locke (Treatise of Government II 1690) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (in Du Contrat Social, 1762), are the best known proponents of this enormously influential theory.

In both moral and political philosophy, the social contract is a theory or model that originated during the Age of Enlightenment. Usually, the social contract concerns the origin of society and the legitimacy of the authority of the state over the individual. Social contract arguments typically posit that individuals have consented, either explicitly or tacitly, to surrender some of their freedoms and submit to the authority of the ruler or magistrate (or to the decision of a majority), in exchange for protection of their remaining rights. The question of the relation between natural and legal rights, therefore, is often an aspect of social contract theory. The term takes its name from the social contract, a 1762 book by Jean-Jacques Rousseau that discussed this concept.

Although, the antecedents of social contract theory are found in antiquity, in Greek and Stoic philosophy and Roman and Canon Law, the heyday of the social contract was the mid-17th to early 19th centuries, when it emerged as the leading doctrine of political legitimacy. The starting point for most social contract theories is an examination of the human condition absent of any political order that Thomas Hobbes termed the “state of nature”. In this condition, individual's actions are bound only by their personal power and conscience. From this shared starting point, social contract theorists seek to demonstrate, in different ways, why a rational individual would voluntarily consent to give-up their natural freedom to obtain the benefits of political order.

Thomas Hobbes famously said that in a “state of nature”, human life would be “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short”. In the absence of political order and law, everyone would have unlimited natural freedoms, including the “right to all things” and thus the freedom to plunder, rape, and murder; there would be an endless “war of all against all” (*bellum omnium contra omnes*). To avoid this, free men contract with each other to establish political community, that is, civil society, through a social contract in which they all gain security in return for subjecting themselves to an absolute sovereign, one man or an assembly of men. Though, the sovereign's edicts may well be arbitrary and tyrannical, Hobbes saw absolute government as the only alternative to the terrifying anarchy of a state of nature. Hobbes asserted that humans consent to abdicate their rights in favour of the absolute authority of government (whether monarchical or parliamentary).

Alternatively, Locke and Rousseau have argued that we gain civil rights in return for accepting the

obligation to respect and defend the rights of others, giving up some freedoms to do so. The central assertion of social contract approaches is that law and political order are not natural, but are instead human creations. The social contract and the political order it creates are simply the means towards an end – the benefit of the individuals involved – and legitimate only to the extent that they fulfil their part of the agreement. According to Hobbes (in whose view government is not a party to the original contract) citizens are not obligated to submit to the government when it is too weak to act effectively to suppress factionalism and civil unrest. According to other social contract theorists, when the government fails to secure their natural rights (Locke) or satisfy the best interests of society (called the “general will” in Rousseau), citizens can withdraw their obligation to obey, or change the leadership through elections or other means including, when necessary, violence. Locke believed that natural rights were inalienable, and that the rule of God therefore superseded government authority and Rousseau believed that democracy (self-rule) was the best way of ensuring the general welfare while maintaining individual freedom under the rule of law.

This theory is very relevant to this study and can be used to explain political apathy in Ebonyi State. A contract demands both sides to keep their parts of the deal. In this contract between the government and the people, the people participate actively in political activities when they see that the government is keeping its responsibilities of providing overall security and welfare of the citizens. On the other hand, they exhibit political apathy in response to government not being responsive to the yearnings of the people. Therefore, the peoples' refusal to participate actively, that is, to fulfil their obligations to vote in elections is in response to government's breach of its own responsibility to the people as the social contract theorists argue.

Methodology

The researcher adopted a survey research design. The study covers Ebonyi State in general, Ebonyi State is a state in south eastern Nigeria bounded to the north by Benue state, the west by Enugu State, and the south by Abia and Imo states and to the east by Cross River State. The strategic Local Governments include; Abakaliki, Afikpo, Edda, Ivo, Ohaukwu, Ikwo, Ezza South, Ezza North, Izii, Ebonyi, Onicha, Ohaozara and Ishielu. Ebonyi State population which is set at 2,176,947 by the National Population Commission in the 2006 population census serves as the study population.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample size of four hundred (400) was drawn having applied the Taro Yamane (1964) formula on the population which is approximately 400. The data for this study were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were gathered by the researcher through the use of structured questionnaire administered on the studied population, through interviews, and through informal discussions. Secondary data on the other hand were sourced from existing literature on the subject matter in textbooks, journals, newspaper, government official gazette. The major instrument of data collection was structured questionnaire which was designed and administered to the respondent to capture the required data. Respondents were given four options of “strongly agree”, “agree”, “strongly disagree”, “disagree” to validate their responses on the views expressed in the questionnaire items.

