

NIGERIAN ELECTORAL PROCESS AND YOUTHS' PRO-DEMOCRACY ATTITUDE IN IGBOLAND

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ABSTRACT: *This study is on "Nigerian electoral process and youths' pro-democracy attitude in Igboland". Elections in Nigeria are organized with disregard to pro-democracy attitudes of youths. This is a great negligence of the youths, who are greater members of the citizen. Two hundred and seventy-eight (278) participants were sampled from Igboland of the Eastern Nigeria for the study. Multistage sampling was adopted to sample the participants. Electoral Process Perception Scale by Nwankwo (2026) and Democracy Attitude Questionnaire by Nwankwo (2026) were the measuring instruments responded on 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). Response period was 5-10 minutes per participant. The study had cross-sectional design, and statistics was Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), with data analyses done with SPSS version 26. The findings showed that: Male Igbo youths' pro-democracy attitude was significantly lower than the female counterparts ($F(1, 8.02) = 0.44; p > 0.000; N = 278$), at $\eta^2 = 0.052$ (5.2%); and Nigerian electoral process significantly promotes pro-democracy attitude among Igbo youths ($F(49, 7.99) = 14.64; p < 0.000; N = 278$), at $\eta^2 = 0.989$ (98.9%). It is recommended for pro-action to be taken to ensure that pro-democracy attitudes of Igbo male youths do not dwindle further, while at the same time sustain the promising pro-democracy attitudes of the female counterparts. The contribution to knowledge of the study and its findings is that it has brought into limelight that the male gender's pro-democracy attitude has dwindled whereas that of the female gender has increased more than that of the male gender.*

KEYWORDS: Youths, Igboland, Pro-Democracy, Attitude

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, elections have historically been marred by controversies, irregularities, and disputes that undermine public confidence in the electoral process. These seem to bring about dwindle in pro-democracy attitudes among the citizens. (Chimogu & Chimogu, 2026). There are persistent challenges surrounding electoral process and election management in Nigeria (Bello, Aboluwoye & Shiyabade, 2026; Yunana, 2025). This heralds the need for a deeper understanding of how these issues affect pro-democracy consolidation attitudes among citizens. Youth engagement is increasingly recognized as a vital factor in building public confidence in election management.

Statement of the Problem

With over 60% of Nigeria's population under the age of 30, young people represent a demographic dividend that could

drive democratic consolidation if effectively mobilized (Ogbodo, 2022). Platforms such as the Not Too Young to Run movement have sought to empower young Nigerians to contest for political office and advocate for policy reforms. Yet, structural barriers such as high nomination fees and entrenched patronage networks continue to hinder meaningful participation.

Gender equality remains a pressing concern in Nigeria's electoral landscape. Women constitute more than half of the population but are grossly underrepresented in elected positions. Cultural norms, discriminatory laws, and systemic biases perpetuate this imbalance, limiting the diversity of perspectives in decision-making processes (Oluwatoyin, 2021).

Many Nigerians, particularly marginalized groups such as women, youth, and rural dwellers, seem to remain uninformed about their rights and

responsibilities as voters. Onapajo (2023) argues that this knowledge gap contributes to apathy and disengagement, which in turn perpetuates cycles of electoral misconduct and mistrust. Hence this study seeks to investigate Nigerian electoral process and youths' pro-democracy attitude in Igboland.

Purpose of the Study

1. Examine Igbo youths with gender variations will not significantly differ in pro-democracy attitude.
2. Nigerian electoral process will not significantly promote pro-democracy attitude among Igbo youths.

Research Questions

1. How will Igbo youths of gender variations will differ in pro-democracy attitude?
2. In what ways do Nigerian electoral process promote pro-democracy attitude among Igbo youths?

Significance of the Study

Civil society organizations and advocacy groups working to promote electoral reforms in Nigeria will also find this research useful. The study will provide empirical-based evidence on the on the relationship between electoral process and youths' political participation. This will aid campaign in electoral reforms that will be youths inclusive.

