

## Assessment of Voter Education on Electorates for Credible Election and Good Governance in Nigeria

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### Abstract

*Nigerian voter turnout has remained low when compared to other African democracies. Presenting a graphical illustration of this scenario, INEC (2019) citing example of the 2015 general election, voter turnout was only 43.7%, and in 2019, it fell even lower to 34.75%. This downward trend raises questions about how well electoral reforms and voter education can address the obvious barriers to electoral participation and the credibility of elections that can guarantee good governance. It is therefore pertinent to get citizens more informed in discharging their legitimate duties and obligations necessary for credible elections, a basic component of good governance in Nigeria. It is against the foregoing that this study x-rays the place of voter education in attaining credible elections as a means of achieving good governance in Nigeria. Findings from the study revealed that majority of respondents (with mean scores ranging from 3.32 to 3.50) authenticate voter education as Nigeria's democratic process tool; participants generally agreed that voter education plays a significant role in electoral credibility, with mean scores for all five items above 3.0; the mean scores of all the items on how voter education affects election credibility in Nigeria were higher than the neutral value of 2.5, hence, respondents had a favourable opinion of the issue for every item in the t-test since all computed t-values were greater than the critical t-value of 1.658 at the 0.05 significance level. Consequently, it behooves the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and civil society organizations to intensify nationwide civic education campaigns that targets rural and first-time voters, to improve knowledge of voting procedures and reduce voter apathy; education policymakers should include structured voter education modules in secondary and tertiary school curricula to foster early civic responsibility and political awareness among Nigerian youth; both Government and NGOs should maximize the use of social media, radio, and TV programmes in disseminating simplified and timely voter education content, ensure wider reach and reduce misinformation that could undermine election credibility.*

**Key words:** Voter education; Credible election; Good governance; Electoral violence; Voter apathy

### Introduction

The foundation of any democratic society is elections, which give people the chance to choose their leaders and shape governance procedures and policies. In Nigeria, electoral processes have been plagued by problems like voter apathy, electoral malpractice, violence, and administrative inefficiencies, which in the words of Adebayo (2020) have eroded public confidence in the electoral system and deterred participation, endangering the legitimacy of Nigeria's democratic institutions. Since Nigeria returned to democracy in 1999, successive governments have implemented a number of electoral reforms to address these problems and improve electoral integrity, however, it is still unclear whether these reforms have been successful. Reiterating this view, it was the contention of Omotola (2013) that the state of the electoral reform vis-à-vis improvement in electorate participation as well as its ability to increase voter turnout is not yet satisfactory; hence, its ability to fortify the democratic process still remains at low ebb. This might not be unconnected with inadequate voter education, corollary of which brings to question the issue of credible elections in the polity. The background to Nigeria's electoral reforms is rooted in a history of electoral controversies and irregularities. Elections in the early post-independence era (1960–1983) as reported by Nwanko (2018) were characterized by widespread rigging, ballot box snatching, and voter intimidation, leading to political instability and military interventions. The transition to democracy in 1999 marked a turning point, yet subsequent elections, particularly in 2003 and 2007, were heavily criticized for fraud and violence. This prompted calls for systemic reforms to restore electoral credibility and public confidence. As a response, the Electoral Act of 2010 and subsequent amendments introduced measures such as biometric voter registration, the use of the Permanent



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Voter Card (PVC), and electronic accreditation systems to enhance transparency and voter participation (INEC, 2015). Despite these reforms, Nigerian voter turnout has remained low when compared to other African democracies. Presenting a graphical illustration of this scenario, INEC (2019) citing example of the 2015 general election, voter turnout was only 43.7%, and in 2019, it fell even lower to 34.75%. This downward trend raises questions about how well electoral reforms and voter education can address the obvious barriers to electoral participation which to Okoh and Osezua (2021), includes socioeconomic factors like poverty and illiteracy, security challenges, and mistrust of the electoral system. Studies have also contended that electoral reforms alone cannot address the structural problems that limit political participation, and that a comprehensive strategy that includes political education and voter education in particular coupled with enhanced security, and stakeholder collaboration is a sine-qua-none of entrenching participatory democratic culture in the citizens (Oni, 2014). Furthermore, in order to improve the credibility and transparency of elections, technological innovations like the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) Result Viewing Portal (IReV) were introduced. These reforms were implemented in the general elections of 2023 and have shown promise in reducing electoral fraud and ensuring accurate voter accreditation; however, obstacles like inadequate technological infrastructure, power outages, and internet connectivity issues have hindered their full implementation and effectiveness (Akinola, 2023).

