

## Effect of Structural Violence in Elections on Democracy in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

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### Abstract

*The election process plays a crucial role in assessing the level of democratic quality inside a nation, therefore making it an essential component of democracy. The acknowledgment, endorsement, and regard for the entitlement to participate in elections and hold public office are therefore of paramount importance within a democratic framework. Since the restoration of democratic governance in Nigeria in 1999, it is anticipated that the fundamental political rights of its populace are duly acknowledged and safeguarded. Elections in Nigeria, however, have been plagued by instances of malpractice and manipulation, resulting in a state of structural violence. This study employed a survey methodology to examine the presence of structural violence inside Nigeria's electoral system. The survey methodology involved the utilization of questionnaires and interviews as data collection tools. The study's findings indicate that the commonly held assumptions on the hindrances to democracy in Nigeria, such as gerrymandering, voter suppression, and unequal resource distribution, were not shown to have a direct impact on the functioning of democracy. Nevertheless, the study also revealed the existence of several noteworthy structural anomalies within the nation's election framework that could potentially influence the broader democratic environment.*

**Keywords:** *Structural violence, election, democracy, inequality, voting, Nigeria, malpractice, political right.*

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### Introduction

The strength of the democracy of any state hinges upon the willingness of such state to recognize, respect and accept the right of its citizens to exercise their rights to vote and be voted for in a free and fair election. Election therefore, serves as a standard for assessing a country's democratic qualities (Obakhedo, 2011). Credible elections provide a platform for equal participation of citizens in the democratic process by electing representatives of their choice to a political office. This process boosts citizen's confidence in democratization and rekindles hope for the consolidation of democratic institutions, especially in developing countries (Aluaigba, 2016; Ajagba, Gberevbie, & Agbu, 2020).

In contemporary times however, a growing global apprehension has emerged regarding the efficacy of electoral systems in accurately reflecting popular sentiment. One contributing factor to the disconnection between elections and popular will lies in the unequal power relations and distribution of resources between different groups in society which systematically creates and maintains socioeconomic and political conditions that perpetuate inequality, decimation, marginalization, victimization and inaccessibility in electoral processes. Consequently, the voices and concerns of ordinary citizens become eclipsed or marginalized (Parvin, 2022). Such influence can distort the electoral process, skewing the playing field and favoring candidates or political parties aligned with their particular interests. Despite their fundamental role in democratic societies, elections in numerous countries encounter diverse challenges that undermine their integrity and equitable nature (Norris, Cameron, & Wynter, 2018). Thus, democratic polity across the globe

are witnessing unequal access to voting rights, voter suppression, marginalization, discrimination and voter intimidation with a concomitance of hampering the fundamentals of democracy and demonstrates the dominance of structural violence. In this regards, structural violence in elections describes a pervasive and entrenched social and political pattern and condition that systematically creates, maintains and perpetuates inequality, exclusion, discrimination, and marginalization in electoral process (Murithi, 2008; Braveman et al., 2022).

Since the return to civil rule in 1999, structural violence has been identified to be a major part of Nigeria's election process (Ibok & Ogar, 2018). In this new democratic dispensation in Nigeria, electoral process has characterized by unequal opportunities for political participation and unequal access to voting by the socio-economically disadvantaged groups, including women, youth, rural population, and persons with disabilities. A Significant number of citizens still face physical, geographical and infrastructural barriers and inadequate polling facilities that limit their access to the polls. Despite Nigeria being a multi-ethnic society, there continues to be under-representation of ethnic minority groups in government appointments, elective office as well as the exclusion of their voices in the electoral process and often leads to heightened conflict during the election period. Consequently, a free, fair, and legitimate election process has grown more difficult to implement at all levels of government. (Adeola, 2012). This occurrence gives rise to profound uncertainties concerning the extent to which electoral outcomes genuinely represent the voices and preferences of the citizenry. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine the extent of structural violence in the voting process of Nigeria's fourth republic and to evaluate the implications it portends for inclusive democracy.

### **Hypotheses**

Hoi: gerrymandering does not have significant effect on democracy in Nigeria

Hoi: unequal distribution of resources and opportunities do not have significant effect on democracy in Nigeria

Hoi: voter suppression does not have significant effect on democracy in Nigeria.