Operational Definition of Measured Variables

Electoral Process: This refers to the election procedures, system, and progression assessed by perceived fairness, transparency, and accuracy measured with Electoral Process Questionnaire by Nwankwo (2026) under Election Credibility, and Election Management Public Confidence dimensions.

Pro-Democracy Attitude: This refers to the practices, disposition, attached-values and other democracy tendencies exhibited by an individual towards democratic consolidation as measured with Pro-Democracy Attitude Questionnaire by Nwankwo (2026).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Anchor/Base

Social Trust theory by Robert Putnam (1993): The anchor theory of the study is the Social Trust theory, which posits that individuals' belief in the integrity and good intentions of others forms the basis for cooperation, social cohesion, and economic and political development. It involves both limited trust in close networks and generalized trust in a wider scope of people. It is crucial for governance, well-being and the functioning of society. It influences everything from community participation to leadership formation in the society. The theory explores how social trust is formed through experiences and social networks, its varied levels across cultures, and its impact on creating stable, prosperous societies, and political stable society. The theory is therefore very apt as the anchor theory, as it gives veritable information concerning electoral process, and pro-democracy attitude. The social trust theory focuses on electoral process as well as pro-democracy issues (relevant for the study).

Gaps in Literature

Several literatures highlight the importance of perceived legitimacy in election processes, which enhances citizens' support for democracy and political authority. Empirical studies reinforce the notion that credible election management is integral to pro-democracy consolidation (Adebayo & Chukwuemeka, 2022). Conversely, a study by Hassan and Daniel (2023) suggest that electoral fraud and manipulation undermine public confidence, leading to political disengagement and weakening democratic attitudes, which requires the need for electoral reforms.

However, there are presumptions that poor electoral process seems to hinder consolidation of pro-democracy attitude among Nigerians, particularly youths. Some psychosocial groups in Nigeria are even tempted or enticed to favour military takeover of Nigerian governance. Empirical literature is therefore dare on Nigerian youths (being future leaders) vis-à-vis their cognitions towards Nigerian electoral process and how it predisposes the youths towards democracy.

Hypotheses

1. Igbo youths with gender variations will not significantly differ in pro-democracy attitude.
2. Nigerian electoral process will not significantly promote pro-democracy attitude among Igbo youths.

METHOD

Participants: A total of two hundred and seventy-eight (278) participants were sampled from Igboland of the Eastern Nigeria for the study. Table 1 shows the participants sample distributions for the study.

Table 1: Sample (Participants') Distribution

Sample Category	Sample Cluster	N
GENDER	Male	100
	Female	178
MARITAL STATUS	Married	80
	Single	198
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	Postgraduate	58
	Graduate	168
	Secondary	52
OCCUPATION	Student	164
	Farmer	12
	Entrepreneur	14
	Civil Servant	18
	Show Business	16
	Finance	16
	Business	26
	Computer Technology	12
	Delta	15
	Rivers	20
STATE OF ORIGIN	Imo	37
	Anambra	115
	Enugu	37
	Abia	28
	Ebonyi	26
	Christianity	272
RELIGION	Traditional	6
	None	6
CHRISTIAN DENOMINATION	Catholic	170
	Anglican	80
	Pentecostal	22

Questionnaire primary data

The sample consisted of males (100) and females (178), with 80 being married and 178 being single. The participants had educational levels variations of postgraduate (58), graduates (168), and secondary (52). The participants' occupational groups were students (164), farmer (12), entrepreneur (14), civil servant (18), show business (16), finance (16), business (26), and computer technology (12). The sample representations from Igbo-speaking States were Delta State (15), Rivers State (20), Imo State (37), Anambra State (115), Enugu State (37), Abia State (28), and Ebonyi State (26). Religious beliefs of the participants were Christianity (272), and traditional (6), where the Christian denominations were Catholic (170), Anglican (80), Pentecostal (22), and none (6).