The effectiveness of these reforms in encouraging voter participation is still up for debate, especially in rural areas where access to technology is limited. Adebayo (2020) examined the difficulties of electoral reforms in Nigeria and emphasized issues like vote-buying, ballot box snatching, and the influence of "godfatherism." in the politics of Nigeria. According to the study, political meddling and a lack of institutional capacity hindered the implementation of reforms like the Electoral Act amendments, which sought to increase electoral credibility. As a result of the public's lack of trust in the electoral process, voter turnout was low. Additionally, Okoh and Osezua (2021) in their assessment of socioeconomic obstacles to voting in Nigeria in terms of lack of political education, voter education, poverty, and illiteracy revealed that socio-economic factors still make it difficult for citizens to effectively participate in elections, even in the face of technological advancements like the Permanent Voter Card (PVC) and the implementation of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS). Similarly, Akinola (2023) in a study on the part being played by technology in Nigeria's 2023 elections, highlighted the potential of the INEC Result Viewing Portal and BVAS. Together, these studies show that although Nigeria has made progress through electoral reforms, issues like voter apathy, electoral violence, institutional inefficiencies, and socio-economic disparities continue to undermine voter participation. These findings highlight the need for more research into the effectiveness of reforms and the enduring barriers to electoral engagement in Nigeria, the urgency of voter education as a driver of credible election and good governance inclusive. The implication of the foregoing among others is to have a rethink on the issue of voter education and credible election in the nation's nascent democracy.

## **The Study**

Since the return to civilian rule in 1999, Nigeria has adopted a number of legal and technological measures, such as the Electoral Act amendments, biometric voter registration, Permanent Voter Cards (PVC), the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), and the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV) to combat electoral fraud and increase transparency. However, elections continue to be beset by voter apathy, violence, logistical failures, and political interference. These persistent issues not only impede inclusive participation but also cast doubt on the legitimacy of elected governments and governance at large. Furthermore, a significant portion of the population remains marginalized, especially in rural areas, due to deeper structural issues like poverty, illiteracy, insecurity, and restricted access to digital infrastructure and inadequate voter education. Even though technology has shown promise generally across the globe, the uneven nature of its application portends a digital divide that makes voting more difficult, thus, warranting adequate voter education and credibility of elections in the country. It is against the foregoing identified gaps capable of affecting the credibility of elections arising from untoward effects of inadequate voter education culminating in questionable election results that this study set to determine the effects of voter education on election credibility as a measure of good governance in Nigeria.

## **Objectives of the Study**

1. To assess the prevalence of voter education among electorates in Nigeria as a measure of increasing voter turnout during elections in Nigeria.



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2. To ascertain the indices of voter education necessary for the electorates' participation during elections for good governance.
3. To identify the extent to which voter education can promote credible election and good governance in Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the level of prevalence of voter education among electorates in Nigeria?
2. What are the indices of voter education necessary for the electorates?
3. To what extent can voter education promote credible election and good governance in Nigeria?

