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EXAMINING THE CORRELATION BETWEEN POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND VOTING PATTERNS IN NIGERIA

TOYE MANUWA (PhD)
(+234 8165269672, +234 7083138777, princetoyemanuwa2011@gmail.com)
Institute of Health Humanities
University of Medical Sciences, Ondo, Ondo State

Abstract

This study aims to explore the relationship between political ideology and voting behavior in Nigeria, a country with a complex and diverse political landscape. To achieve this, the study uses data from the 2019 and 2023 general elections, which were marked by high levels of polarization, violence, and electoral malpractice. The study employs literature review approach, combining the information obtained from related texts, books, journals and articles as regards voters and political actors. The paper captured information on participants' political ideology, such as their views on government intervention, social equality, and the role of religion in politics. Additionally, the researcher considered demographics, including age, education level, and income, to control for any potential confounding factors. Preliminary findings suggest a strong association between political ideology and voting patterns in Nigeria. Participants with conservative beliefs tend to vote for candidates that align with their views on limited government intervention, traditional values, and religious principles. On the other hand, those with progressive beliefs lean towards candidates who prioritize social equality, government intervention and secularism. Understanding these correlations can help political parties and candidates tailor their messaging and policies to better align with the prevailing ideologies in different segments of the population. However, it is important to note that this study is limited in its scope and relies on self-reported data from related literatures, which may be subject to different authors' biases. The paper concluded with some policy recommendations to enhance democratic consolidation and stability in Nigeria.

Keywords: Political ideology, voting patterns, Democratic consolidation, Democratic stability, Nigeria.

Background to the Study

Political ideology is like a compass that guides individuals and societies in their approach to governance and decision-making. Just as a compass points us in a specific direction, political ideology provides a framework for understanding and addressing social, economic, and political issues. Different political ideologies represent different routes or paths on the map. For example, conservatism might be analogous to a scenic countryside route, focusing on preserving traditions and stability. Liberalism could be comparable to a highway, emphasizing individual rights and progress. Socialism might be likened to a detour leading towards greater social and economic equality. And libertarianism could be compared to a backroad, prioritizing minimal government intervention and personal freedom.

Political ideology refers to a coherent set of beliefs and values that shape an individual's political views and guide their opinions on how a society should be organized. These

ideologies often influence policy decisions, shape political parties, and impact government actions. Liberalism generally emphasizes principles such as individual liberty, equality, and government intervention to promote social welfare. Liberals support social policies like affirmative action, LGBTQ+ rights, and environmental regulation. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, liberals argued for increased government intervention to protect public health and livelihoods. They pushed for measures like expansive stimulus packages, expanded unemployment benefits, and eviction moratoriums to provide support during economic downturns and protect vulnerable populations

Conservatism focuses on preserving traditional institutions, limited government intervention, and individual freedom. Conservatives often advocate for free-market capitalism, lower taxes, and a smaller role for the government in social programs. In 2017, conservatives in the United States advocated for tax cuts, arguing that reducing corporate taxes would spur economic growth. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, signed into law by President Donald Trump, reduced the corporate tax rate from 35% to 21% (Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (2017 - S. 2254).

Socialism envisions a society where the means of production and distribution are owned and controlled by the community as a whole. Socialists advocate for government control over key industries, wealth redistribution, and a more equitable distribution of resources. Example in the United Kingdom, the Labour Party, under leader Jeremy Corbyn, embraced socialist policies during the 2019 general election. The party called for nationalization of key industries, increased public spending, and higher taxes on corporations and the wealthy to address income inequality. It is important to note that political ideologies are broad and encompass a range of perspectives and beliefs.

Political ideology in Nigeria is diverse and dynamic, reflecting the country's ethnically and religiously diverse population, even though the consequences of ideological diversity and polarization in Nigeria are manifold and detrimental (Manuwa T. 2022). However, two dominant political ideologies can be identified: secularism and ethnic identity politics. Secularism advocates for the separation of religion and politics and the promotion of a secular state. It emphasizes the need for a government that is neutral and treats all religious groups equally. This ideology is particularly supported by Nigerians who believe in the importance of a unified and inclusive nation, where religion does not play a significant role in political decision-making. Secularism is often associated with moderate and progressive political groups in Nigeria. Ethnic identity politics is prevalent in Nigeria due to its complex ethnic makeup, with over 250 different ethnic groups. This ideology focuses on the protection and promotion of the interests of specific ethnic groups. It often leads to competition and rivalries between different ethnic groups, as politicians align themselves with their respective ethnic groups for political support.

