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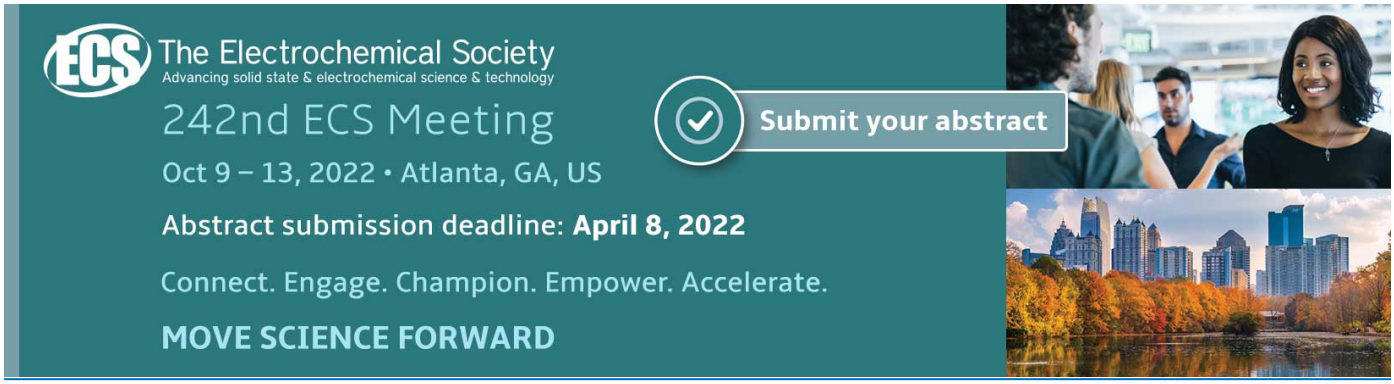

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Residential mobility and its effect on voter turnout in Surulere, Lagos, Nigeria

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Abstract. The study is aimed at assessing the effect of residential mobility on voter turnout or electoral participation, by exploring: the average distance between a polling unit and voter residence and the relationship between residential mobility and voter turnout in Alaka LSDPC Estate, Surulere Local Government Area. The study targeted a population of residents who moved into the neighborhood between 2015 to 2019 general elections, employed a hundred percent sample size, considering the marginal figure of 36 families and the sampling technique adopted was the snowballing and purposive. For data analysis, descriptive statistics were used for the average distance between a polling unit and voter residence, and ANOVA and linear regression were used to analyze the relationship between residential mobility and voter turnout. The current study found out that there is a significant relationship between residential mobility and voter turnout, as the average distance between a polling unit and a voter's residence is greater than 20 km which implies that it is very far and inaccessible. Residential mobility indeed affects voter participation, with a P = 0.001 value and R2 value of 0.513 (51.3%). It is recommended that residential mobility be considered in electoral policies, laws, initiatives, and programs by the electoral body to ensure total inclusion.
Keywords: Residential, mobility, voter participation, elections, purposive sampling, snowball sampling, regression.

1. Introduction

The concept of residential mobility is as old as man himself and the desire to move from one dwelling unit to another is as compelling as ever before [1]. Right through history, man is known to be continuously on the move either in search of better shelter or security. According to Coulton et al. [2], residential mobility is a procedure that is perceived to transform lives and neighborhoods. It does not only affect individual households but it affects the people as they occasionally move to improve their quality of life and maximize the use of their environment. Falling standard of living may force Low-income earners to move frequently to fit their standard. However, a significant improvement in income can force low or middle income to move to a place that suits their newest socioeconomic status.

Generally, for 50 years now, 23 out of 36 acclaimed democracies has witnessed a gradual decline in voter turnout in their respective national elections [3]. The steady but gradual decline in global voter turnout signals can be viewed as ideological and societal loss of trust in the credibility of the electoral process. It can also be that the manifesto promised by previous elected governments has not been implemented and hence the citizens have not benefited from the dividends of democracy practiced in the countries. Low voter turnout also connotes that the faith on political parties and elections as vehicle on consensual leadership is at a free fall [4].

