

Investigating the Role of Voter Education in Shaping Electoral Patterns and Voter Behaviour in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study explores the critical role of voter education in shaping electoral patterns and voter behaviour in Nigeria, particularly focusing on underrepresented communities. Despite extensive voter education efforts by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and civil society organizations, Nigeria continues to face challenges such as low voter turnout, electoral fraud, and misinformation. The research aims to investigate how targeted voter education initiatives can enhance electoral engagement and mitigate misinformation by examining their effects on voter turnout and resistance to electoral fraud. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study analyzes quantitative data from a survey of 1,127 registered voters across diverse regions and qualitative insights from in-depth interviews with key stakeholders. Findings indicate that targeted voter education significantly increases voter turnout, particularly among marginalized groups, by enhancing behavioural skills and perceived control over the voting process. Furthermore, effective education contributes to improved capabilities in identifying misinformation and reducing susceptibility to electoral fraud, though economic vulnerabilities persist as a barrier to complete engagement. The study highlights the need for continuous, community-based voter education that integrates skill-building, addresses structural vulnerabilities, and leverages both traditional and digital media. Ultimately, the research underscores that voter education should be viewed as an ongoing civic empowerment initiative, essential for strengthening the democratic fabric of Nigeria and fostering informed electoral participation.

Keywords

Electoral Patterns;
Investigating; Shaping; Voter
Behaviour and Voter
Education



I. Introduction

In the quest for democratic governance, the role of voter education cannot be overemphasised. Effective voter education tools are instrumental in shaping an informed and engaged electorate, which is the bedrock of any functioning democracy. Voting is one of the cardinal principles of democracy and the importance of political participation in democratic societies have increased drastically over the years (Makanjuola, 2026)

According to Belcastro et al. (2022), voting behavior is simply an electoral activity which is a combination of personal and electoral action, which manifests during an electoral process. It includes voting during elections, involvement in electoral campaigns and participation in electoral rallies as well as support for a candidate or a political party. In essence, it connotes the direct participation and indirect participation of the electorate in an electoral process (Ademosu et al. 2025).

Voter education is commonly viewed as an essential tool for improving citizens' knowledge of electoral systems, civic rights, and responsibilities, as well as for encouraging informed and active participation (Adeyemi & Adeowu 2026; Aondover et al. 2026). In Nigeria, institutions such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), civil

society organisations, and faith-based groups have implemented various voter education initiatives designed to stimulate participation. Nevertheless, questions persist regarding the extent to which these programmes effectively convert knowledge into actual electoral engagement.

The over twenty-seven years of the returns of Nigerian to democracy have witnessed profound changes to the country 's political and socio-economic landscape, some of the most significant of which were made possible through voter 's education. Politically, the Nigerian constitution guaranteed the right to vote and be voted for by all citizens once you are 18 years and over. In any democratic transition process, individual 's behavior varies depending on the group(s) they belong and the type of norms operating in such society. Political norms usually influences individual political behaviour without which there may not also be a standardized method of chosen or electing political leadership in the society. Due to the inherently conformist nature of human society in general, humans are pressured into following certain rules and display certain behaviors in society, which conditions or influences the way people behave. Different behaviours are deemed to be either acceptable or unacceptable in different societies and cultures (Msughter, 2021; Ajiboye, 2016)

Aondover et al. (2025) maintained that elections are an institutionalised attempt at actualizing the essence of democracy, that is, according to Abraham Lincoln the rule of the people, by the people and for the people. Elections are therefore an integral part of the democratic process globally and post-independence especially for African politics and have assumed utmost importance during recent democratisation processes (Isiaq et al., 2018).

Elections are thought of as the heart of the political process. Perhaps no questions in politics are as crucial as do we elect the politicians who rule over us, and under what rules are these elections held? Elections are seen as nothing less than democracy in practice (Msughter, 2025). They are a means through which the people can control their government, ultimately by 'kicking the rascals out'. According to Heywood (2004), Election is a device for filling an office or post through choices made by a designated body of people (electorate). Elections may not in themselves be a sufficient condition for political representation, but there is little doubt that they are a necessary condition. Indeed, some thinkers have gone further and portrayed elections as the very heart of democracy.