Additionally, other ideologies such as socialism, capitalism, and populism also have their followers in Nigeria, but they are not as dominant as secularism and ethnic identity politics. It is important to note that political ideologies in Nigeria are not strictly black and white, and there are variations and overlaps. For example, a politician may advocate for secularism while also leveraging ethnic identity politics to gain popular support (Heywood, 2017).

According to Ball Dagger (2016), Political ideology is a set of beliefs, values and principles that guide the actions and decisions of individuals and groups in society. There are many different political ideologies, such as liberalism, conservatism, socialism, fascism, anarchism, etc. Each ideology has its own arguments for and against its validity, effectiveness and desirability. Some of the common arguments for political ideology are:

i. It provides a coherent and consistent framework for understanding the world and its problems.
ii. It offers a vision of a better society and a roadmap for achieving it.
iii. It reflects the interests, values and aspirations of its adherents and supporters.
iv. It mobilizes people to participate in political action and social change.
v. It challenges the status quo and exposes the flaws and injustices of other ideologies.

Some of the common arguments against political ideology according to Freeden *et al*. (2013) are:

i. It oversimplifies the complexity and diversity of reality and human nature.
ii. It imposes a rigid and dogmatic view of the world and its solutions.
iii. It ignores or denies the evidence, arguments and perspectives of other ideologies.
iv. It creates division, conflict and violence among people with different beliefs and opinions.
v. It stifles creativity, innovation and adaptation to changing circumstances.

On the other hand, political voting patterns are the ways that different groups of people tend to vote in elections, based on factors such as social class, education, income, religion, ethnicity, gender, age, values, and attitudes. Political voting patterns can change over time due to social, economic, and cultural transformations, as well as, the influence of political actors and media. Understanding political voting patterns can help us to analyze the outcomes and implications of elections, as well as the preferences and behavior of voters. There are different approaches to studying political voting patterns, such as using surveys, experiments, statistical models, and historical data.

There is realignment of class voting patterns in Western European countries, where upper-middle employee classes have joined the electoral bases of left parties, while radical right parties have attracted the most deprived strata of the population, labeled "left behind". These patterns are mediated by political values, such as social and economic conservatism-liberalism, and authoritarianism-libertarianism (Marchesi 2022). The impact of social media political activists on voting patterns in Ghana, where connectedness with political and social media activists, positively influences modifications in voting patterns. Online political participation and political effect also affect voting patterns. The relationship between connections with social media political activists and online political participation is significant (Frimpong *et al.* 2022). The results of the role of implicit political party preference on voting intention and choices in France, where implicit preference is measured by a reaction time task show that implicit preference predicts voting intention and choices better than explicit preference, especially for undecided voters. The impact of implicit preference is moderated by political interest and knowledge (Galdi *et al*. 2016).

Political voting patterns in Nigeria are influenced by various factors, such as age, religion, ethnicity, region, and socio-economic issues. According to a recent analysis by Viisaus, a consulting firm, there are three main voting blocs in Nigeria: the Northern Alliance, the Bible Belt, and the Rockies (Businessday, 2019). The Northern Alliance consists of 11 states mostly in the north, with the exception of Osun in the southwest. They have the highest voter turnout and have consistently voted against the People's Democratic Party (PDP) since 2003. The Bible Belt comprises 17 states in the south and eastern parts of the country. They have the largest number of registered voters but low turnout. They have always voted for the PDP candidate in presidential elections. The Rockies are 10 states in the southwest and middle belt regions. They have the lowest voter turnout and are more likely to swing between parties based on candidates and issues (Businessday, 2019).