The participants' age ranged between 19-55 years, with mean age (23.58) and SD (5.69). This age range was selected to capture individuals who were eligible to vote and participate in democratic processes, ensuring that the sample consisted of active members of the electorate.

Multistage sampling was adopted to sample the participants. Multistage sampling is a sampling method that involves dividing a population into smaller, more manageable groups (strata or clusters) and then randomly sampling from these subgroups at successive stages until a final sample is obtained (Chah et al, 2022; Friendly Statistician, 2025; Nwankwo et al, 2019; Usman et at, 2022). This approach is particularly useful for large, or geographically

dispersed population where a complete list of individuals is unavailable, and it helps reduce costs and improve feasibility (Chah et al, 2022; Friendly Statistician, 2025; Nwankwo et al, 2019; Usman et al, 2022).

Quality assurance was adopted to ensure representative sampling across the population. Efforts were made to ensure that the participants' sampling represented the psychosocial diversity of the population, which allowed for the sampling of individuals from different demographic backgrounds, such as age, gender, educational level, marital status, occupational groups, religion and State of origin. The aim was to provide a comprehensive understanding of electoral process in Nigeria and its implications for pro-democracy attitudes.

Instruments: The instruments of the study were Electoral Process Perception Scale by Nwankwo (2026), consisting Election Credibility Questionnaire, Election Management Public Confidence, and Democracy Attitude Questionnaire dimensions. The Electoral Process Scale and its dimensions were uniquely tailored to measure the variables relevant to the present study. They had undergone adequate psychometric evaluations to ensure their validity, reliability, and mean norms. The research instruments were designed to assess the level of perceived credibility in Nigerian electoral system. It was used to evaluate the public's perception of the fairness, and acceptability of election-outcomes (results) conducted in Nigeria. The instrument targeted such aspects as whether elections are free from manipulation, the fairness of vote counting, and result announcement.

The ECQ consists of 13 carefully constructed items aimed at eliciting responses that reflected citizens' experiences and evaluations of recent electoral exercises. The response format was a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The scoring format was cumulative, where higher scores indicated a higher perception of electoral credibility, and lower scores suggested skepticism or distrust.

The instruments were subjected to psychometric validation, reliability, and mean norms determinations. Furthermore, Item and

Theme Analyses were also done on the items and factors of the instruments, by experts who reviewed the items for clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness. The convergent validity indices obtained with "Electoral Integrity" was "Electoral Process" = 0.95, "Election Credibility" = 0.94, "Election Management Public Confidence" = 0.92, and "Pro-Democracy Attitude" = 0.96, indicating an overall high level of convergent validity. Furthermore, the reliability of the instruments was determined using Cronbach's alpha method. The overall Cronbach Alpha of the "Electoral Process" instrument was 0.83. However, the respective reliability coefficients of the instruments' dimensions were "Election Credibility" = 0.79, "Election Management Public Confidence" = 0.75, and "Pro-Democracy Attitude" = 0.83, suggesting good internal consistency and dependability for research instrument and its dimensions. The mean norms were "Electoral System" = 110, "Election Credibility" = 32.5, "Election Management Public Confidence" = 40.0, and "Pro-Democracy Attitude" = 32.5, indicating the higher the mean norm the higher the behavioural exhibitions.

Procedure: The procedure for this study involved several well-defined stages to ensure accurate data collection and ethical compliance. First, the researcher obtained an official introduction letter from the Department, which aided the researcher access to research organizations or groups where the need arose. Upon receiving consent, the researcher proceeded to identify public spaces, institutions, and community hubs where eligible participants could be approached. A total of 300 questionnaire copies were administered on corresponding participants using multistage sampling technique to ensure adequate representation across gender, educational background, religion, and occupational status. However, only two hundred and seventy-eight (278) participants completed the sampling process, and were used for the study.