### **Democracy and Structural Violence in Electoral Process: A Theoretical Nexus**

The primary objective of a democratic society is to ensure the principles of equality and accessibility are upheld for all individuals in the process of decision-making (Chando, 2014; Olu-Owolabi, Gberebie, & Abasilim, 2021). The fundamental principle underlying democracy is rooted in the belief that all individuals possess equal worth. As Setälä (2010) asserts, the core tenets of democratic ideals revolve around the notions of individual equality and liberty. The concept of democracy, which encompasses principles such as inclusivity, participation, representation, accountability, and transparency (Rai, 2000), is predicated upon the essential foundation of conducting elections in a consistent and impartial manner. The aforementioned statement posits that the establishment of a system wherein every member of a given nation possesses the liberty to exercise their agency in selecting their governing authorities is of paramount importance. This fundamental principle guarantees that individuals are not subjected to any form of apprehension or coercion stemming from their societal standing, economic circumstances, or political affiliations (Bogaards, 2007).

The election holds a paramount significance within the framework of democracy, rendering the notion of a democratic governance devoid of this fundamental process virtually unimaginable. Indeed, it is currently plausible to assert that a legitimate peril exists wherein the differentiation between the execution of routine, typically disputed, and openly conducted elections becomes indistinguishable from the essence of democracy itself (Hounkpe & Gueye, 2010). The selection of representatives to govern within contemporary democratic systems is commonly regarded as the most suitable approach. Elections assume a pivotal function within democratic frameworks as they afford citizens the opportunity to exercise their voting rights, thereby conferring legitimacy upon the governing entity. Moreover, elections serve to facilitate a peaceful transfer of

power, foster civic engagement, and furnish a mechanism for providing feedback to political leaders (Wojtasik, 2013). The conduct of elections serves as a mechanism through which individuals are able to articulate their preferences and, in turn, ensures that the government is a faithful reflection of their collective desires. This process, in effect, contributes to the cultivation of political stability within a given society. It is imperative to acknowledge, nonetheless, that numerous democratic societies encounter obstacles pertaining to the phenomenon of structural violence. The presence of such barriers can hinder the engagement of marginalized factions within the democratic framework, consequently leading to the formulation and implementation of policies that sustain existing disparities and inflict detrimental consequences (Vaidya, 2018). Dilts et al. (2012) have noted that structural violence possesses the capacity to exert an influence on democracy by virtue of its role in perpetuating an uneven allocation of resources and opportunities. The capacity to attain education, healthcare, and employment assumes a pivotal function in endowing individuals with the agency to participate in the democratic process. In the absence of these indispensable resources, the distribution of power and influence may manifest an inequitable concentration within a select group of individuals who possess certain advantages. Consequently, policy frameworks frequently exhibit a tendency to accord precedence to the interests and requirements of the privileged few, thereby neglecting to adequately attend to the apprehensions and predicaments faced by the most marginalized segments of the populace. Moreover, it is worth noting that political authorities have been known to employ repressive tactics in order to quell dissidence and counter any form of opposition, consequently impeding the active involvement of individuals in democratic processes. The aforementioned statement highlights the paramount importance of guaranteeing equitable opportunities for education, healthcare, and employment to all members of society, thereby cultivating a genuinely inclusive democratic milieu. The presence of this incongruity significantly erodes the inclusiveness and fairness of the democratic framework.

The concept of structural violence elucidates the manner in which societal structures and arrangements impose limitations upon individuals, thereby encroaching upon their fundamental rights (Ho, 2007). According to the scholarly work of Lee (2016), the act of restricting or negating this particular entitlement by those occupying positions of political authority can be categorized as a manifestation of structural violence. In accordance with the scholarly work of Leander (2012), it is posited that the influence of structural violence on the realm of state politics is notably pronounced, thereby engendering heightened levels of devastation. This phenomenon arises from the systematic deprivation of individuals' political agency and suffrage, a consequence of inherent inadequacies within the societal framework. Structural violence, as a manifestation of societal harm, is perpetuated by the intricate frameworks and establishments within a given society (Rylko-Bauer & Farmer, 2016). The aforementioned form of violence frequently eludes detection, yet exerts a substantial influence on the electoral mechanism.