Previous studies have concluded that residential mobility is negatively correlated with voters [5-7]. The reason for the negative effects of residential mobility on voters' turnout for elections were x-rayed in Hansen [8] and the author warned that this has led to inequalities in civic participation of democratic process. In most countries, restrictions on movement are imposed during elections to forestall electoral violence and to ensure free movement of electoral officers, security agents and electoral materials to polling and collation centres. Because of these, movement to polling stations on election days may not be feasible for some voters because of the following:

a). The distance between residence and polling stations may be too long and trekking (because of movement restrictions) may be stressful or not feasible.

b). Some voters may register in their workplaces and as such, it may be inconvenient to vote because of the distance factor.

c). Electoral agencies may relocate voters to different polling stations away from their residence.

d). Some voters may have changed locations for instance, some may register while they are in the university and have since graduated and reside in another place [9].

e). Where restrictions are not imposed, some voters may not have the capital to transport themselves to the polling stations [10].

Historically, movements are often restricted during elections in Nigerians and the income disparities in the country made people change their residence in line with the prevailing economic atmosphere [11]. Residential mobility has not featured as one of the causes of low voters' turnout. Corruption, tribalism, electoral malpractices, and violence, religious bias, zoning system, lack of political ideology, favouritism, godfatherism in politics and other unfavourable factors are the main causes of voters' dissatisfaction and loss of faith in the democratic process which manifest in low voters' turnout and political apathy [12]. Several authors have suggested some methods that can help to ensure credible elections and consequently enhance residential mobility to the polling centres [13-15].

Previous studies, while addressing some key issues towards the explanation of residential mobility and voter turnout are imagined to fall short in certain areas. First, the previous studies are based on residential mobility and voter turnout in different countries, while little has been done about the nature of residential mobility and voter turnout in Nigeria. Second, those extant studies that were carried in this context are quite old [16-18], as a lot has changed along the timeline these researches were conducted. There is a need for more recent research and the use of a holistic approach to investigate the impact of residential mobility on voter turnout. Third, bi-variate and multi-variate analyses have been used to determine linear and non-linear relationships that exist between residential mobility and voter turnout in various studies carried out in other geographical locations and countries. The present

work filled the gap by conducting the study of residential mobility and voter turnout in Nigeria specifically in a more holistic manner using multivariate analysis, experimental approach, and additional related variables. However, it is unlikely that residential mobility will change the way people votes as people that lives in a similar area often seems to vote for a particular candidate as often witnessed in Nigeria [19].

It is in this view that this study becomes imperative to examine the effect of residential mobility on voter participation as residential mobility is an important factor to consider in planning.

2. Materials and Methods

The research design is a survey which involves the use of interview and questionnaire as sources of the data.

2.1 Interview

In the study, 3 key bodies who were involved in one stage or the other in the formulation/implementation of residential/housing-related programs in Lagos state were scheduled for interviews. In the first category was the office of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Surulere District. The second was the office of the Community Development Council (CDC) Surulere Office, which is in charge of the Itire/Ikate and Coker/Aguda LGA residences. The third and last category involved the chairmen of the Community Development Association (CDAs) in the 43 CDAs given by the CDC office. The personal interaction with these governmental bodies who responded to questions facilitated access to the relevant document and other vital information that could not be easily released to anyone. The office of INEC supplied documents on the number of registered voters in the Surulere District and the list of polling areas in all the 12 wards. The office of the CDC provided information on the 43 CDAs available in Surulere with the contact information of the chairmen. Lastly, the CDA chairmen provided information on the number of residential associations available and new residents who moved in between 2015 and 2019.

2.2 Questionnaire

The recently moved-in respondents between 2015 and 2019 were selected for their views on the effect of residential mobility on voter participation/turnout in Alaka LSDPC Estate because they were the major determinants of assessing the effects of residential mobility.