The inclusion criteria were that the participants must be Nigerians, Igbo tribe, adults and up to 18 being the voting age in Nigeria. Participants were be fully briefed on the purpose

of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. Informed consent was obtained from them. The researcher and trained assistants were available to clarify items where necessary. Responding to the questionnaires was expected to take between 5-10 minutes per participant depending on individual differences. After completion, the questionnaire was collected, sorted, and coded in preparation for data analysis.

Design and Statistics: The design for this study was cross-sectional designs. This design was

considered appropriate because the data for the study were collected from the participants at a point in time in their places of endeavour. Quantitative data obtained from the participants were subjected to statistical analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 26). Descriptive statistics were be used to summarize the variables information. Inferential statistics were used for testing the hypotheses using Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), evaluating impacts of gender and electoral process in promoting pro-democracy attitude among the youths.

Table 2: Performance Descriptive Statistics of Variables

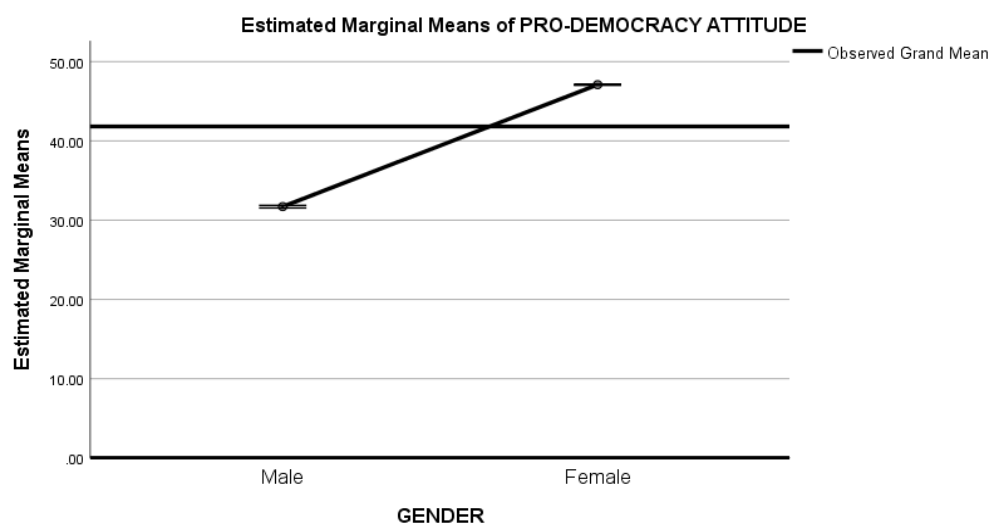
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Std. Error	Kurtosis	Std. Error
AGE	278	19.00	55.00	23.5755	5.69118	3.378	.146	13.693	.291
ELECTORAL PROCESS	278	57.00	216.00	124.1187	29.88565	.682	.146	1.663	.291
PRO-DEMOCRACY ATTITUDE	278	12.00	65.00	41.8201	11.28639	-.449	.146	.377	.291

SOURCE: Questionnaire primary data. N = 278

SD (standard deviation) of “Electoral Process” was 29.88565, indicating high performance variations among the participants. “Pro-Democracy Attitude” of Igbo youths was above average (41.8201 of 65). SD of “Pro-Democracy Attitude” was 11.28639, indicating high variations among Igbo youths. Skewness of “Electoral Process” was 0.682 indicating data of

lower values more than higher values were collected, while Kurtosis was 13.693 indicating substantial and diverse outlier performance. Skewness of “Pro-Democracy Attitude” was -0.449 indicating data of higher values more than lower values were collected, while Kurtosis was 0.377 indicating high uniformity of majority of the performance.