The research conducted by Braveman et al. (2022) elucidated a significant manifestation of structural violence within the electoral process, namely the utilization of strategies designed to impede voter participation. The concept of voter suppression encompasses purposeful endeavors aimed at impeding or dissuading individuals from engaging in the act of voting, with a particular focus on those who are affiliated with historically marginalized or underrepresented factions within society. In the realm of voter suppression strategies, a prevalent method involves the implementation of rigorous voter identification legislation, as expounded upon by Hajnal et al. (2017). The aforementioned laws necessitate that individuals who wish to exercise their voting rights must furnish a government-issued photographic identification as a prerequisite for the act of casting their votes. Upon initial examination, one may perceive this as a rational stipulation. Nevertheless, the acquisition of identification documents can present substantial challenges for specific demographics lacking convenient accessibility to said documentation. In the context of socioeconomic disparities, it is noteworthy that individuals with diminished financial resources may confront challenges stemming from the onerous fiscal obligations entailed in procuring a government-issued photographic identification document. Additionally, they may encounter obstacles in the form of inadequate documentation

necessary for the successful completion of the application process. Similarly, individuals of advanced age who engage in the electoral process, as well as those residing in geographically isolated regions, may confront challenges stemming from constraints on their physical mobility or the scarcity of available transportation alternatives (Smith, 2016). An additional manifestation of voter suppression entails the deliberate curtailment of polling stations within particular geographical areas. The manifestation of this phenomenon became apparent in the context of Georgia's electoral proceedings in 2018, wherein a multitude of polling stations were deliberately shuttered within locales predominantly inhabited by individuals of African American descent. As a consequence, the electorate experienced protracted lines and prolonged periods of waiting, thereby impeding the exercise of their voting rights (Stephens, 2021). The aforementioned practices possess the potential to engender a sense of discouragement among individuals with regards to their participation in the electoral process, particularly among those who find themselves incapable of availing themselves of the opportunity to temporarily abstain from their occupational duties or who find themselves encumbered by other responsibilities that impede their ability to withstand the arduousness of enduring prolonged periods of waiting. Moreover, it is worth noting that the obstruction of voter registration stands as yet another frequently employed strategy in the realm of voter suppression. The aforementioned objective can be attained by implementing stringent registration deadlines, imposing onerous prerequisites for verification of residency or citizenship, or engaging in the practice of purging voter rolls (Hajnal et al., 2017). Gerrymandering, a manifestation of structural violence, possesses the capacity to exert substantial influence over the electoral process. The practice under consideration entails the strategic manipulation of electoral district boundaries with the intention of conferring an advantageous position upon a particular political party, thereby disadvantaging others. The aforementioned strategy entails the concentration of partisans aligned with a particular political party within a restricted number of electoral districts, while simultaneously dispersing adherents of the opposing party across a greater number of districts. Through this strategic maneuver, individuals in positions of authority possess the ability to effectively reduce the electoral influence wielded by their adversaries (Marcuse, 2020). The ramifications of this particular practice are far-reaching, resulting in inequitable representation and diminished political sway for specific communities.

In conjunction with its ramifications on political representation, gerrymandering serves to perpetuate systemic inequities and discriminatory practices. In the context of the United States, it is noteworthy to observe that the historical trajectory of racial segregation has engendered the formation of distinct communities that have become geographically concentrated within specific regions. When the redrawing of district boundaries occurs without due consideration of the aforementioned historical realities, the practice of gerrymandering serves to perpetuate the suppression of the voices emanating from these communities, thereby exacerbating their marginalization (Whittemore, 2017).

One additional determinant that exerts influence upon the electoral procedure is structural inequality, which can be regarded as yet another manifestation of structural violence. Within numerous societies, there exists a discernible pattern whereby specific groups encounter an inequitable distribution of poverty and are deprived of equitable political influence when juxtaposed with their more prosperous counterparts. Consequently, it can be observed that the aforementioned marginalized groups suffer from a lack of adequate representation within the electoral process, thereby perpetuating the existence of systemic disparities (Thai, 2017). The influence of structural inequality on electoral processes manifests itself notably through the imposition of economic barriers. The impediment of individuals' comprehensive engagement in the electoral process can be attributed to the dearth of access to fundamental requisites such as sustenance, habitation, and medical care. This deficiency hampers their capacity to partake in voting activities, encompassing the challenges of securing time off from employment obligations and procuring means of transportation to polling venues.

In essence, it can be succinctly stated that gerrymandering and structural inequality represent two distinct manifestations of structural violence that exert significant influence over electoral processes. The practice of