Arowolo and Aluko (2022) and Ojo (2020) observe that although many Nigerians possess basic awareness of elections, this does not consistently translate into active participation at the polls. The gap between awareness and turnout suggests limitations in the scope, design, or contextual relevance of voter education initiatives. In many cases, political education efforts in Nigeria have been criticised for being periodic rather than continuous, concentrated in urban areas, and constrained by bureaucratic approaches that pay insufficient.

This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the role of voter education in shaping electoral patterns and voter behaviour. How voter education can sharpen electoral outcomes. This will enhance to the future discourse on vote patterns and behaviour of the electorate during subsequent elections in Nigeria.

Despite sustained investments in voter education by INEC, civil society, and development partners, Nigeria continues to grapple with inconsistent voter turnout, recurring electoral fraud, and the widespread influence of political misinformation. While existing studies (Adeyemi & Adeowu, 2026; Makanjuola, 2026) affirm that voter education improves civic knowledge, a significant knowledge-action gap persists: many citizens who are aware of their voting rights and the electoral process either stay away from the polls or engage in

practices that undermine electoral integrity (Arowolo & Aluko, 2022; Ojo, 2020). This paradox suggests that conventional voter education models often episodic, urban-centred, and designed around generic messaging may not be adequately tailored to address the structural, psychological, and informational barriers that shape actual voting behaviour (Msughter, 2023).

Furthermore, the relationship between voter education and the reduction of electoral fraud and misinformation remains underexplored in the Nigerian context. Much of the discourse centres on voter turnout, while insufficient attention is given to how educational interventions can equip citizens to identify and resist fraudulent electoral appeals or false information that distorts voting choices. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate how targeted voter education shapes electoral patterns and voter behaviour by examining both its mobilising effect on underrepresented communities and its potential to mitigate electoral fraud and misinformation. Addressing this dual concern is critical for designing evidence-based voter education strategies that go beyond raising awareness to transforming the quality of electoral participation.

1.1 Research questions

1. How does targeted voter education influence voting turnout in underrepresented communities?
2. What impact does voter education have on incidence of electoral fraud or misinformation?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in several key respects, offering theoretical, policy, and practical contributions to the field of electoral studies and democratic development in Nigeria. The research will contribute to the existing body of literature by moving beyond the general assertion that voter education improves civic knowledge. It will critically examine the knowledge-action gap, providing nuanced insights into how, why, and under what conditions educational interventions translate into tangible changes in voter turnout and resistance to electoral fraud. By exploring both behaviour-mobilising and behaviour-qualifying dimensions of voter education, the study will enrich theories of political behaviour and communication in emerging democracies.

From a policy and institutional perspective, the findings will provide evidence-based recommendations for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), civil society organisations, and development partners. By identifying the components of voter education that are most effective for reaching underrepresented groups and combating misinformation, the study will guide the design of more targeted, continuous, and context-sensitive programmes. This can help shift investments from generic, episodic campaigns to strategic, outcome-oriented civic engagement initiatives.

The significance lies in its potential to enhance the integrity of Nigeria's electoral process. By illuminating how education can equip citizens to identify and reject fraudulent electoral appeals and false information, the research will support efforts to build a more discerning and resilience electorate. This, in turn, can contribute to reducing the incidence of vote-buying, voter intimidation, and other malpractices that are often sustained by an uninformed or misinformed citizenry.

Finally, the study will benefit grassroots civil society groups and community-based organisations by offering a framework for designing voter education curricula that address local, structural, and psychological barriers to participation. In empowering these organisations with empirical evidence, the study ultimately aims to shape an electoral environment where informed, voluntary participation becomes the norm, thereby deepening the quality of Nigerian democracy beyond the mere conduct of elections.

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Conceptual Framework

To investigate the role of voter education in shaping electoral patterns and voter behaviour, it is essential to clarify the core concepts that anchor this study

2.2 Voter Education

This refers to the deliberate and systematic dissemination of information, skills, and values designed to equip citizens with the knowledge necessary to participate meaningfully in electoral processes. According to the Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room (2023), Voter education plays a critical role in ensuring that citizens understand their rights, the voting process, and the importance of their participation in elections. An informed electorate is more likely to participate in the electoral process, make informed choices, and hold elected officials accountable.

Voter education encompasses awareness of voting rights, understanding of electoral systems and procedures (registration, balloting, result collation), the ability to evaluate candidates and issues critically, and knowledge of the legal and ethical boundaries of electoral conduct. Voter education equips the electorates with necessary information that educate them on their right to select the candidate of their choice. It contains vital aspect like when, where to register and vote casting (ECI, 2016).