### **Concept and Import of Voter Education**

Voter education can be described as all efforts targeted at building the literacy level of the electorate for the purpose of taking informed decision necessary for the achievement of election success. This has to do with attaining free, fair, and credible elections in electoral procedures, this transcends civic education and political literacy. It entails a method of getting informed citizens on election issues, a basic function of the state and government in power which Onuigbo et al. (2018) adduced capable of enhancing the credibility of election. Voter education relate to the principles of democracy (Borhaug, 2005) based on the creation of a conducive environment for people's involvement in the development through registering and participating in election needed to foster hearing of citizens' voices in the decision making coupled with the achievement of equity and equality. It is thus concerned with equipping the citizens with relevant and necessary knowledge, skills and traits of character akin to political culture. Buttressing further, Okon (2013) described voter education as the enlightenment of citizens on the advantages of adequate participation in democratic and electoral processes. This involves registering as voters, mobilizing of voters as well as voting. Thus, citizens through voter education do realize the importance of the performance of their civic duties, in order to achieve political, social, and economic development in all spheres of life. It is connoting an act of training and mentoring since voting is the centre of democracy and thus should be given a pride of place focused on the process of voting and issues around elections. Educating and informing the electorates is therefore germane for the planning, voting process, information about electoral rights (Alamu, 2022). The basic goal of voter education is to make facts available and accessible through universal coverage, avoidance of discrimination between the advantaged and disadvantaged, mainstreaming women and men alike, taking cognizance of the illiterate population, minority groups among others (Independent Sectors, 2021). The essential of voter education cannot be overemphasized. It is the center point of election and democratic sustainability. Voter education has been fingered to be of advantage in several ways. The level of political participation of citizens is directly related to the level of voter education at their disposal. Therefore, the extent to which a population will participate in election or even political issues is highly dependent on the information, education at their disposal. Voter education therefore, inspires citizens to be abreast of information as regards election (Onuigbo et al, 2018). Studies have canvassed voter education as a requirement that enhances political abilities, knowledge and participation in democracy, described as the best form of government the world over owing to its representative nature. Furthermore, voter education do assists in motivating the citizens for the required mental capabilities needed to acquire the necessary skills and attitudes in digesting and analyzing political issues as a precursor of right decision and choices in elections (Bage, 2016; Onuigbo et al, 2018; Iwundu, 2021).

In view of the fact that democratic values is evolving in Nigeria and to meet the exigencies of democratic governance, voter education is pertinent as it creates enabling environment for people, not only to play their parts in governance through voting but also make their voices to be heard directly or indirectly which thus prevent apathy (Onuigbo et al, 2018; Oladosu, 2021). In like manner, research has revealed that voter education assists citizens in keeping abreast of information about the dangers of electoral malpractices. This is important to the extent that Nigeria's elections had been at the edge of being riddled with electoral malpractices from ballot box snatching, political violence, bribery, brigandage, arson, killing, and manipulation of results by politicians, protests, intimidation, and vote buying among others. Voter Education will enlighten the people on the ills of engaging in electoral malpractices, before, during and after election (Aroge, 2012; Nnedinso, 2014, Bage, 2016; Verjce et al, 2018). Similarly, scholars have emphasized the need to be global complaint as regards the ever dynamic and fluid of realities pervading the world as new and emerging issues of national and international concerns keep on rising up on daily basis. This according to studies, demands citizens' intellectual focus and inputs in policy decisions formation. The more reason why Aghaele (2013) and Edegoh Amunike (2016) in a separate study affirmed that voter education is an all-important instrument for ensuring proper and adequate dissemination of such issues to citizens in such



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a way as to guide involvement and impact generally. Among others, voter education enables citizens to imbibe the spirit of statesmanship, nationalism, patriotism, loyalty, sacrifice, selflessness, values, virtues, attitudes, behaviour that enhances good citizenship (Nnedinso, 2014).