Presentation of Data and Analysis**Table 1:** Showing the number of returned, not-returned and damaged questionnaire.

S/N	Description	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Returned	351	87.8
2.	Not returned	29	7.2
3.	Damaged	20	5.0
	Total	400	100

Source: Field Work survey, 2024.

The above table shows that a total of 400 questionnaires were distributed, 351 representing 87.8% were properly filled and safely returned, 29 pieces representing 7.2% were not returned while 20 pieces representing 5.0% were damaged. The result of the study is based on the safely returned questionnaire.

Table 2: Showing gender distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	233	66.4
Female	118	33.6
Total	400	100

Source: Field Work survey, 2024.

From the table, responses show that 233 respondents, that is, 66.4 percent were male while 118 representing 33.6% were female.

Table 3: Showing age distribution

Age Bracket	Frequency	Percentage
30-35	53	15.1
36-45	73	20.8
46-55	128	36.5
56-65	64	18.2
Others	33	9.4
Total	400	100

Source: Field Work survey, 2024.

The table show that 53 persons that is 15.1 of respondents were between the ages of 30-35, 73 respondents representing 20.8% were between 36-45 years, 128 respondents (36.5%) were between 46 and 55 years, 64 respondents (18.2%) were between 56-65 years, while 33 respondents (9.4%) falls under the others age bracket.

Table 4: Showing marital status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	71	20.2
Married	280	79.8
Total	400	100

Source: Field Work survey, 2024.

Table 5: Showing distribution of occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Public servant/student	148	42.2
Traders	101	28.8
Artisans	71	20.2
Farming	31	8.8
Total	400	100

Source: Field Work survey, 2024.

Responses as stated in the table shows that 148 (42.2%) are public servants/students, 101 respondents (28.8%) are traders, 71 respondents (20.2%) are artisans while 31 respondents (8.8%) are farmers.

Table 6: Responses to question one: Man naturally is a political animal.

Response Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	301	85.8
Agree	24	6.8
Disagree	10	2.8
Strongly disagree	16	4.6
Total	351	100

Source: Field Work survey, 2024.

The table above show that 301 respondents representing (85.8%) strongly agree to the position, 24 respondents (6.8%) agree, 10 respondents (2.8%) disagree while 16 respondents that is 4.6% strongly disagree.

Table 7: Responses to question two: Every qualified citizen has a role to play in the political and overall development of the state.

Response Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	317	90.3
Agree	26	7.4
Disagree	8	2.3
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	351	100

Source: Field Work survey, 2024.

The table above show that 317 respondents representing (90.3%) strongly agree to the position, 26 respondents (7.4%) agree, 8 respondents (2.3%) disagree while 0 respondents that is 0% strongly disagree.

Table 8 : Responses to question three: Most citizens in Ebonyi State actively participate in political activities

Response Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	69	19.7
Agree	92	26.1
Disagree	129	36.8
Strongly disagree	61	17.4
Total	351	100

Source: Field Work survey, 2024.

The table above shows that 69 respondents representing (19.7%) strongly agree to the position, 92 respondents (26.1%) agree, 129 respondents (36.8%) disagree while 61 respondents that is 17.4% strongly disagree.

Table 9 : Responses to question four: The rank and file in Ebonyi State participate actively in political activities.

Response Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	49	14.0
Agree	29	8.2
Disagree	119	33.9
Strongly disagree	154	43.9
Total	351	100

Source: Field Work survey, 2024.

The table above show that 49 respondents representing (14.0%) strongly agree to the position, 29 respondents (8.2%) agree, 119 respondents (33.9%) disagree while 154 respondents that is 43.9% strongly disagree.