gerrymandering involves the strategic manipulation of district boundaries with the intention of achieving political advantage, thereby compromising the principles of equitable representation and impeding the expression of marginalized communities' voices. In the realm of electoral processes, it is imperative to acknowledge the presence of structural inequality, which engenders disparities that effectively curtail the access of specific demographic cohorts to political power. Both of these issues serve to undermine the fundamental principles of democracy by distorting the concept of fair representation and perpetuating systemic injustices within the system. Moreover, the exorbitant fees associated with the acquisition of nomination forms, which effectively impede certain segments of society from exercising their electoral eligibility, serve as a conspicuous manifestation of structural violence. The rationale behind this phenomenon lies in the limited accessibility of this specific manifestation, thereby relegating the majority to the regrettable circumstance of perpetual exclusion from political aspirations. In conjunction with economic impediments and the consolidation of political authority, an additional manifestation of systemic inequity within the electoral framework is observed in the form of discrimination and marginalization. In the event that specific cohorts, such as the female demographic, encounter systematic discrimination or marginalization, their capacity to attain commensurate levels of political influence may be compromised vis-à-vis other cohorts. In accordance with the findings of Ziller and Schubel (2015), it is evident that a notable disparity exists between the collective volition of the general populace and the preferences held by select high-ranking officials and influential individuals within a given nation. A perennial contest ensues between aspirants of political authority and those predisposed to its relinquishment. The adoption of coercive measures is a common practice in the deliberate manipulation of electoral processes and outcomes, as evidenced by the scholarly works of Fischer (2002), Nwolise (2007), Hoglund (2009), Omotola (2010), Bekoe (2012), and Harish and Toha (2019). Moreover, it is worth noting that these illicit and manipulative tactics are employed with the intention of suppressing the recognition of individuals' preferences (Adeola, 2012; Shelly, 2019). Instances of such occurrences are not limited to any specific phase within the electoral cycle, but rather encompass a broad spectrum of events including party primaries, voters' registration, the actual election process, and the subsequent announcement of election results. In instances of this nature, the fundamental entitlements of citizens to exercise their agency in determining their preferred governance are disregarded and withheld. The capacity of individuals to engage in the nation's democratic deliberations via a legitimate, unencumbered, and equitable electoral system is undermined by the actions of certain individuals within the governing body, who endeavor to enforce their own desires upon the populace, even if it entails significant loss of life. The argument put forth by Ron (2001) posits that the magnitude and extent of harm inflicted in an endeavor to deprive citizens of their electoral rights should be acknowledged as a manifestation of structural violence, as opposed to mere inequality or social injustice. This is due to the potential for substantial casualties and the potential escalation into a state of civil conflict that can arise from structural violence in the context of voting. The aforementioned standpoint garnered endorsement from Farmer (2005) and Lee (2016). In Farmer's seminal work published in 2005, it is argued that the considerable toll of casualties resulting from a range of structural constraints warrants the characterization of this phenomenon as structural violence, as opposed to mere inequality. This distinction is made on the basis that the term inequality fails to adequately capture the profound extent of harm that it entails. The aforementioned reality thus serves to underscore the extent of peril facilitated by structural violence and the scale of devastation it engenders. According to the scholarly work of Okeke-Ogbuafora, Grayb, and Steada (2018), it has been argued that the presence of structural violence within the realm of politics poses a significant hindrance to the realization of a government that is characterized by its commitment to the principles of inclusivity and representation, commonly referred to as a government of, by, and for the people. The fundamental objective of such a governmental system is to institute and advance the fundamental principles of democracy by means of electoral processes wherein the prevailing sentiment of the populace is duly acknowledged, thereby

culminating in the formation of a governing body that is a true reflection of the collective volition of the citizenry.

**3.0 Methodology**

Survey method is adopted which consists of the administration of questionnaire and interview methods. The adoption of survey research is justified on the ground that it enables the researcher to generalize from a sample to a population so that inferences and conclusions can be arrived at. This research cover Nigeria with a total population of 221,364,133.<sup>1</sup> The sample population adopts Krejcie and Morgan method of determining sample size for this research activity.<sup>2</sup> According to Krejcie and Morgan population size that is above 900,000 and above is pegged at 384 therefore the sample size is 384 respondents.<sup>3,4</sup> In order to make provision for the error that may occur during the administration of questionnaire. Israel asserts that 10% of the questionnaires should be added to the sample size.<sup>3</sup> The study used purposive, cluster and simple random sampling techniques. The choice of this technique is basically to avoid bias or absence of systematic variance. This research work strictly used the data generated during the research to test the hypotheses. Primary data was used in this study with a total of 422 questionnaires administered to the citizens of Nigeria, but only 410 questionnaires were returned. The study adopted Partial Least Square to analyze its data.