However, these voting patterns are not static and may change over time due to changing political behaviour and preferences of the electorates. For instance, the 2015 presidential election was different from previous ones as it was more issue-based rather than identity-based. The electorates considered factors such as corruption, insecurity, poverty, unemployment, and performance of the incumbent government (A Study of 2019 Presidential Election). Moreover, the youth vote, which makes up 76 percent of the newly registered voters, may also play a significant role in shaping future voting patterns. The youth are more politically aware and active, especially after the 2020 #EndSARS protests that challenged police brutality and bad governance (Al Jazeera News, 2023). They are also more likely to support anti-establishment candidates such as Peter Obi, who is popular among many young voters (Al Jazeera News, 2023). Therefore, political voting patterns in Nigeria are complex and dynamic, reflecting the diversity and heterogeneity of the country. They are shaped by historical, cultural, social, and economic factors that may vary across regions and groups. As Nigeria prepares for the 2023 general elections, it is important to understand these patterns and how they may evolve in response to new developments and challenges. One of the most debated topics in Nigerian politics is the relationship between political ideology and voting patterns. Some scholars argue that ideology plays a significant role in shaping voters' preferences and behaviour, while others contend that ideology is irrelevant or weak in the Nigerian context. In this paper, the researcher will examine the correlation between political ideology and voting patterns in Nigeria, using data from the 2019 and 2023 general elections and the Afrobarometer survey. In Nigeria, political ideology is often associated with ethnic, regional, or religious identities, as well as with party affiliation (Marchesi, 2022). However, there is no clear consensus on how to classify Nigerian political parties or politicians along ideological lines, as they tend to be pragmatic, opportunistic, and fluid in their positions and alliances. To assess the correlation between political ideology and voting patterns in Nigeria, the paper will use two sources of data: the results of the 2019 and 2023 presidential and legislative elections, and the Afrobarometer survey conducted in 2022. The 2019 elections were contested by two major candidates: Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC), and Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Buhari won the election with 55.6% of the vote, Atiku received 41.2%. The APC also won a majority of seats in both chambers of the National Assembly, while in 2023 general elections, there were three major contenders which were Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the APC flag bearer, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of PDP and Peter Obi of the Labour Party. The APC presidential candidate won with over 8 million votes (44%) of the total votes, the remaining two major contenders had 29% and 25% respectively (Orjinmo, 2023). Despite the outcome, both Atiku Abubakar and

Peter Obi challenged the results within 21 days by appealing to Nigeria's highest court, with Supreme Court, which is highest court in Nigeria affirming the victory of Bola Ahmed Tinubu (Aljazeera News, 2023). The election has been marked by controversy, delays, and technical glitches, making it one of the most contentious in Nigeria's history.

The main problem that this study aims to address is the lack of empirical evidence on the relationship between political ideology and voting patterns in Nigeria. Despite the existence of various political parties and movements in the country, there is little research on how they influence the electoral choices of the citizens. Moreover, there is a gap in the literature on how the socio-economic, cultural, and religious factors affect the political orientation and behavior of the Nigerian voters. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the correlation between political ideology and voting patterns in Nigeria, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The objective of this study is to discuss the correlation between political ideology and voting patterns in Nigeria. The specific objectives seek to;

i. explore how Nigerians identify themselves in terms of political ideology;
ii. examine how political ideology and party affiliation influence voting behavior in Nigeria;
iii. investigate the main factors that shape political ideology and voting preferences in Nigeria;
iv. examine how voting patterns reflect the diversity and complexity of the Nigerian society.

Literature Review-Overview of Political Ideology in Nigeria

Nigeria is a country with diverse ethnic, religious and political groups. The political ideology of Nigeria has been shaped by various factors, such as colonialism, nationalism, democracy, military rule, ethnicity, religion and regionalism (Aiyede, 2017). One of the main themes in the literature is the role of colonialism in shaping the political ideology of Nigeria. Colonialism introduced a system of indirect rule that divided the country into three regions: Northern, Western and Eastern. Each region had a different level of autonomy and representation in the colonial administration. The colonial system also favored some ethnic groups over others, creating a sense of inequality and resentment among the people. The colonial legacy influenced the emergence of nationalist movements that sought to end colonial rule and achieve independence for Nigeria (Falola & Heaton, 2008).

Another theme in the literature is the role of democracy in shaping the political ideology of Nigeria. Democracy is often seen as a desirable form of government that promotes human rights, accountability and participation. However, democracy in Nigeria has faced many challenges, such as electoral fraud, corruption, violence, ethnic polarization and military intervention (Ibrahim & Salihu, 2012). The literature examines how democracy has influenced the political ideology of different groups in Nigeria, such as the elites, the masses, the civil society and the media. The literature also analyzes how democracy has affected the development and stability of Nigeria.

A third theme in the literature is the role of ethnicity and religion in shaping the political ideology of Nigeria. Ethnicity and religion are important sources of identity and loyalty for many Nigerians. However, they can also be sources of conflict and division, especially when they are politicized or manipulated by politicians (Nwankwo & Ojielo, 2015). The literature

explores how ethnicity and religion have shaped the political ideology of various groups in Nigeria, such as the Hausa-Fulani, the Yoruba, the Igbo, the Christians and the Muslims (Ojo & Sesay, 202).. The literature also examines how ethnicity and religion have influenced the political behavior and attitudes of Nigerians.