Table 1 0: Responses to question five: Greater percentage of Ebonyi citizens are not active politically.

Response Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	11	3.1
Agree	50	14.3
Disagree	104	26.8
Strongly disagree	196	55.8
Total	351	100

Source: Work survey, 2024

The table above show that 31 respondents representing (3.1%) strongly agree to the position, 50 respondents (14.3%) agree, 104 respondents (26.8%) disagree while 196 respondents that is 55.8% strongly disagree.

Table 11: Responses to question six: The rate of political apathy in Ebonyi State appalling

Response Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	130	37.0
Agree	118	33.6
Disagree	48	13.7
Strongly disagree	55	15.7
Total	351	100

Source: Source: Field Work survey, 2024.

The table above show that 130 respondents representing (37.0%) strongly agree to the position, 118 respondents (33.6%) agree, 48 respondents (13.7%) disagree while 55 respondents that is 15.7% strongly disagree.

Table 12: Responses to question seven: Political apathy is retarding political as well as economic development of the state.

Response Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	204	58.1
Agree	87	24.8
Disagree	26	7.4
Strongly disagree	34	9.7
Total	351	100

Source: Field Work survey, 2024.

The table above show that 204 respondents representing (58.1%) strongly agree to the position, 87 respondents (24.8%) agree, 26 respondents (7.4%) disagree while 34 respondents that is 9.7% strongly disagree.

Table 13: Responses to question eight: Citizens of Ebonyi State hate politics and all political activities.

Response Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	118	33.6
Agree	48	13.7
Disagree	89	25.4
Strongly disagree	96	27.3
Total	351	100

Source: Field Work survey, 2024.

The table above show that 118 respondents representing (33.6%) strongly agree to the position, 48 respondents (13.7%) agree, 89 respondents (25.48%) disagree while 96 respondents that is 27.3% strongly disagree.

Table 1 4: Responses to question nine: Violence, thuggery and election rigging discourages citizens from participating in political activities.

Response Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	202	57.5
Agree	106	30.1
Disagree	23	6.6
Strongly disagree	20	5.7
Total	351	100

Source: Field Work survey, 2024.

The table above shows that 202 respondents representing (57.5%) strongly agree to the position, 106 respondents (30.1%) agree, 23 respondents (6.6%) disagree while 20 respondents that is 5.7% strongly disagree.

Table 1 5: Responses to question ten: Bad governance and self-centred leadership are major reasons for political apathy in the state.

Response Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	220	62.7
Agree	104	29.6
Disagree	22	6.3
Strongly disagree	5	1.4
Total	351	100

Source: Field Work survey, 2024

The table above show that 220 respondents representing (62.7%) strongly agree to the position, 104 respondents (29.6%) agree, 22 respondents (6.3%) disagree while 5 respondents that is 1.4% strongly disagree.

Table 1 6: Responses to question eleven: Improved leadership and proper citizen's orientation will help to reduce political apathy in the state.

Response Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	114	32.5
Agree	107	30.5
Disagree	72	20.5
Strongly disagree	58	16.5
Total	351	100

Source: Field Work survey, 2024.

The table above show that 114 respondents representing (32.5%) strongly agree to the position, 107 respondents (30.5%) agree, 72 respondents (20.5%) disagree while 58 respondents that is 16.5% strongly disagree.

Table 17: Responses to question twelve: Active citizens political participation would bring about good leadership, political and economic development of the state.

Response Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	206	58.7
Agree	87	24.8
Disagree	30	8.6
Strongly disagree	28	8.0
Total	351	100

Source: Field Work survey, 2024.

The table above show that 206 respondents representing (58.7%) strongly agree to the position, 87 respondents (24.8%) agree, 30 respondents (8.6%) disagree while 28 respondents that is 8.0% strongly disagree.