2.3 Summary of the Research Design

Study Population: Adult residents who moved in between 2015 to 2019 general elections
Sample Frame: Total number of residents that move-in to the neighborhood between 2015 – 2019 general elections were 36 Adult person(s)
Sample Size: 36 persons (100% sample survey)
Sampling Technique: Snowballing and purposive.
Data Presentation: Texts and tables
Null Hypothesis: Residential mobility does not affect voter turnout/participation

3. Result

3.1Distance between the polling unit and individual residences

The responses solicited from the respondents on their perceived distances between their respective polling unit and individual residences were presented in **Tables 1** to **11**. The missing values were not used to calculate the percentages and N/A means not applicable.

Table 1: Walkable distance to a polling unit

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	0	0
No	32	94.1
N/A	2	5.9
Missing	2	
Total	36	100

Table 2: Unreachable distance between polling unit and home

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	28	82.4
No	4	11.8
N/A	2	5.8
Missing	2	
Total	36	100

Table 3: Polling unit accessibility

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	4	11.8
No	28	82.4
N/A	2	5.8
Missing	2	
Total	36	100

Table 4: Travelling overnight/ a day before to your polling unit

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	1	2.9
No	31	91.2
N/A	2	5.9
Missing	2	
Total	36	100

Table 5: Application of public transport to your polling unit

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	7	20.6
No	25	73.5
N/A	2	5.9
Missing	2	
Total	36	100

Table 6: Location of polling unit within the neighborhood

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	0	0
No	32	94.1
N/A	2	5.9
Missing	2	
Total	36	100

Table 7: Location of polling unit outside the neighborhood

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	31	91.2
No	1	2.9
N/A	2	5.9
Missing	2	
Total	36	100

Table 8: Convenience of locating the polling unit

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	1	2.9
No	31	91.2
N/A	2	5.9
Missing	2	
Total	36	100

Table 9: Convenience of accessing the polling unit

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	2	5.9
No	30	88.2
N/A	2	5.9
Missing	2	
Total	36	100

Table 10: Is Your Polling Unit Located in Surulere LGA?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	1	2.9
No	28	82.4
N/A	5	14.7
Missing	2	
Total	36	100

Table 11: Distance between your residence and the polling unit

Response	Frequency	Percentage
1 Km – 5 Km	1	2.9
5 Km – 20 Km	13	38.2
> 20 Km	15	44.2
N/A	5	14.7
Missing	2	
Total	36	100

In summary, when examining the average distance between the polling units and individual residences, it was observed that their polling units were not accessible, majority of the respondents did not travel overnight to vote. Also, the respondents did not use public transport to go to their polling units. Again, it was also observed that their polling units were not located in their neighborhoods which made it inconvenient accessing their polling unit.

3.2 Relationship between residential mobility and voter turnout/participation

To test the research hypothesis, the researcher builds the simple linear regression between the independent variable the restriction of movement on Election Day affects the right to vote on the dependent variable what is the distance between your house and where your polling unit is. The estimated results by SPSS 20.0 are described below as follows:

The dependent variable is the question responded in **Table 11**, which is the perceived distance between your respondents' respective residences and their corresponding polling units. The predictor is the question "the restriction of movement on election day affects the right to vote."

The regression model is significant and was able to explain 48% and 51.3% of the variation inherent in the dependent variable as shown in **Table 12**.

Table 12: Distance between your residence and the polling unit

	Value	P value
F	15.289	0.001
R	0.716	
R square	0.513	
Adjusted R square	0.480	
R Square change	0.716	
F change	15.289	
Constant (coefficient)	63.809	0.000
Predictor (coefficient)	0.19	0.001

Since the P-value of the coefficient of the predictor (independent variable) is less than 0.05, the Alternate Hypothesis (H1) is accepted, and hence, residential mobility affects voter turnout/participation.

From the data analyzed, it can be justified that the majority of the newly moved-in residents did not vote in the just concluded election (April 2019). Residential mobility affects voter turnout because the majority of the respondents recently moved into the estate, their polling units were not accessible and their registered polling units are neither in their neighborhood nor within a walking distance.

4. Conclusion

This research concludes that the average distance between the polling units and individual residences is greater than 20 km, which implies that the polling units are not within a walkable distance, not accessible, inconvenient accessing polling units and the polling units are not within their neighbourhood, hence inability to participate. The tested hypothesis also proved that residential mobility was 51.3% responsible for voter turnout.

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