Election Management Bodies (EMBs) organise regular voters' education updates or broadcasts through messages, aired on radio and the print media, In the Nigerian context, voter education is operationalised through civic engagement campaigns by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), workshops conducted by civil society organisations, media programmes, and community-based sensitisation. The concept of voter education goes beyond the episodic pre-election announcements to encompass continuous civic learning that shapes deeper democratic dispositions (Moropefoluwa et al., 2024).

INEC modify its operation to be in tune with contemporary media trends for example, the maximum use of the internet. Elections cannot be generally said to be credible unless the voters are aware of the right choice. In addition, detailed information on voting methodology should be available ahead of time of Election Day. Voters' education activities could be directed by either the INEC or other stakeholders like the civil society in disseminating information on what is required of the electorates throughout the electioneering process (Oduola et al 2020).

Voting and election are virtuous features of modern democratic society. To appreciate the connection between voting and election, eligible voters must be enlightened and sensitized about their right and obligations, the electoral process, the informed and non-prejudicial choices they make during election amongst others. This is what is commonly referred to as voter education.

2.3 Electoral or Vote Pattern

This refers to observable, recurring trends in electoral participation and outcomes over time. These include voter turnout rates across different demographics and geographies, registration trends, frequency of invalid votes, and the spatial distribution of support for political parties. Electoral or vote pattern is the study of partisan preferences or choices of selected voter groups or individuals (Merrill & Grofman, 1999). The pattern of voting of such voting groups or individual is not static but is largely dynamic due to realignment.

Voting denotes the means whereby several persons are enabled to indicate their agreement or disagreement with some propositions or their preferences as between two or more proposals or between two or more candidates for some offices. It is therefore a means

of aggregating individual preference into a collective decision (Aondover et al., 2026). The term generally refers to the process by which citizens choose candidates for public office or decide political questions submitted to them. Voting is one of the cardinal principles of the democratic system of government and the importance of political and election participations in democratic societies have increased dramatically. This brings us to a sharper definition of voting; therefore, voting in this capacity refers to aggregating individual preferences into a collective decision in an election, the action of formally indicating one's choice of candidate or political party at an election (Gerber, Green & Shachar, 2003).

Voting pattern or behaviour is an electoral activity. It is a combination of personal and electoral action, which manifests during an electoral process. Such include voting during elections, involvement in electoral campaigns and participation in electoral rallies as well as support for a candidate or a political party (Bratton et al., 2012; Msughter, 2022). In essence, it connotes the participation and nonparticipation of the electorate in an electoral process. In other words, it simply implied to the manners electorates cast their vote for a given political party or candidates irrespective of their political affiliation in a particular election within a state or a political system or country. (Amao,2021).

2.4 Underrepresented Communities

Electoral systems are the skeletons on which the body of a peaceful or a conflict-ridden society grows. By considering the electoral systems behind different conflict situations worldwide, and examining and evaluating the level of minority inclusion, this shows clearly that participation of minorities in the legislative process at the stage of electoral reform is a key tool, both in peace building and in future conflict prevention.

Underrepresented Communities are the groups whose electoral participation is systematically lower than their proportion in the population due to structural, social, or informational barriers. In Nigeria, this includes residents of remote rural areas, internally displaced persons, persons with disabilities, women in certain cultural contexts, and first-time voters from marginalised socioeconomic backgrounds (Akintayo et al., 2026). Targeted voter education in this study means interventions specifically designed to reach and resonate with such groups.

2.5 Electoral Fraud and Misinformation

These are related but distinct contaminants of electoral behaviour. Electoral fraud encompasses illegal acts such as vote buying, ballot snatching, multiple voting, and falsification of results. Misinformation refers to false or misleading information—whether deliberately spread (disinformation) or inadvertently shared—that distorts voters' perceptions of candidates, policies, or the electoral process itself. False, misleading, and intimidating speech has proliferated in both online and real-world spaces, particularly as it relates to elections. Although the right to free speech is generally protected by the First Amendment, that right does not extend to saying anything, anywhere, in any manner. When governments identify efforts to intimidate, deter, or otherwise interfere with voters, the First Amendment allows them to safeguard the fundamental right of citizens to vote freely without fear, threat, or undue influence (Mohammed & Aondover, 2025). Governments can also take steps to prevent, suppress, or remove false and misleading speech that seeks to disrupt the process of voting. This Fact Sheet outlines the legal framework for governments to counter false, misleading, or intimidating election-related speech within the bounds of the First Amendment. The study examines voter education's potential to inoculate citizens against both predatory offers (fraud) and false narratives (misinformation) (Akintayo et al., 2026).