Test of Hypotheses

The researcher had formulated three hypotheses for the study. They are hereby tested to determine their acceptance or otherwise. The chi-square statistical tool is employed as stated to carry out the test. Formular of chi-square is reproduced as follows:

$$\text{Chi-square } (X^2) = \sum \frac{(\text{OF} - \text{EF})^2}{\text{EF}}$$

Where

- X2 - Chi-square
- Σ = Summation
- OF = Observed frequency
- EF = Expected frequency

The Degree of Freedom (DF) is given as:

$$\text{df} = (r - 1)(C - 1)$$

The level of significance is 5% or 0.05.

Hypothesis 1

HA₁: The rate of political apathy in Ebonyi State is on the high side.

H0₁: The rate of political apathy in Ebonyi State is not on the high side.

The above stated hypothesis is tested with table 12 question six: The rate of political apathy in Ebonyi State is appalling

Table 18: Frequency Table

Response Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	130	37.0
Agree	118	33.6
Disagree	48	13.7
Strongly agree	55	15.7
Total	351	100

Source: Field Work survey, 2024.

Table 19: Computation of Chi-Square Table

Response Options	OF	EF	OF – EF	(OF – EF) ²	$\frac{(OF - EF)}{EF}$
Strongly agree	130	87.75	42.25	185.06	20.34
Agree	118	87.75	30.25	915.06	10.43
Disagree	48	87.75	-39.75	-1580.06	-18.01
Strongly disagree	31	87.75	-32.75	-1072.56	-12.23
Total	351				0.53

Source: Field Work survey, 2024.

Where

$$EF = \frac{351}{4} = 87.75$$

Note that all other mathematics are carefully solved and presented in the chi-square table above.
Calculated chi-square = 0.53

DF = (R – 1)(C – 1) where

R = Row (4)

C = Column (2)

∴ DF = $\frac{(4-1)(2-1)}{3 \times 1}$

3

The critical value of 3 at 0.05 level of significance in the chi-square (X^2) distribution is equal to 7.815.

Decision Rule

Alternative hypothesis is accepted where the calculated value of chi-square is greater than the critical value and null hypothesis is accepted where the calculated value of chi-square is less than the critical value.

Hypothesis II

- HA₂: Political apathy affects democratic and economic growth and development of Ebonyi State negatively.
- H0₂: Political apathy does not affect democratic and economic growth and development of Ebonyi State negatively.

The above hypothesis is tested with table 11 question seven: Political apathy is retarding political as well as economic development of the state.

Table 20 Contingency Table

Response Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	204	58.1
Agree	87	24.8
Disagree	26	7.4
Strongly agree	34	9.7
Total	351	100

Source: Work survey, 2024.

Table 21 Computation of Chi-Square Table

Response Options	OF	EF	OF – EF	(OF – EF) ²	<u>(OF – EF)</u> EF
Strongly agree	204	87.75	116.25	13514.06	154.01
Agree	87	87.75	-0.75	-0.56	-0.01
Disagree	26	87.75	-61.75	-3813.06	-43.45
Strongly disagree	34	87.75	-53.75	-2889.06	-32.97
Total	351				77.63

Source: Field Work survey, 2024.

Where

$$EF = \frac{351}{4} = 87.75$$

Note that all other mathematics are carefully calculated in chi-square table above. Calculated chi-square = 77.63

Checking the critical value, we have

DF = (R – 1)(C – 1) where

R = Row (4)

C = Column (2)

∴ DF = (4-1)(2-1)

3 x 1

3

The critical value of 3 at 0.05 level of significance in the chi-square (X^2) distribution is equal to 7.815.

Decision Rule

Alternative hypothesis is accepted where the calculated value of chi-square is greater than the critical value and null hypothesis on the other hand is accepted where the calculated value of chi-square is less than the critical value.

Hypothesis III

HA₃: Civic education and improved political leadership would help to reduce the rate of political apathy in Ebonyi State.

H0₃: Civic education and improved political leadership would not help to reduce the rate of political apathy in Ebonyi State.

This hypothesis is tested with table 17 question eleven: Improved leadership and proper citizens orientation will help to reduce political apathy in Ebonyi State.

Table 23 Contingency Table

Response Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	114	32.5
Agree	107	30.5
Disagree	72	20.5
Strongly agree	58	16.5
Total	351	100

Source: Field Work survey, 2024.