**4.0 Analysis of findings**

Table 1: The analysis of interview response using Thematic Analysis

	Position	Geo-political Zones	Sex	Occupation	Code
Informant 1	Electorate	South East	Male	Business man	In1
Informant 2	Electorate	South East	Female	Business women	In2
Infromant 3	Electorate	Northwest	Male	Business man	In3
Informant 4	Electorate	Northwest	Female	Business women	In4
Informant 5	Electorate	South West	Male	Civil servant	In5
Informant 6	Electorate	South West	Female	Civil servant	In6
Informant 7	Electorate	South South	Male	Civil servant	In7
Informant 8	Public Servant	South West	Male	INEC personnel	In8
Informant 9	Public Servant	South East	Male	INEC personnel	In9
Informant 10	Public Servant	Northwest	Male	INEC personnel	In10
Informant 11	Public Servant	FCT	Male	INEC personnel	In11

**Theme I: Gerrymandering**

**Sub-Theme i: Is there any political manipulation of electoral district boundary in Nigeria in order to disenfranchise Nigerians?**

The initial subject explored pertains to the impact of gerrymandering on the democratic system in Nigeria. According to sources inside the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the regions of Southwest, Northwest, South-South, Southeast, and the Federal Capital Territory, it has been said that Nigeria has not previously encountered instances of gerrymandering. Furthermore, it

<sup>1</sup> Worldometer, Nigeria Population Worldometer. Retrieved online from [www.worldometers.info](http://www.worldometers.info) , 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Krejcie, Robert and Daryle W. Morgan, "Determining sample size for research activities" (Educational and psychological measurement, 1970), 607-610.

has been emphasized that INEC consistently endeavors to provide eligible Nigerian citizens with the opportunity to exercise their right to vote and participate in the electoral process as candidates.

The phenomenon described is not commonly observed within the context of Nigeria. "In the Southwestern region, individuals who meet the necessary qualifications are granted the opportunity to exercise their right to vote" (In8, In9, In10, In11).

Furthermore, some respondents affiliated with the Organization have expounded upon the aforementioned elucidation. Additionally, a number of constituents residing inside the study regions have expressed the following sentiment: "In the region of Kaduna, the occurrence of gerrymandering has not been observed." The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has not engaged in any form of electoral district boundary manipulation with the intention of exerting influence over a candidate in Nigeria in the past. While there are Nigerians who hold the belief that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) may engage in malicious activities related to electoral malpractice, it is important to note that this perception does not extend to the degree of manipulating voting district boundaries in order to favor their chosen candidates (In1, In2, In3, In4, In5, In6, In7). According to all the sources consulted it is widely asserted that Nigeria has not previously encountered the practice of gerrymandering, particularly within the context of the Fourth Republic. Due to the identical nature of the responses from In3, In4, In5, In6, and In7, it was determined that reporting the information from In1 and In2 would be enough. This decision was made based on the notion of reaching a saturation point, a concept backed by Islam and Aldaihani.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the Nigerian Tribune made an observation that INEC, under the leadership of Professor Attahiru Jega, faced criticism for its endeavor to establish an additional 30,000 polling units prior to the 2015 general elections. This move was perceived as potentially granting an electoral advantage to the northern region and its consensus candidate in the presidential election. As a result, the proposed proposal was obstructed through the use of filibustering tactics and ultimately failed to be implemented.<sup>5</sup>

## **Theme II: Unequal distribution and opportunity**

### **Sub-Theme ii: Does poverty and class affect democracy in Nigeria?**

The second theme developed is garner responses from the electorates and officials if poverty and lack of basic amenities affect them from exercising their franchise. According to some INEC officials: - "Nigeria is class conscious country where we have the rich, middle class and the poor but that does not affect the electorate from voting during the elections". "In Nigeria, most of the rich men don't vote, it is these poor and middle-class people you mostly see at the polling booth on the election days" "the poor are the one that vote mostly "everybody votes in Nigeria as long as you fall within the age (In8, In9, In10, In11). In addition to the above explanation provided by some informants in the Organization, some electorates stated that: - "Our class and levels do not affect us during the election" "Our predicaments in Nigeria are the reasons why we come out massively to vote". How many rich people dey vote during the election". "Our status no affect us to vote because, na because of our pikin we dey vote. Wetin our eyes see we no want our pikin to face am" (In1, In2, In3, In4, In5, In6 & In7). We reached saturations point. This finding is similar to the findings of an author who observed that in most cases, the poor are the ones who come out to vote during elections. He however observed that even though the poor come out to vote, most of them do not vote their conscience but

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<sup>4</sup> Islam Asadul, and Faraj Mazyed, "Justification for adopting qualitative research method, research approaches, sampling strategy, sample size, interview method, saturation, and data analysis" (Journal of International Business and Management, 2022), 01-11.