This study is grounded in two complementary theoretical lenses: the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Information-Motivation-Behavioural Skills (IMB) Model.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) posits that an individual's behavioural intention is the immediate antecedent of action and is determined by three constructs:

1. attitude toward the behaviour,
2. subjective norm, and
3. perceived behavioural control.

Applied to voting, a citizen's decision to vote is shaped by their positive or negative evaluation of voting, the perceived social pressure from peers and community leaders, and their belief in their own capacity to navigate the voting process successfully. Voter education, under this framework, can influence all three: it can improve attitudes by emphasising civic duty, reshape subjective norms by normalising informed participation, and enhance perceived control by demystifying registration and balloting. The TPB also helps explain the knowledge-action gap: if education only improves attitudes and subjective norms without building genuine perceived behavioural control—or if structural barriers keep control low—intention may not translate into turnout.

The Information-Motivation-Behavioural Skills (IMB) Model (Fisher & Fisher, 1992) offers a more intervention-focused lens. It proposes that behaviour change is a function of the interaction among information (facts and understanding relevant to the action), motivation (personal and social attitudes toward the behaviour), and behavioural skills (objective abilities and self-efficacy required to perform the act). In the electoral domain, information includes knowledge of registration procedures, candidate platforms, and how to detect misinformation. Motivation encompasses civic commitment, trust in the electoral system, and the perceived importance of one's vote. Behavioural skills involve the practical ability to locate a polling unit, to use ballot papers correctly, and to critically evaluate campaign messages. The IMB model asserts that information and motivation work largely through behavioural skills to produce behaviour, and that when skills are strong, information and motivation can directly trigger the action (Hile et al., 2023; Akintayo et al., 2026).

This framework directly supports the study's aim: effective voter education should not only impart information but also strengthen motivation and, critically, build the skills needed for discerning participation. It predicts that educational interventions most successful at closing the knowledge-action gap are those that address all three components, especially by equipping citizens with the skill to recognise and reject fraudulent or misleading electoral content (Yar'Adua et al., 2019). By combining TPB and the IMB model, the study captures both the socio-psychological decision-making process and the practical, skills-based pathway through which voter education can shape both the quantity (turnout) and quality (fraud and misinformation resistance) of electoral behaviour (Vitalis et al., 2025).

2.6 Empirical Review

A growing body of scholarship has examined the relationship between voter education and electoral engagement. Much of the empirical evidence supports the claim that well-designed educational initiatives can increase voter turnout, though the effects are often conditional and context-dependent.

In the Nigerian context, Adeyemi and Adeowu (2026) found that INEC-led voter education programmes significantly increased civic knowledge among respondents in south-western Nigeria, particularly regarding voter registration deadlines and balloting procedures. Similarly, Makanjuola (2026) observed a positive correlation between exposure to voter education messages and self-reported intention to vote among urban youth. However, these studies also reveal the knowledge-action gap: Arowolo and Aluko (2022) documented that, whilst more than 70% of surveyed Lagos residents demonstrated electoral awareness, actual turnout in the 2019 general elections remained below 35% in the same wards. Ojo (2020) corroborates this disconnect in a study of three election cycles in Ekiti State, noting that

episodic civic campaigns failed to overcome deep-seated apathy born of unmet governance expectations.

International literature provides important comparative lessons. In India, Banerjee et al. (2011) conducted a randomised experiment showing that targeted get-out-the-vote campaigns providing simple information about voting procedures increased turnout, especially in rural and female populations. In Ghana, Ichino and Schündeln (2012) found that community-based voter education reduced the incidence of invalid votes and improved the accuracy of voter choices. Conversely, a study in Kenya by Cheeseman et al. (2019) cautioned that civic education can sometimes increase political cynicism if the information about governance failures is not paired with empowerment strategies, highlighting the importance of programme design.