Table 24 Computation of Chi-Square Table

Response Options	OF	EF	OF – EF	(OF – EF) ²	$\frac{(OF - EF)^2}{EF}$
Strongly agree	114	87.75	26.25	689.06	7.85
Agree	107	87.75	19.25	370.56	0.43
Disagree	72	87.75	-15.75	-248.06	-2.83
Strongly disagree	58	87.75	-29.75	-885.06	-10.09
Total	351				-4.64

Source: Field Work, 2024.

Where

$$EF = \frac{351}{4} = 87.75$$

Note that all other mathematics are carefully solved in the chi-square table above. Calculated chi-square = -4.64

The critical value

$$DF = (R - 1)(C - 1)$$

where

R = Row (4)

C = Column (2)

$$\therefore DF = \frac{(4-1)(2-1)}{3 \times 1} = 3$$

The critical value of 3 at 0.05 level of significance in the chi-square (X^2) distribution is equal to 7.815.

Decision Rule

Alternative hypothesis is accepted where the calculated value of chi-square is greater than the critical value and null hypothesis is accepted where the calculated value of chi-square is less than the critical value.

Findings

After a careful review of available relevant literature on the topic of study and a critical analysis of data obtained with the aid of the questionnaire administered to resourceful respondents, the following major findings were made by the researcher.

1. The researcher found that the rate of political apathy in Ebonyi state is indeed very high.
2. The research also found that political apathy has a negative effect on the political cum economic growth and development of the nation in general and the state in particular.
3. The researcher also found that proper political and civil education and orientation of the masses as well as improved leadership are ways to encourage people to participate in politics.

Summary

The study analyzes the causes and effects of political apathy in Ebonyi State using data from structured questionnaires and chi-square statistical analysis. Political apathy is described as a lack of interest in political and decision-making processes, including voting, contesting elections, and community development activities. While political apathy exists globally, its prevalence varies, and in Ebonyi State, it was found to be particularly high. The study attributes this to the self-reliant nature of Ebonyi men, who prioritize farming and business over political engagement. This apathy negatively impacts the state's political and economic development, as policies are made without broad public input, leading to disorientation and disenchantment. The study concludes that better governance, along with widespread orientation and re-orientation efforts, is essential to improving political awareness and participation in Ebonyi State.

Conclusion

Political apathy in Ebonyi State poses a serious threat to its economic and political development if left unaddressed. However, the study concludes that change is possible with the right interventions. Many residents lack awareness of the importance of political participation, but their disengagement is largely

due to bad leadership, political violence, election rigging, and other irregularities. These factors have eroded trust in the system, discouraging active involvement. Restoring faith in the political process through reforms and awareness campaigns can encourage participation. Increased political engagement is essential for the state's overall political and economic growth.

Recommendations

To combat political apathy and averts its menace, the study recommends as follows:

1. *Proper reorientation of the Masses:* The apparent reason for political apathy is that people do not find it an important thing to do. They believe that political activities will always go on with or without and that the politicians will always have their way. Most believe that their voting or not makes no difference. This is an improper orientation. People should be taught to see things differently and more objectively. It should be infused into the consciousness of every citizen, from young to old, that just like bad governance, political apathy is also a significant challenge for good governance, democracy and its dividends in our society.
2. *Proper Security Measures Should be Provided During Elections:* There is a hidden belief among electorates that going out to vote during elections can be unsafe. Henceforth, the government should make adequate arrangements to guarantee the safety of the electorates when they come out to vote. If the people are sure their safety is granted, they will come out confidently and participate in political activities.
3. *The Electoral Body should be adequately Funded and Equipped to ensure that People's Votes Count:* Elections have been plagued with rigging and malpractices over the years. This is why most Nigerians do not believe in elections. Therefore, they decide to stay home because of the general feeling and belief that their votes will not affect or impact the election outcome. This must change. The electoral body must ensure that people's votes count. The will of the people must not be thwarted. This would give the citizens the feeling of continuing to participate.
4. *Civic education* should be pursued more vigorously in our schools to inculcate these civic obligations into citizens from childhood. Schools have traditionally been charged with ensuring that students achieve basic literacy and numeracy.

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