<sup>5</sup> Nigerian Tribune, "Of INEC, voting point settlements and gerrymandering" (2019), Retrieved from <https://tribuneonlineng.com/of-inec-voting-point-settlements-and-gerrymandering/>

the desires of the top guns in politics.<sup>6</sup> He identified that the issue of vote buying as one of the tricks political leaders adopt in attaining or holding onto power. According to him, “What we see in some places as large turnout is actually made possible by the token doled out. The electorates collect such handout in exchange for the fabled democracy dividends.” Similarly, it was observed that despite the huge turnout by those in the lower class, they are often been manipulated against their wishes through the use of ethnic, regional and religious sentiments.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, he credited the huge turnout by those in the lower class to vote-buying and not the desire to bring about change. For him, poverty enhances vote selling, which results in the huge turnout and defaced democracy.

### **Theme III: Voter Suppression**

#### **Sub-Theme iii: does voter suppression affect democracy in Nigeria?**

The third theme developed is whether voter suppression affects democracy in Nigeria. According to some informants in INEC: - “Voters are not suppressed in Nigeria” “we have never heard or experienced voters’ suppression in Nigeria before”, “Yes, voter suppression can affect voting behaviour of the electorate but in Nigeria we don’t suppress the electorates”. Nobody is suppressed in Nigeria so I am wondering why you asked this question” (In8, In9, In10 & In11). In addition to the above explanation provided by some informants in the Organization, some electorates stated that: -

“INEC don’t suppress us”. The problem of suppression is not manifested in Nigeria election except for those miscreants that used to steal ballot boxes” “During the last election some of us were coerced by the miscreants to vote against our wish”, I was not suppressed during the election except that Ibos are claiming to be suppressed in Lagos”. “We Ibos were suppressed in Lagos State during the elections. “I was not suppressed during the election”. (In2, In3, In4, In5, In7) exerted that they were not suppressed during the election. (In1 & In6) explained that they were suppressed during the election. From the above information, the researchers experienced mixed feelings as the South westerners interviewed opined that they were not suppressed while the Ibos in the Southwest particularly in Lagos believed they were suppressed. However, we experienced saturation in answering the questions in our interview. In line with the finding from In1 and In6, it was observed that during the 2023 elections, some politicians and stakeholders encouraged criminal gangs to incite violence in order to suppress voters. Furthermore, the violence during the election was way beyond the carting away of ballot boxes, as political thugs were seen moving from streets to streets, cautioning citizens from exercising their voting rights if they would not vote for a particular party and its candidate<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Zukumnan Dapel, “Nigeria’s poor have the highest voting power yet seldom use it” (2022), Retrieved from <https://www.thecable.ng/nigerias-poor-have-the-highest-voting-power-yet-seldom-use-it>

<sup>7</sup> Nigerian Tribune, “Of INEC, voting point settlements and gerrymandering” (2019), Retrieved from <https://tribuneonlineng.com/of-inec-voting-point-settlements-and-gerrymandering/>

<sup>8</sup> Isaac Anyagou, In Nigeria’s elections, fraud is a built-in feature (2023). Retrieved from <https://businessday.ng/features/article/in-nigerias-elections-fraud-is-a-built-in-feature/>