Regarding electoral fraud and misinformation, the empirical evidence remains scarcer. A strand of research in media literacy suggests that educational interventions can improve citizens' ability to detect disinformation. Guess et al. (2020) found that digital literacy training in the United States reduced susceptibility to online political falsehoods. Within Africa, Wasserman and Madrid-Morales (2019) argue that misinformation spreads through both digital and informal offline networks, making purely media-based education insufficient. In Nigeria, Enweremadu (2021) linked vote buying to voters' economic vulnerability, implying that education focusing solely on civic duty without addressing survival realities may fail to deter complicity in electoral fraud. Crucially, no rigorous empirical study was identified that directly tests the effect of voter education on Nigerians' resistance to electoral fraud and misinformation, either through experimental or in-depth qualitative designs (Aondover & Ademosu, 2025). This gap is particularly pressing given the increasing sophistication of political disinformation and the persistence of vote trading.

Collectively, the empirical landscape indicates that whilst voter education can boost civic knowledge and sometimes turnout, its impact is contingent on targeting, continuity, and the incorporation of skill-building components. The translation of awareness into behaviour change remains uneven, and the link to mitigating electoral fraud and misinformation is theoretically plausible but empirically underexplored, especially within Nigeria's distinct political environment.

2.7 Gap to Fill

From the foregoing review, the literature establishes a broad positive association between voter education and civic knowledge, but several lacunae persist that this study aims to address.

First, there is a pronounced knowledge-action gap in the Nigerian context that existing studies identify but do not fully unpack. Research has not sufficiently investigated the mechanisms by which education translates into actual voting behaviour, nor why this translation fails. By employing the IMB and TPB frameworks, this study will move beyond measuring knowledge gains to examining how voter education shapes the skills and perceived control needed to bridge intention and action, particularly in underrepresented communities.

Second, there is a thematic gap concerning the influence of voter education on electoral integrity outcomes. The bulk of the literature prioritises voter turnout as the dependent variable, whilst the role of education in reducing citizens' engagement in or tolerance of electoral fraud, and their susceptibility to misinformation, remains largely neglected. This study explicitly addresses this by assessing the impact of voter education on both the incidence of fraud and the electorate's ability to identify and resist misinformation.

Third, there is a methodological and design gap. Much Nigerian voter education research relies on cross-sectional surveys that capture associations but not causal pathways or

contextualised experiences. This study proposes a deeper investigation—through a mixed-methods approach—to examine the specific contents, delivery modes, and contextual adaptations of educational initiatives that prove most effective. It will also focus on underrepresented communities, a segment often missed by urban-biased, mass-media-oriented programmes. By doing so, it aims to generate evidence on how voter education can be redesigned from a generic, episodic activity into a continuous, context-sensitive strategy that shapes not only whether citizens vote, but how discerningly they do so.

III. Research Methods

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to capture both the breadth and depth of voter education's influence on electoral patterns and voter behaviour. A convergent parallel design was employed: quantitative data from a cross-sectional survey and qualitative data from in-depth interviews were collected concurrently, analysed separately, and then integrated during interpretation. This design enabled the study to measure the statistical relationship between targeted voter education and turnout/misinformation resistance, while also exploring the lived experiences and contextual mechanisms behind the knowledge-action gap.

3.2 Study Area and Population

The research was conducted in three states representing Nigeria's diverse geopolitical zones and degrees of urban-rural disparity: Ekiti (South-West), Kano (North-West), and Enugu (South-East). Within each state, one urban and two rural local government areas were purposely selected for their documented low voter turnout and presence of underrepresented groups. The target population comprised registered voters who had been eligible to vote in at least one of the last two general elections (2019 and 2023). Special emphasis was placed on underrepresented communities: rural women, persons with disabilities (PWDs), first-time voters from low-income households, and residents of internally displaced persons (IDP) camps where applicable.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

For the quantitative strand, a sample size of 1,200 registered voters was determined using Cochran's formula at a 95% confidence level and 3% margin of error, adjusted for an estimated non-response rate of 10%. A multi-stage sampling technique was used:

1. Purposive selection of states and LGAs as described above.
2. Stratified random sampling within each LGA, stratifying by demographic categories (gender, age group, disability status) to ensure the inclusion of underrepresented groups.
3. Simple random selection of households and subsequent selection of eligible respondents using the last-birthday method.

For the qualitative strand, 30 in-depth interviews were conducted. Participants were drawn from the same underrepresented categories and included INEC voter education officers, civil society organisation (CSO) facilitators, community leaders, and voters who had participated in targeted education programmes as well as those who had not.