### **Components of Voter Education for Credible Election and Good Governance**

Putting across effective and efficient voter education requires quite a number of channels. Prominent here is the channel of communication that must be used appropriately. Reiterating this fact Alamu (2022) enthused that, the medium of communicating voter education can make or mar the information being relayed. The environment, situation, recipient and the message must thus be taken into cognizance. One of such means has to do with issues relating to media which could be print and electronics, a veritable means through which voter education is being carried out. Print media includes Newspapers, periodicals, tabloids, magazines, bulletins, the electronics include Radio, television stations and in contemporary time, websites, social media such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Whatsapp. Televisions and Radios are employed through casting, jingles, songs, drama, to mention few (Edegoh & Amunike, 2016; Onuigbo et al. 2018; Verjee 2018 and Independent Sector, 2021). Town hall meetings which are sometimes organized for voter education agents have opportunities of interpersonal interaction with the electorates and where information as regards education is concerned is passed across (UNDP, 2003; Verjee et al, 2018). It presents means through which voters can ask questions on gray areas and have a sense of importance and belongings. This is mostly carried out in the rural areas where there is huge deficit of infrastructure and a high deposit of illiterates. Also, posters and handbills are also medium through which voter education can be carried out on traditional billboards, placing information on public transport, are means through which voters are educated. Vital information can be put in a concise and illustrative manner on posters and bills, such can be placed in public places like supermarkets, hospitals, banks and government establishments for intending voters to pick and read. The information on such mediums are not expected too lengthy, this is to the extent that within few minutes the reading can be dispensed with message must be codified in a catchy form in order to attract citizens' attention. Another component of voter education germane for credible election and good governance is organization of campaigns and rallies by political parties and gladiators. It constitutes (Alamu, 2022) avenue through which electorates are given information and educated on their obligations, duties and rights as regards electoral process. Political parties are noted during campaigns to educate voters, especially on how to vote appropriately and correctly during elections. They also give information on how electorates can conduct themselves as required and expected and teach them how to protect their voters in a peaceful and lawful manner (Vergec et al, 2018; Onuigbo et al, 2018; US Election Assistance, 2021). Other means include direct mailing, drama, playlet, street theatre (Oladiti et al, 2025), technological development. It is on record that as at January 2021, out of the 208.8million estimated population of Nigerians, 104.4million are using mobile phones which represents about 50 percent of the population. It was also stated that out of the 104.4 million that use/phone 93per cent access the internet through mobile phones (<http://www.connectingafrica.com>. Nigerian internet and mobile penetration grows -connecting Africa, 2 June, 2021). Engaging the internet through Whatsapp, Facebook, Instagram, Twtter, Messenger, and the likes make passage of information to a wider and larger population becomes very possible, less stressful and less costly.

Credible election is a sort of election that is devoid of all manners of electoral malpractices where by, the votes of the electorates really count. This is the more reason why electoral credibility has been described by Ejue and Ekanem (2011) as that which relates to the candidate with the highest votes emerging as winner in an election. This cannot operate in a vacuum; it calls for voters knowing their rights, adequately protected by the instrument of law. Furthermore, in order for any election to be regarded as being credible there is the need to ensure credibility, transparency, neutrality and independence in voter registration, verification process, voting exercise itself, collation of results and announcements of results. All these are a product of effective voter education. Credible elections are sine qua none of achieving democracy and democratization since elections is what provided any government legitimacy and its ability to elicit the support and cooperation of the governed. Credible elections allow for citizens' participation and freedom of choice in terms of who will represent their interest. Thus, indirectly taking part in policy making as it is expected that their elected representatives would pursue their interests (Idike, 2013). Credible elections are essential to the extent that it makes the elected officials to be accountable to the electorates. It enhances the performance of political office holders knowing that they would from time to time give their stewardship to the citizens and ultimately it is this that will peak for them when seeking re-election either for their political party or as candidates (Nwangwu et al, 2018).



## Presentation of Results

**Table 1:**

**Analysis of the Importance of Voter Education**

Item	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Std. Dev. (SD)
Voter education is essential for promoting citizens' political awareness	3.38	0.74
Effective voter education empowers people to make informed electoral choices	3.45	0.65
Voter education helps reduce political apathy among citizens	3.32	0.78
Voter education strengthens democratic values in Nigeria	3.50	0.62
Voter education is necessary to discourage electoral malpractices	3.41	0.70

Source: Authors' survey, 2025

The majority of respondents (with mean scores ranging from 3.32 to 3.50) authenticate voter education as Nigeria's democratic process tool. Voter education is overwhelmingly seen as a pillar of democracy, as evidenced by the highest mean (3.50) for the statement that it strengthens democratic values. Likewise, there is strong agreement (mean score of 3.45) that voter education enables citizens to make informed decisions, which is essential for legitimate elections. The comparatively low standard deviations (0.62–0.78) for each item suggest that respondents generally agreed, as evidenced by the consistent responses that were grouped around the mean. The results of this study are consistent with research by Adebayo (2020) and Alamu (2022), which highlighted the critical role that voter education plays in lowering electoral malpractices, reducing political apathy, and encouraging citizen participation all of which are essential for good governance.