Figure 1: Gender and Pro-Democracy Attitude



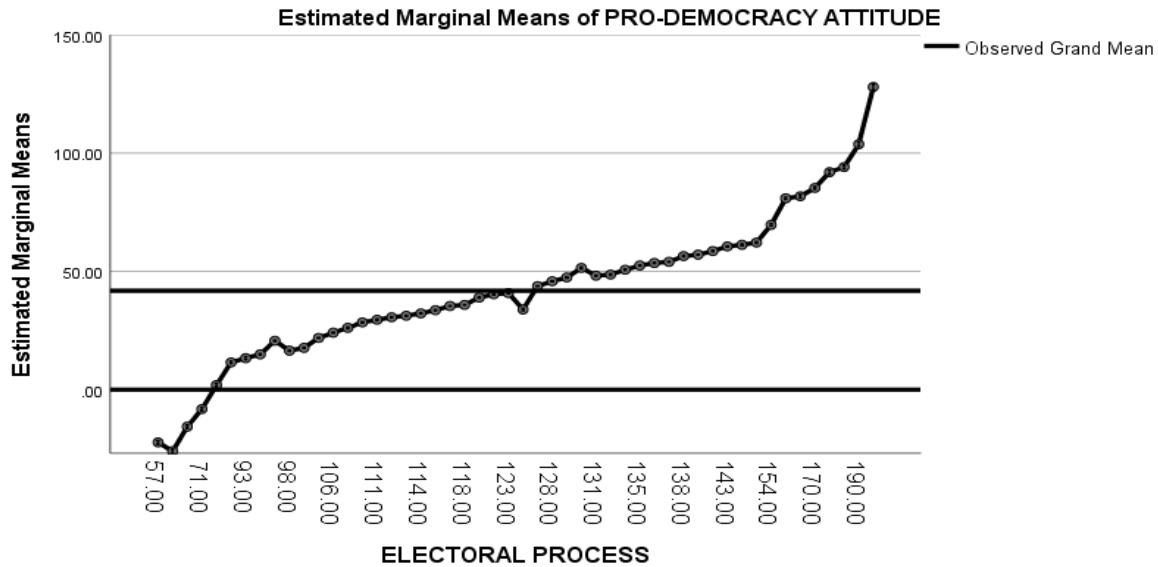
Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Election Credibility = 38.2806, Election Mgt Public Confidence = 44.0791

Error bars: 95% CI

SOURCE: Questionnaire primary data. N = 278

Figure 1 shows that the “Pro-Democracy Attitude” of the Igbo male youths was below average (33.00 of 43.00), while that for the female youths was above average (47 of 43).

Figure 2: Electoral Process and Pro-Democracy Attitude



Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Election Credibility = 38.2806, Election Mgt Public Confidence = 44.0791

Error bars: 95% CI

SOURCE: Questionnaire primary data. N = 278

Figure 2 shows that the “Pro-Democracy Attitude” of Igbo youths is steadily on the increase.

Table 3: ANCOVA Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Pro-Democracy Attitude

Dependent Variable: PRO-DEMOCRACY ATTITUDE

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power
GENDER	Hypothesis	5.15	1	5.15	.44	.524	.052	.44	.09
	Error	93.32	8.02	11.62					
ELECTORAL PROCESS	Hypothesis	16798.40	49	342.82	14.64	.000**	.989	717.66	1
	Error	187.13	7.99	23.40					
GENDER & ELECTORAL PROCESS	Hypothesis	162.22	8	20.27	427.99	.000**	.940	3423.99	1
	Error	10.28	217	.04					

** Significant @ 0.01 level (2-tailed); N = 278. SOURCE: Questionnaire primary data

Hypothesis One: It states that “Igbo youths with gender variations will not significantly differ in pro-democracy attitude.” Table 3 showed that the hypothesis was accepted. It confirmed that Igbo youths with gender variations did not significantly differ in “Pro-Democracy Attitude” ($F(1, 8.02) = 0.44; p > 0.000; N = 278$), at $\eta^2 = 0.052$ (5.2%). The observed power of 0.09 showed low statistical strength of gender differences in “Pro-Democracy Attitude” among Igbo youths at $p > 0.01$, and even $p > 0.05$. The non-centrality

parameter ($\delta = 0.44$) was not high, indicating low degree to which the null hypothesis is false.