3.4 Research Instruments

Three instruments were developed:

1. Voter Education and Electoral Behaviour Questionnaire (VEEB-Q): A structured questionnaire containing five sections: demographic information, exposure to voter education (timing, source, content), voting behaviour (turnout in 2023 general election), perceived electoral fraud and misinformation (adapted from Guess et al., 2020), and measures of the Theory of Planned Behaviour constructs (attitude, subjective norm,

- perceived behavioural control) and IMB components (information, motivation, behavioural skills). Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale.
2. In-Depth Interview Guide: Semi-structured questions exploring how voter education shaped participants' decisions to vote or abstain, their ability to detect and resist misinformation, experiences of electoral fraud inducements, and suggestions for improving voter education.
 3. Key Informant Interview Guide: Designed for INEC and CSO officials, focusing on the design, implementation, and challenges of targeted voter education initiatives.

Instruments were validated through face and content validity by a panel of political scientists and measurement experts. The VEEB-Q was pilot-tested on 50 respondents in a neighbouring state, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.83 for internal consistency.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection took place over eight weeks between August and September 2025. Trained research assistants administered the questionnaire in face-to-face settings, translating items into Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo where necessary. Interviews, lasting 40–60 minutes, were audio-recorded with participants' consent. Ethical clearance was obtained from the institutional review board, and all respondents provided informed consent. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained.

3.6 Data Analysis and Presentation

Quantitative data were cleaned, coded, and analysed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations) were used to profile respondents and their exposure to voter education. Inferential analysis employed logistic regression to determine the effect of targeted voter education on voter turnout (binary outcome: voted/did not vote), and multiple linear regression to assess the impact of voter education components on resistance to electoral fraud and misinformation (composite scores). The Theory of Planned Behaviour and IMB variables were entered as predictors to test the hypothesised pathways. Model fit was assessed using the Hosmer-Lemeshow test for logistic regression and adjusted R^2 for linear regression. Assumptions of multicollinearity, linearity, and homoscedasticity were checked and met.

Qualitative data were transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. Data were coded inductively and deductively, guided by the TPB and IMB constructs. Themes were extracted to explain the patterns observed in the quantitative findings. Quantitative and qualitative results were then integrated using a joint display to compare convergence and divergence.

IV. Result and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

A total of 1,127 completed questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 93.9%. Males constituted 51.3%, females 48.7%. Rural residents made up 62% of the sample; 11.4% were persons with disabilities; and 28% were first-time voters. Exposure to targeted voter education (defined as community-based workshops, door-to-door sensitisation, or disability-inclusive sessions) was reported by 65% of respondents, while 35% had received only mass-media messages or no education at all.

4.2 Influence of Targeted Voter Education on Turnout in Underrepresented Communities

The logistic regression model (Table 1) revealed that exposure to targeted voter education was a significant positive predictor of voter turnout (OR = 2.14, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [1.68, 2.72]), after controlling for age, gender, education, and residential location. Among the

TPB constructs, perceived behavioural control (OR = 1.89, $p < 0.001$) and subjective norm (OR = 1.56, $p < 0.01$) were significant mediators. In the IMB pathway, behavioural skills—specifically knowing how to locate a polling unit and verify candidate information—exhibited the strongest mediating effect, accounting for 34% of the total effect of voter education on turnout (Sobel test $z = 4.21$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 1. Logistic Regression Predicting Voter Turnout

Predictor	B	S.E.	Wald	p	OR
Targeted Voter Education	0.76	0.12	38.1	<0.001	2.14
Perceived Behavioural Control	0.64	0.14	20.8	<0.001	1.89
Subjective Norm	0.44	0.15	8.6	0.003	1.56
Information (IMB)	0.18	0.13	1.9	0.168	1.20
Behavioural Skills (IMB)	0.73	0.16	20.4	<0.001	2.08
Model $\chi^2(7)=198.3$, $p<0.001$, Nagelkerke $R^2=0.28$					

The qualitative data supported these results. A rural woman in Enugu explained: “Before those women came to our village to teach us how to vote, I was afraid of making mistakes. But they showed us the ballot paper, how to thumbprint properly, and told us our vote is secret. So I went.” A PWD in Kano noted that the provision of sign language interpretation during a workshop gave him the confidence to participate. Conversely, respondents in areas without targeted interventions frequently cited lack of practical knowledge and fear of electoral violence as deterrents.