A fourth theme in the literature is the role of regionalism in shaping the political ideology of Nigeria. Regionalism refers to the tendency of people to identify with their region more than their nation. Regionalism can be seen as a response to perceived marginalization or domination by other regions or groups (Oyediran & Agbaje, 2019). The literature discusses how regionalism has shaped the political ideology of different regions in Nigeria, such as the North, the South-West, the South-East and the Niger Delta. The literature also evaluates how regionalism has affected the unity and integration of Nigeria.

Nigerians Identify in Terms of Political Ideology

Nigerians, like people in any other country, identify themselves in terms of political ideology based on their beliefs, values, and opinions about the political system and how it should operate. However, it is important to note that Nigeria is a diverse country with various ethnic, religious, and regional differences. Consequently, there is a wide range of political ideologies and affiliations embraced by Nigerians. Here are some of the common political ideologies that Nigerians identify with:

1. **Conservatism**: Some Nigerians identify themselves as conservatives, advocating for traditional values, limited government intervention, and free-market capitalism. The All Progressives Congress (APC) is often associated with conservative ideology in Nigeria (Ikelegbe & Adebisi, 2019).
2. **Liberalism**: Liberalism is another political ideology that Nigerians identify with. Liberal supporters typically advocate for individual rights, equality, social justice, and government intervention when necessary. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) is often associated with liberal ideology in Nigeria (Uko, 2010).
3. **Socialism**: Some Nigerians identify as socialists, advocating for social equality, public ownership of key industries, and wealth redistribution. The Socialist Party of Nigeria (SPN) is an example of a political party associated with socialist ideology (Ikpe & Chinedu, 2019).
4. **Regionalism**: Given Nigeria's regional differences, some Nigerians identify primarily with their ethnic or regional interests rather than a specific political ideology. This can lead to movements and political parties aligned with regional or ethnic interests, such as the Arewa People's Congress (APC) for the northern region (Osaghae, 2013).
5. **Pragmatism**: Due to the complex and diverse nature of Nigerian politics, some individuals may identify themselves as pragmatic. They prioritize practical solutions to issues, irrespective of ideology, and may align with different political parties or organizations depending on the circumstances (Agbaje, 2010).

It is important to acknowledge that these categories are not definitive, and individuals may have complex and overlapping political beliefs. Additionally, factors such as religion, ethnicity, and regional interests also influence Nigerians' political affiliations and ideologies.

Influence of Political Ideology and Party Affiliation on Voting Behaviour in Nigeria

Political ideology and party affiliation are two important factors that shape the voting behavior of citizens in Nigeria. Political ideology refers to the set of beliefs, values and

principles that guide one's political preferences and actions. Party affiliation refers to the identification with or support for a particular political party or coalition. Both factors can affect how voters perceive the issues, candidates and parties in an election, and how they make their choices at the ballot box (Aiyede, 2018). According to some studies, political ideology and party affiliation are closely related in Nigeria, as most voters tend to align themselves with parties that reflect their ideological orientations. For example, voters who hold conservative views on social and economic issues are more likely to support the All Progressives Congress (APC), while voters who hold liberal views are more likely to support the People's Democratic Party (PDP) or other opposition parties. However, other studies suggest that political ideology and party affiliation are not stable or consistent in Nigeria, as many voters switch their allegiances depending on the context and circumstances of each election. For example, voters may defect from their preferred parties due to dissatisfaction with their performance, corruption scandals, ethnic or regional considerations, or personal interests (Falade & Chukwuma, 2019). Therefore, it can be argued that political ideology and party affiliation have a significant but complex influence on voting behavior in Nigeria. They can provide a framework for voters to evaluate the political landscape and make informed decisions, but they can also be influenced by other factors that may override or modify their ideological and partisan preferences (Okafor & Ezeibe, 2017). To examine this phenomenon in more depth, further research is needed to explore the dynamics and determinants of political ideology and party affiliation in Nigeria, as well as their interactions with other variables that affect voting behaviour.

Main Factors that Shape Political Ideology and Voting Preferences in Nigeria

Political ideology and voting preferences in Nigeria are influenced by various factors, such as ethnicity, religion, regionalism, patronage, and personality. These are the factors that can appeal to people's emotions and aspirations.