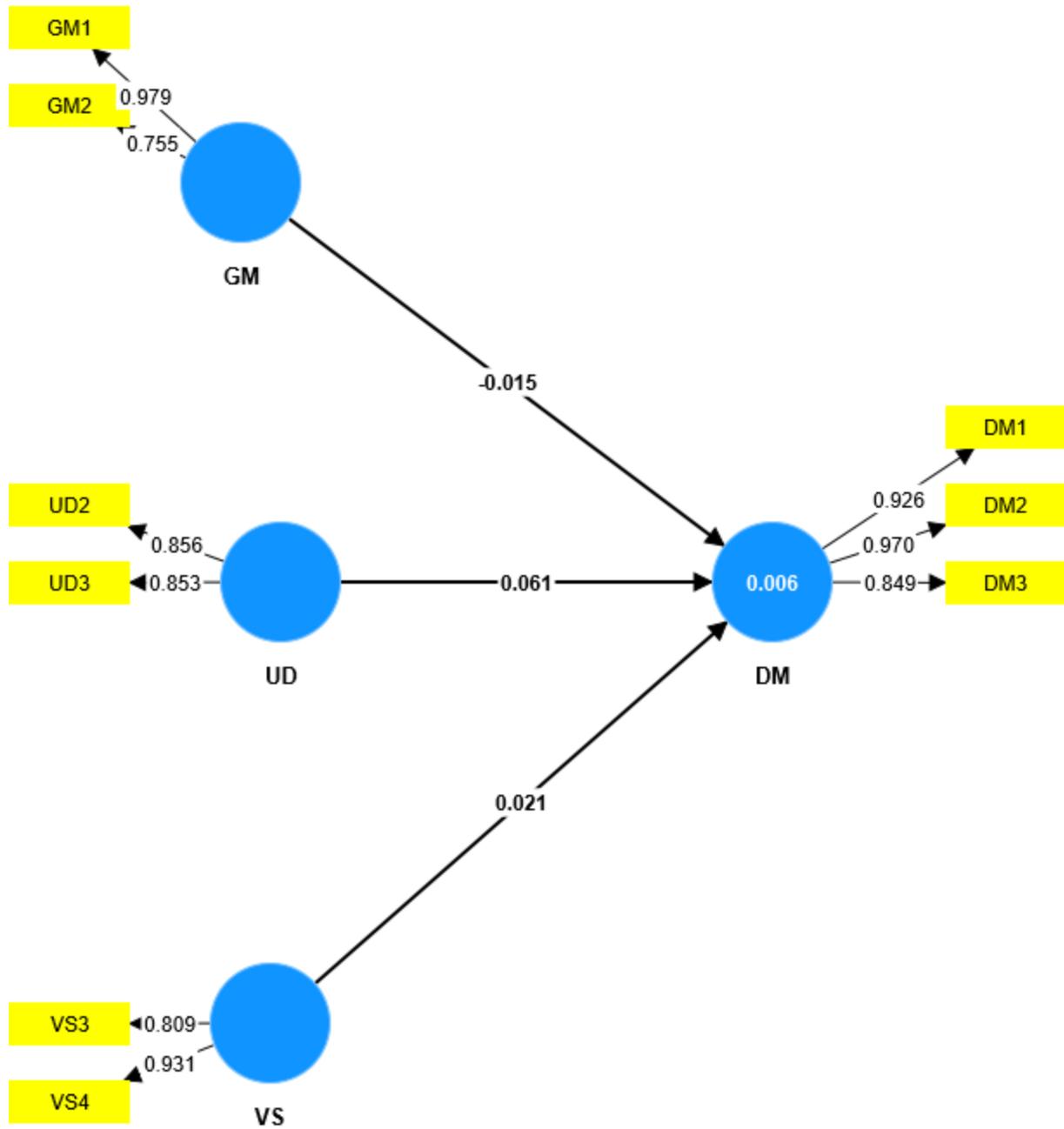


Table 2: Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity (n=410)

Construct	Items	Loadings	AVE	CR
Gerrymandering	GM1	0.979	0.801	0.889
	GM2	0.755		
Unequal Distribution	UD2	0.856	0.724	0.840
	UD3	0.853		
Voter's suppression	VS3	0.809	0.767	0.868
	VS4	0.931		
Democracy	DM1	0.926	0.686	0.867
	DM2	0.970		
	DM3	0.849		

Note: 5 constructs were deleted due to insufficient loading. AVE represents Average Variance Extracted; CR represents Composite Reliability.

In the provided table, it can be shown that all constructs exhibit Cronbach's Alpha coefficients over the threshold of 0.7. However, it is worth noting that constructions pertaining to GM, UD, VS, and DM were excluded from the analysis in order to enhance the overall quality of the study. Garson (2016) asserts that Cronbach's Alpha exhibits bias towards small scales consisting of only two items, similar to its bias against GM, UD, VS, and DM. Hair et al. (2014) suggest that constructions with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient below 0.7 may be disregarded, as long as the other constructs within the model exhibit a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient beyond 0.7 (Hair et al., 2014). All constructs exhibit composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) values that meet the recommended thresholds of 0.7 and 0.5, respectively. According to Hair et al. (2014), it is recommended that loadings should not fall below 0.7. In the table, all items that measure the variables exhibited a loading value greater than 0.7. Discriminant validity was also assessed for the data.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity using Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio (n=410)

Construct	DM	GM	UD	VS
<b>DM</b>				
<b>GM</b>	<b>0.137</b>			
<b>UD</b>	<b>0.153</b>	<b>0.741</b>		
<b>VS</b>	<b>0.097</b>	<b>0.370</b>	<b>0.639</b>	

Note: The bolded diagonal numbers represent the square root of the AVE of each latent construct

The aforementioned data illustrates the results obtained from the assessment of discriminant validity. The numbers that have been emphasized indicate the square root of the average of each hidden variable. The square roots of all the average variances extracted (AVE) exhibit larger values compared to their correlations with other latent variables. Based on the analysis of the Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio, the findings indicate the presence of discriminant validity, as reported by Garson (2016). Thus far, the data have been subjected to rigorous examination pertaining to factor loadings, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, and have successfully satisfied all established standards.