Hypothesis Two: It states that “Nigerian electoral process will not significantly promote pro-democracy attitude among Igbo youths.” Table 3 showed that the hypothesis was rejected. It entails that Nigerian “Electoral Process” significantly promotes “Pro-Democracy Attitude” among Igbo youths ($F(49, 7.99) = 14.64; p < 0.000; N = 278$), at $\eta^2 = 0.989$ (98.9%). The observed power of 1 showed perfect statistical strength of Nigerian “Electoral Process” in promoting “Pro-Democracy

Attitude” among Igbo youths at $p < 0.000$. The non-centrality parameter ($\delta = 717.66$) was high above 3 point-bench mark, indicating high degree to which the null hypothesis is false.

Summary of Findings

Descriptive Findings

1. Igbo male youths had “Pro-Democracy Attitude” below average.
2. Igbo female youths had “Pro-Democracy Attitude” above average.
3. Electoral process in Nigeria was perceived above average.
4. Pro-democracy attitude was steadily on the increase.

Hypotheses Findings

5. Igbo youths with gender variations did not significantly differ in “Pro-Democracy Attitude”.
6. Nigerian “Electoral Process” significantly promotes “Pro-Democracy Attitude” among Igbo youths.
7. Interaction of gender and Nigerian electoral process significantly promotes “Pro-Democracy Attitude” among Igbo youths.

DISCUSSION

One of the findings of the present study is that Igbo youths with gender variations did not significantly differ in Pro-Democracy Attitude. Furthermore, Igbo male youths had Pro-Democracy Attitude below average. On the other hand, Igbo female youths had Pro-Democracy Attitude above average. This finding could be explained from the perspective of Mrubula-Ngwenya, Legodi, Vuma, and Rapanyane (2026) that gender emancipation has improved the participation of women in political decision-making. While the present study is in consonance with the earlier findings by Chimogu and Chimogu (2026) as it concerns Nigerian males, it is however at variance with the Nigerian females.

Chimogu and Chimogu (2026) were of the view that pro-democracy attitude is in a consistent decline in terms of voters’ turnout during elections, driven by widespread disillusionment, poor institutional credibility, and the perception that elections seldom influence governance outcomes. The sustainability of democracy in Nigeria depends on strengthening electoral integrity, deepening

political accountability, and restoring citizens’ confidence in electoral institutions. Comprehensive electoral reforms, inclusive political processes, and civic education are key strategies for enhancing political participation and consolidating democracy (Chimogu & Chimogu, 2026).

The findings of the study contradict the expectations as observed by Yunana (2025) that Nigeria’s electoral process has been marred by controversy and disputes, undermining the credibility of the country’s democratic system. In a country where elections are often marred by controversy, the commission is constantly under scrutiny. While progress has been made in strengthening Nigeria’s electoral process, public confidence in election management seems disappointing (Yunana, 2025).

The findings of the study conformed with republican and democratic predisposition of the Igbos. The population of the study is such that dislikes autocracy. So, pro-democracy attitudes fit naturally into Igbos’ pattern of rulership. Pro-democracy attitudes are existential value of the Igbos. Societies that accept autocracy tolerates democratic autocracy, indoctrination, and repression (Kim, Nazrullaeva, Neundorf, Northmore-Ball & Tertychnaya, 2026) which are part of the Igbos.

Implication of the Study and its Findings

1. Another implication of the study could be that political interest among Igbo youths is prioritized to pro-Biafra independence motivation. Consequently, negative electoral process in Nigeria has discouraged pro-democracy attitudes among Igbo male youths.

Recommendations

1. Pro-action has to be made to ensure that pro-democracy attitudes of male youths do not dwindle further. It has been found from the study that male Igbo youths have pro-democracy attitude below their female counterpart.