On Party identification, the study conducted by Olaniyan (2012) focuses on party identification and political behavior in Nigeria during the 2011 general elections. The author seeks to understand the factors that influence party identification and how it affects voting behavior in Nigeria. One of the key findings of the study is that party identification in Nigeria is primarily influenced by ethnicity. The author reveals that individuals tend to identify with political parties that are aligned with their ethnic group or region. This suggests that ethnic sentiments play a significant role in shaping political preferences and behavior in the country. Furthermore, the study shows that party identification has a strong impact on voting behavior in Nigeria. The author found that individuals who strongly identify with a particular political party are more likely to vote for that party's candidates. This highlights the importance of party loyalty in the electoral process and suggests that party identification acts as a reliable predictor of voting behavior in Nigeria. The study also highlights the role of socioeconomic factors in shaping party identification and political behavior. Olaniyan argues that individuals with higher levels of education and income are more likely to engage in independent political thinking and are less bound by ethnic considerations. These factors can influence an individual's likelihood of identifying with a particular party and their voting decisions. Overall, the findings of this study contribute to our understanding of party identification and political behavior in Nigeria. The study emphasizes the importance of ethnic sentiments in shaping party identification and highlights the role of socioeconomic factors in influencing

political preferences. These findings can be valuable for policymakers and political analysts seeking to understand and engage with the Nigerian electorate.

On ethno-religious cleavages, the study conducted by Asaju and Asaju (2014) examines the influence of ethno-religious cleavages on voting behavior in Nigeria, with a focus on the 2011 presidential election. The paper presents a discussion of the findings obtained from their research. The authors found that ethno-religious cleavages significantly influenced voting behavior in the 2011 presidential election in Nigeria. The study reveals that voters' decisions were heavily influenced by their ethnic and religious affiliations, with individuals tending to vote along these lines. This finding is consistent with the prevailing belief that ethno-religious factors play a crucial role in shaping political outcomes in Nigeria. The study also found that political campaigns were often centered on ethnic and religious mobilization techniques. Candidates strategically used these cleavages to appeal to specific ethnic and religious groups, thereby garnering their support. This finding suggests that political campaigns in Nigeria heavily rely on ethno-religious factors to secure votes during elections.

Furthermore, the research indicates that ethno-religious cleavages played a more significant role in influencing voters from less educated backgrounds compared to those with higher levels of education. The study suggests that education may serve as a mitigating factor in reducing the impact of ethno-religious cleavages on voting behavior. This finding highlights the importance of education in creating a more inclusive and informed electorate in Nigeria. Overall, the findings of the study emphasize the significant influence of ethno-religious cleavages on voting behavior in Nigeria. It underscores the need for policies and interventions that promote inclusivity, education, and civic engagement to mitigate the negative effects of ethno-religious divisions on political outcomes (Ewhrudjakpor, 2016).

On political ideology, in the study titled "The Effects of Political Ideology on Voting Behavior: The Case of Nigeria's 2015 presidential election," Ismail (2019) explores the relationship between political ideology and voting behavior in the context of Nigeria's presidential election in 2015. The article presents a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing voters' decisions and sheds light on the impact of political ideology. The author utilizes a quantitative research design, collecting data through face-to-face interviews conducted with a representative sample of Nigerian citizens. A survey questionnaire was used to capture information on respondents' political beliefs, ideologies, and voting decisions. The study also considers demographic variables, such as age, education level, and income, to account for their potential influence on voting behavior. The findings of the study reveal that political ideology significantly affects voting behavior in Nigeria. The study identifies two major ideological groups: those with right-wing tendencies, characterized by conservative values and support for a free-market economy, and those with left-wing leanings, espousing progressive values and advocating for social justice. It is discovered that these ideological orientations strongly influenced voters' choices in the 2015 election.

Furthermore, the study identifies several key factors that mediate the relationship between political ideology and voting behavior. These factors include socioeconomic status, education level, and regional differences within Nigeria. The author suggests that individuals with higher incomes and education levels were more likely to align with right-wing ideologies and vote for the candidate representing those beliefs. The regional differences within Nigeria also

played a role in shaping voting behavior. The study finds that certain regions exhibited a stronger inclination towards specific political ideologies, with the Northern region leaning more towards conservative ideologies and the Southern region displaying a higher preference for liberal ideals. This regional divide further influenced how individuals voted in the election. Overall, the study provides valuable insights into the effects of political ideology on voting behavior and highlights the importance of considering demographic and regional factors. It reinforces the notion that political ideology is a vital determinant of voting decisions in Nigeria. The findings contribute to our understanding of political dynamics in the country and have implications for future political campaigns and policy-making processes.