Table 4: *Path Coefficient*

Hypotheses	T Stat	P Value	Decision
H <sub>01</sub> : GM -> DM	1.517**	0.129	Fail to Reject
H <sub>02</sub> UD -> DM	1.089**	0.276	Fail to Reject
H <sub>03</sub> : VS -> DM	0.537**	0.591	Fail to Reject
R <sub>ADJUSTED</sub>	0.018		

\*\*p < 0.05;

Based on the aforementioned analysis, it can be concluded that gerrymandering does not exert a substantial impact on the democratic system in Nigeria, as indicated by the statistical results (t-value = 1.517, p-value > 0.05). As a result, the null hypothesis H<sub>01</sub>, which posits that gerrymandering does not exert a substantial impact on democracy in Nigeria, cannot be rejected. Furthermore, it may be argued that the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities does not have a substantial impact on the state of democracy in Nigeria, as evidenced by a t-value of 1.089 and a p-value greater than 0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis H<sub>02</sub>, which posits that the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities does not have a substantial impact on democracy in Nigeria, cannot be rejected. Finally, it might be argued that the impact of voter suppression on democracy in Nigeria is not substantial. The calculated t-value is 0.708, and the corresponding p-value is more than 0.05. H<sub>03</sub> posits that the impact of voter suppression on democracy in Nigeria is not statistically significant. The null hypothesis was not rejected. The adjusted R-squared value for this study is 18%.

**Potential Avenues for the Curtailment of Structural Violence in Nigeria’s Electoral Process**

The Fourth Republic of Nigeria's electoral process has faced many obstacles. The above issues have been linked to prominent people, weak organizational structures, and poor electoral regulation. Given the above problems, electoral changes in Nigeria are essential for promoting inclusivity and democracy in the country's voting procedures. The government, civic society, media, and marginalized groups like women and youth must work together to make Nigeria's electoral process more inclusive and democratic.

**Strengthening institutions:** Enhancing the capacity of electoral organizing institutions, such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), can contribute to mitigating structural violence within the electoral process. This objective can be achieved by implementing reforms that aim to bolster the autonomy of electoral institutions, foster transparency, and strengthen the efficacy of election oversight mechanisms.

**Increased political engagement:** Increased political engagement by marginalized groups like women, youth, and minorities is encouraged. This can be done by giving political parties quotas for marginalized groups or public money for diversity-promoting parties. Promoting civil society involvement in the electoral process might also minimize structural violence by monitoring elections and reporting electoral irregularities. Monitoring election results, reporting irregularities and violence, and lobbying for electoral changes can help civil society organizations promote transparency, accountability, and inclusivity. Political education and knowledge can also boost voter turnout and prevent electoral violence. Media, public discourse, and civic

education initiatives that promote democratic values, civic engagement, and political participation can do this.

**Addressing impunity:** This involves holding individuals and institutions accountable and punishing malpractices and incitement. This deters future perpetrators and improves the rule of law, eliminating structural violence in the political process. Prosecuting them sends a strong message that such behavior is unacceptable. Establishing specialist electoral offenses tribunals can speed up prosecution and hold electoral offenders accountable. Punishing electoral offenders is also crucial to ending impunity. This can be done by enforcing harsh electoral violation penalties including exclusion from running for office or fines. Doing so will deter electoral malfeasance and violence, making elections more peaceful and inclusive.

### Conclusion

This study critically examined several indicators of structural violence in Nigeria's electoral process, namely gerrymandering, voter suppression, and the unequal distribution of resources. Contrary to prevailing assumptions, the findings indicated that these particular indicators did not directly impede the functioning of democracy in Nigeria. However, the research also unveiled the presence of other significant structural irregularities within the country's electoral system that possess the potential to impact the overall democratic landscape. The analysis revealed that while gerrymandering, voter suppression, and resource disparities may not be pervasive in Nigeria's electoral process, there remain noteworthy challenges that demand attention and resolution. These identified structural irregularities, emerging as a result of this study, call for further investigation to comprehensively grasp their ramifications on Nigeria's democracy.

The outcomes of this research underscore the imperative of sustained scholarly inquiry and examination of Nigeria's electoral system. Future studies should delve deeper into these identified structural irregularities and explore their potential consequences on democratic processes and outcomes.

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