Contributions to Knowledge

1. One of the contributions to knowledge the study and its findings have made is that the study has brought into limelight that the male gender’s pro-democracy attitude has dwindled whereas that of the female gender

has increased more than that of the male gender.

Suggestions for Further Research

1. Future studies on this topic should explore the factors that predispose the male gender to exhibit dwindling pro-democracy attitude.

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APPENDIX ELECTORAL PROCESS PERCEPTION SCALE

COULD YOU PLEASE RATE HOW MUCH YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?		Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Sometimes (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
ELECTION CREDIBILITY						
1.	I use my vote to determine which candidate is most credible in an election.					
2.	As a voter, I determine the leader that defends my ideas.					
3.	When I listen to electoral debates, I usually wish the best candidate wins.					
4.	I feel very involved in election to ensure the best candidate wins.					
5.	Elections are won in Nigeria based on sincere voting by voters.					
6.	Citizens are the determinants of election outcomes.					
7.	Elected politicians in Nigeria give good governance to the people.					
8.	With election, a wrong candidate cannot find their way into leadership position.					
9.	A wrong candidate in an election cannot brainwashing voters.					
10.	Voting buying is not possible in my country.					
11.	On the whole, Nigerian politicians are credibly elected.					
12.	My vote does influence how my country is governed.					
13.	So far, Nigerian elections have been free and fair.					
ELECTION MANAGEMENT PUBLIC CONFIDENCE						
14.	That a wrong candidate is declared winners does not invalidate the election process.					
15.	Generally, Nigerian corrupt politicians do not benefit from the electoral system.					
16.	The current Nigerian electoral system will ensure happier life for future generation.					
17.	The country's election is not influenced by external powers.					
18.	Elections in Nigeria is well organized.					
19.	Memories of previous elections determine whether I will vote or not in next election.					
20.	In Nigeria, leaders are selected rather than elected.					
21.	Election atmosphere in Nigeria is very encouraging.					
22.	Polling centres/stations in Nigeria are secured.					
23.	Election results in my country are not manipulated.					
24.	In Nigeria, election process is just not a formality.					
25.	Election officials in my country are trustworthy.					
26.	Election process in Nigeria offers citizens opportunity to participate in governance.					
27.	Public confidence in Nigerian electoral system is on the increase.					
28.	Election (INEC) officials in my country cannot be bribed.					
29.	In Nigeria, voters are freely allowed to monitor election results.					
30.	Election results are announced very timely.					
31.	Election results in Nigeria are not tampered with.					

SOURCE: Nwankwo O.D. (2026), Department of Psychology, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State, Nigeria. Emails: nwankwodo@gmail.com ; nwankwodo@yahoo.com ; od.nwankwo@coou.edu.ng ; Phones: +2348030809950 , +2348120207053

PRO-DEMOCRACY ATTITUDE QUESTIONNAIRE

	COULD YOU PLEASE RATE HOW MUCH YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Sometimes (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
1.	I see democracy as the best form of leadership/government.					
2.	Nigerian political parties do not deceive the citizens.					
3.	It is my view that democracy works quite well in Nigeria.					
4.	Good governance has improved in Nigeria since the restoration of democracy.					
5.	I participate in an election because I have it as a duty to do so.					
6.	I feel guilty if I don't vote in an election.					
7.	I vote for the party I like best regardless of its chances of winning.					
8.	Nigeria's interest instead of ethnic interest is what determines who I vote for.					
9.	Despite not voting, I had strong feelings about a party I want to win.					
10.	I feel proud if I go out to vote.					
11.	Democratic election is an opportunity for me to vote out bad leaders.					
12.	Voting regularly in elections has inculcated political participation consciousness in me.					
13.	I vote in an election because that is the best way of electing political leaders.					

SOURCE: Nwankwo O.D. (2026), Department of Psychology, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State, Nigeria. Emails: nwankwodo@gmail.com ; nwankwodo@yahoo.com ; od.nwankwo@coou.edu.ng ;
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