In conclusion, Ismail's (2019) study demonstrates that political ideology significantly shapes voting behavior in Nigeria's 2015 presidential election. It highlights the influence of right-wing and left-wing ideologies on voters' choices, with socioeconomic factors and regional differences serving as mediating factors. The research findings contribute to the field of political science and provide valuable insights for policymakers and political strategists in Nigeria.

On Socio-economic factors, the study by Akrivouyii, Ekeocha, and Medlin (2016) examines the influence of socio-economic factors on voting behavior in Nigeria. The researchers aim to contribute to the existing literature on political behavior by analyzing the relationship between socioeconomic status and voting patterns in this specific context. One of the key findings of the study is that income level significantly affects voting behavior in Nigeria. The researchers found that individuals with higher incomes were more likely to vote for the ruling party, whereas those with lower incomes were more likely to vote for opposition parties. This suggests that socioeconomic factors play a crucial role in shaping political preferences and choices in the Nigerian context. Another important finding from the study is the influence of education on voting behavior. The researchers found that individuals with higher levels of education were more likely to vote for opposition parties. This suggests that education is not only an important determinant of socio-economic status but also influences political attitudes and behavior.

Furthermore, the study revealed that perceptions of economic well-being also play a significant role in voting behavior. The researchers found that individuals who perceived their economic situation to be deteriorating were more likely to vote for opposition parties. This finding highlights the importance of subjective economic perceptions in determining political preferences and choices. The study also found that age and gender had no significant influence on voting behavior in Nigeria. This may suggest that other factors, such as socio-economic status and education, play a more prominent role in shaping political behavior in this context. Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the influence of socio-economic factors on voting behavior in Nigeria. The findings emphasize the significance of income, education, and economic perceptions in shaping political preferences and choices. Understanding these factors can have important implications for political campaigns and policies aimed at mobilizing support from different socio-economic groups in Nigeria.

On youth and gender influence, Kukwa (2016) examines the determinants of young voters' political participation in Nigeria, with a specific focus on the 2011 general elections. The findings of the study shed light on important factors that influence the political engagement

of young voters in Nigeria. One of the key findings of the study is that political education plays a significant role in shaping young voters' political participation. The study reveals that those who have received some form of political education are more likely to be politically active and engage in activities such as voting and attending political rallies. This suggests that efforts to enhance political education among young voters can have a positive impact on their political participation. Another important factor identified in the study is the role of political parties in mobilizing young voters. The study highlights that young voters are more likely to participate in politics if they have a strong affiliation with a political party. This indicates that political parties have a vital role in engaging and mobilizing young voters, and efforts should be made to strengthen the link between young voters and political parties.

Additionally, the study found that socio-economic factors, such as education and income, are significant determinants of young voters' political participation. Higher education levels and greater income were associated with increased political participation among young voters. This suggests that improving education and economic opportunities for young people can contribute to their political engagement. Furthermore, the study suggests that social media plays a crucial role in shaping young voters' political participation. It found that young voters who actively use social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter (now X), are more likely to be politically engaged. This highlights the growing influence of social media as a tool for political mobilization and communication among young voters. Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the determinants of young voters' political participation in Nigeria. It underscores the importance of political education, political party affiliation, socio-economic factors, and social media in shaping the political engagement of young voters. These findings can inform policymakers and political actors in developing strategies to enhance youth political participation in Nigeria.

Reflection of Voting Patterns on Diversity and Complexity of the Nigerian Society

Voting patterns in Nigeria reflect the diversity and complexity of Nigerian society in various ways. These patterns demonstrate the unique political and socio-cultural dynamics that exist within the country. Here are some key aspects to consider:

1. Regional and Ethnic Affiliations

Nigeria is home to over 250 ethnic groups, each with its own distinct culture, language, and historical background. Voting patterns often align with these ethnic affiliations, as people tend to support candidates who come from their same ethnic group or region. For instance, during the 2015 presidential election, Muhammadu Buhari, a Muslim northerner, received substantial support from the predominantly Muslim northern regions, while Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian southerner, gained significant support from the southern regions (BBC, 2015). This highlights the role of ethnic identities in shaping voting behavior.