**Table 2:**

**Analysis of Indices of Voter Education by Participants**

Item	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Std. Dev. (SD)
Access to reliable information about voting procedures is a key aspect of voter education	3.45	0.72
Knowledge of political parties' manifestos reflects effective voter education	3.22	0.81
Civic responsibility and awareness are indicators of quality voter education	3.60	0.65
Understanding the roles of electoral institutions demonstrates adequate voter education	3.35	0.79
Voter turnout rate can be used as an index of effective voter education	3.10	0.85

Source: Authors' survey, 2025

Table 2 reveals that respondents generally agreed that voter education plays a significant role in electoral credibility, with mean scores for all five items above 3.0. The category "Civic responsibility and awareness" had the highest mean (3.60), indicating that respondents strongly link voter education to the development of civic consciousness. Similarly, having access to trustworthy voting information (Mean = 3.45) and being aware of the functions of electoral institutions (Mean = 3.35) were also highly rated, supporting the idea that awareness and knowledge are essential for successful voter participation. Relatively little to moderate response dispersion is indicated by the standard deviation values, which fall between 0.65 and 0.85 in terms of variability. This suggests that there is little polarisation in the respondents' views, which are generally consistent. The item on voter turnout as a measure of voter education, however, exhibits the greatest variability (Mean = 3.10, SD = 0.85), indicating that some respondents might be hesitant to use turnout alone to gauge the success of voter education. The results of this study supported the findings of Adebayo (2020), Oladosu (2021) and Iwundu (2021) that found that citizens' confidence and election participation are increased when they have access to trustworthy information and comprehend electoral institutions.

**Table 3:**

**Analysis of the Contribution of Voter Education to Election Credibility in Nigeria**

Item	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )	SD	t-calculated	t-critical (0.05)	Decision
Voter education reduces incidences of vote buying during elections	3.40	0.80	1.66	1.66	Reject $H_0$



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Effective voter education promotes free and fair elections in Nigeria	3.60	0.70	1.66	1.66	Reject Ho
Voter education increases citizens' confidence in the electoral process	3.45	0.75	1.66	1.66	Reject Ho
Adequate voter education helps minimize electoral violence	3.38	0.85	1.66	1.66	Reject Ho
Voter education contributes significantly to achieving credible and transparent elections in Nigeria	3.55	0.78	1.66	1.66	Reject Ho

Source: Authors' survey, 2025

From Table 3, the mean scores of all the items on how voter education affects election credibility in Nigeria were higher than the neutral value of 2.5; hence, respondents had a favourable opinion of the issue for every item in the t-test since all computed t-values were greater than the critical t-value of 1.658 at the 0.05 significance level. Accordingly, the majority of respondents believed that voter education is essential for lowering vote buying, encouraging free and fair elections, increases public trust in the electoral process, lowering electoral violence, and improve credible and transparent elections. Finding here aligns with previous studies that established relationship between voter education, credible election and good governance (Adebayo, 2020, Omotola, 2013, Alamu, 2022).

### Conclusion

Feelers from this study demonstrated that increased election credibility in Nigeria requires voter education as the respondents firmly believed that having access to trustworthy voting information, being aware of party platforms, and comprehending electoral institutions all support citizens' active engagement in the electoral process, as evidenced by the consistently high mean scores across all items. Voter education is crucial for encouraging civic engagement and prevention of electoral malpractices, as evidenced by the comparatively low to moderate standard deviations, which indicate that respondents hold similar opinions. These findings support the idea that enhanced electoral transparency and bolstering democratic governance requires adequate voter education.

### Recommendations

Consequently, it is recommended that

1. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and civil society organizations should intensify nationwide civic education campaigns, particularly targeting rural and first-time voters, to improve knowledge of voting procedures and reduce voter apathy.
2. Education policymakers should include structured voter education modules in secondary and tertiary school curricula to foster early civic responsibility and political awareness among Nigerian youth.
3. Similarly, both Government and NGOs should maximize the use of social media, radio, and TV programmes in disseminating simplified and timely voter education content, ensure wider reach and reduce misinformation that could undermine election credibility

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