4.3 Impact of Voter Education on Electoral Fraud and Misinformation

Multiple linear regression assessed the effect of voter education components on a composite score measuring resistance to electoral fraud (refusing vote-buying, not engaging in multiple voting) and ability to identify misinformation (e.g., fact-checking claims, recognising fake news). The full model with IMB and TPB variables significantly predicted resistance behaviour ($F(5, 1121) = 42.11$, $p < 0.001$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.22$). Significant predictors were information ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.001$), motivation ($\beta = 0.15$, $p < 0.01$), and behavioural skills ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.001$). Information that specifically addressed how to verify news and identify vote-buying tactics had the strongest zero-order correlation with resistance ($r = 0.43$, $p < 0.001$).

Thematic analysis revealed that participants who had undergone digital literacy and critical evaluation workshops described greater self-efficacy in detecting misinformation. A youth from Ekiti stated: “I used to forward any political message on WhatsApp. After the training, I check if the news is from a verified platform before sharing.” However, many respondents acknowledged that economic hardship weakened their resistance to vote-buying despite education. One informant remarked: “When they offer you rice or money and you are hungry, you will take it even if you know it is wrong.” This underscores the knowledge-action gap linked to structural vulnerability, supporting Enweremadu’s (2021) argument.

4.4 Integrated Summary

Targeted voter education was significantly associated with higher turnout in underrepresented groups, mediated by enhanced behavioural skills and perceived behavioural control. It also improved voters' capacity to identify misinformation and, to a lesser extent, reduced participation in fraud, though economic pressures moderated this relationship. These findings confirm that education must address not only information delivery but also skill-building and motivational reinforcement to transform electoral behaviour.

V. Conclusion

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Shift to Continuous, Community-Based Voter Education: INEC and CSOs should transform voter education from an episodic, pre-election activity into a sustained year-round civic empowerment programme. Dedicated community liaison officers should be deployed to rural and marginalized areas to conduct periodic workshops that build practical voting skills and critical information evaluation.
2. Integrate Skill-Building Modules: Voter education curricula must extend beyond civic knowledge to include hands-on skills: how to verify candidates' claims, fact-check viral messages, recognise vote-buying attempts, and report electoral malpractices using official channels. These modules should be co-designed with target communities.
3. Tailor Content for Underrepresented Groups: Disability-inclusive formats, translated materials, and women-only discussion forums should be standard. For internally displaced persons, mobile registration and voting procedure demonstrations should be combined with education on rights.
4. Address Structural Vulnerabilities that Enable Fraud: Voter education alone cannot eliminate vote-selling. Government and development partners should pair civic education with short-term economic support programmes during election seasons to reduce the desperation that drives citizens to accept illicit inducements.
5. Leverage Traditional and Digital Media Synergistically: While radio and community theatre remain effective in rural areas, targeted digital literacy campaigns on WhatsApp and Facebook can equip urban and semi-urban youth to counter misinformation. INEC should establish a verified online portal for real-time rumour debunking.
6. Strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation: Voter education programmes should include built-in impact assessments measuring not only awareness gains but actual turnout and resistance behaviour. Findings should feed back continuously into programme redesign.

This study set out to investigate the role of voter education in shaping electoral patterns and voter behaviour in Nigeria, with a focus on underrepresented communities and the dual challenges of low turnout and electoral fraud/misinformation. The results confirm that targeted voter education significantly increases the likelihood of voting among groups historically excluded from full participation. Crucially, this effect operates less through mere information transfer and more through the cultivation of behavioural skills and a sense of control over the voting process.

Furthermore, the study provides compelling evidence that voter education can strengthen the electorate's defences against misinformation and, to a degree, electoral fraud. However, the persistence of vote-buying amid economic deprivation underscores that education alone is not a silver bullet. Meaningful electoral integrity requires simultaneous investment in poverty alleviation and strict enforcement of electoral laws.

The research bridges the knowledge-action gap identified in prior Nigerian studies by demonstrating that when education is targeted, skills-oriented, and context-sensitive, it can move citizens from passive awareness to active, discerning electoral participation. Ultimately, strengthening Nigerian democracy demands a reimagining of voter education not as a transitory campaign tool but as a permanent pillar of civic life—one that equips every citizen, regardless of location or status, with the capability and confidence to shape the nation’s political destiny.

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