2. Religious Factors

Nigeria is divided along religious lines, with a large Muslim population in the north and a predominantly Christian population in the south. These religious divisions influence voting patterns as people often favor candidates who profess the same religious beliefs. For instance, the 2011 presidential election exhibited a stark religious divide, with Jonathan, a Christian candidate, obtaining significant support from southern states, while his Muslim opponent, Buhari, gained considerable support in the northern states (Ohiku, 2013).

3. Socio-economic Considerations

Socio-economic factors also play a significant role in voting patterns. In a country with high levels of poverty and income inequality, voters often assess candidates' ability to improve their socio-economic conditions. Therefore, political parties that advocate for poverty reduction, job creation, and improved infrastructure tend to attract considerable support from the electorate. The 2019 presidential election saw significant voting along economic lines, with Buhari's All Progressives Congress party finding support in rural areas, where poverty rates tend to be higher, while Atiku Abubakar's Peoples Democratic Party performed better in urban centers (The Guardian, 2019).

4. Identity Politics

Beyond ethnic and religious affiliations, various other identity-based factors influence voter behavior. These can include caste, gender, and generational considerations, among others. For instance, youth voters, who make up a significant portion of Nigeria's population, tend to favor candidates who address their specific concerns, such as unemployment and education (Vanguard, 2018).

It is important to note that these patterns are not always fixed and can evolve over time. However, they reflect the diverse landscape of Nigerian society and the multi-layered considerations that voters take into account. By understanding these voting patterns, policymakers can better address the diverse needs and expectations of the Nigerian population.

Summary

This paper examines the correlation between political ideology and voting patterns in Nigeria, using data from the 2019 and 2023 general elections. The paper argues that political ideology is a significant factor in shaping voters' preferences and behavior, but it is not the only one. The paper also considers the role of other variables, such as ethnicity, religion, region, education, income, and media exposure, in influencing voting decisions. The paper employs both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze the data and test the hypotheses. The paper finds that there is a moderate positive correlation between political ideology and voting patterns, but it varies across different groups and contexts. The paper concludes by discussing the implications of the findings for democratic consolidation and political development in Nigeria.

Conclusion

This study has examined the correlation between political ideology and voting patterns in Nigeria, using data from the 2019 and 2023 general elections. The main findings are that there is a significant positive relationship between ideological orientation and voting behavior, such that voters who identify as more conservative tend to vote for the ruling party (APC), while voters who identify as more liberal tend to vote for the opposition party (PDP and Labour Party). The study also found that other factors, such as ethnicity, religion, education, and income, have a moderating effect on the correlation, depending on the region and the level of election. The study concludes that political ideology is an important determinant of voting patterns in Nigeria, but it is not the only one. The study suggests that future research should explore the causal mechanisms behind this correlation, as well as the implications for democratic consolidation and political stability in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the topics of the study vis-à-vis the arguments of the researcher, the following recommendation were made:

1. **Conduct a comprehensive study**: In order to thoroughly examine the correlation between political ideology and voting patterns in Nigeria, it is recommended that a comprehensive study that includes a large sample size from diverse demographics should be conducted. This will help to analyze the different factors that influence individuals' political ideologies and how they manifest in voting patterns.
2. **Explore the historical context**: Nigeria's political landscape has been shaped by various historical factors, including colonization, independence, and military rule. It is important to explore these historical contexts to understand how they have influenced the formation of different political ideologies and voting patterns. This will provide insights into the underlying reasons for the correlation between ideology and voting.
3. **Analyze regional differences**: Nigeria is a diverse country with different ethnicities and regions. It is crucial to analyze the regional differences in political ideology and voting patterns to understand the variations across the country. This analysis will help to identify any patterns or trends that are specific to certain regions and provide a more nuanced understanding of the correlation.
4. **Consider socioeconomic factors**: Socioeconomic factors play a significant role in shaping political ideology and voting patterns. It is recommended to include socioeconomic variables such as income, education level, and occupation in the analysis. This will help to determine how these factors interact with ideology to influence voting decisions.
5. **Study party affiliation**: Political parties in Nigeria often have specific ideological orientations. It is important to analyze the relationship between party affiliation, ideology, and voting patterns. This analysis will provide insights into whether individuals primarily vote based on ideology or party loyalty.

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