



## Youths' Perception of Voter Education and Voting in Ekiti State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

*The study examined the youths' perception towards voter education and voting in Ekiti State. The study adopted a description research design of the survey type. The population comprised all students in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. The sample was made up of 200 male and female who were selected using stratified random sampling procedure from the three senatorial districts in Ekiti state. Such as Ekiti North senatorial district, Ekiti Central senatorial district and Ekiti South senatorial district. One tertiary institution was selected from each senatorial district. A self-designed questionnaire titled youths' perception towards voter education and voting in Ekiti State was used for data collection. The face and content of the instrument were carried out through experts in the field of education. The reliability coefficient of 0.89 was obtained for the instrument. Data collection was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Location has no significant influence on youths' perception towards voter education and voting. Also gender has no significant influence on youths' perception towards voter education and voting. The study therefore recommended that Government should organize voter educational programme in the media, such as radio, television and newspaper to educate youths who have not got the opportunity to be involved in the voter education programme on voting exercise. These youths will be knowledgeable on due process and electoral credibility during political processes. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should organize conferences and workshops to educate youths on voter education and on their rights towards voting.*

**Keywords:** Voter education, Attitudes, Youths, Gender, Location and Vote behaviour.

### Introduction

In any democratic society, electorates have the right in decision making in the country during popular participation. This is done by voting to elect the credible leaders of their choice in the parliament for political stability, good, and sustainable governance. Popular participation also allows for social

justice and responsibility hence, allowing the social, political and physical development of the nation. The attitudes exhibited by the populace during political processes calls for concern. Many of the youths are usually violence tools in the hands of the politicians to foment trouble. For instance, some are used as thugs,



riggers, sycophants, kingpins and assassins before, during and post electoral processes.

Many of the youths refuse to vote due to ignorance, few of them who took part in voting casts their vote wrongly which may result in electing candidates who are not transparent, accessible, accountable, responsible and responsive to the yearnings and aspiration of the people. These attitudes could jeopardise the development and peace of the country. The essence of these attitudes exhibited by the youths may be due to lack voter education. They never know that it is their rights, duties, obligation and responsibilities to part take in popular exercise such as voting and, that they have equal chance of voting and that their vote counts.

Voter education is providing citizens of a democracy with basic information about participating in elections. In the opinion of Ajayi (2011), voter education is the development of competence and motivation to engage actively in community issues. Voter education is also an education in self-governance that is concerned with promoting the understanding of the ideals of democracy and a reasoned commitment of the values and principles of democracy. Aibieyi (2008) described voter education as an educational programme that provides the citizenry with knowledge, skills and values necessary for the development of the society. Alonge (2005) saw the concept as ideals and knowledge needed for the provision of

information and learning experience to equip and empower citizens to participate in democratic process. He went further to say that voter education provides the citizens with opportunity of understanding their political culture, political ideology and thoughts, their fundamental human rights and the basic elements and structures of the constitution of their country. From the foregoing, it could be deduced that for an election to be successful and democratic, voters must understand their rights and responsibilities, and must be sufficiently knowledgeable and well informed to cast ballots that are legally valid and to participate meaningfully in the voting process.

Ake (2005) opined that the goal of voter education is to make information available and accessible to all constituents and campaigns should seek to achieve universal coverage of the electorate. To do this effectively requires reaching out to disadvantaged groups as well as mainstream voters. Furthermore, Hassan (2011) opined that for Nigeria to achieve good and sustainable governance, citizens must possess skills, values, and manifest the appropriate behaviours which promote good governance. Voter education helps citizens to make informed judgment about the nature of democratic system, politics, government and such knowledge could promote the understanding of the nature and importance of democratic society and the art of good governance. Banks (2005) asserted that the youths never know the value of voter education as an educational programme that provides the citizenry



with knowledge, skills and values necessary for the development of the society. Voter education in a democratic society promotes peaceful and happy community, social responsibilities, reduction in poverty, high sense of co-operation and social justice within the political system.

In the observation of Babatunde, Ifedayo and Ishola (2013), both male and female youths in Ekiti State, sees politics largely as a business venture through which those they could amass stupendous wealth quickly. Little wonder the political godfathers and leaders could spend the last naira in their pocket to sponsor candidates in anticipation of getting back in thousand folds whatever they might have invested on any candidate after securing juicy political positions for them. Hence the youths including males and females are used as tools by the politicians to disrupt the electioneering process. Males are used as kingpins or thugs while females are sponsored to involve in multiple voting. These problems arise as a result of lack of voter education, they lack the knowledge that their votes would count.

In the contribution of Ajayi (2011), the way in which the elder politicians, both male and female behave towards democratic system in Ekiti State is very bad. The attitude of winner takes all syndrome is a problem. They believe that once they get to power / office they must be there for life and then exchange position / portfolio at different terms. They thought the various positions are there for them as

life offices. Both elderly male and female politicians, they never think of allowing the youths to be involved in politics as they always suppress the inspiration of youths who have interest to partake in politics. Youths never know when their time will come as the elderly politicians are not ready to give chance for them to partake in politics and to be voted for.

A study of Afigbo (2008) revealed that Ekiti State youths have participated in history of electoral malpractices that had to do with election rigging that thwarts the popular will of the people and most of the time had been accompanied with social upheavals with negative impacts on the polity. Anyanwu (2001) observed that the voters have developed the attitude in which they can hardly give their support and votes to contestants freely without collecting their dues from them. These politicians also become philanthropists by doling out money and materials such as umbrellas, T-shirts, face caps, bags, rice and soup ingredients, to win the minds of voters. Many of them change their mind overnight when they have received these flashy materials to vote for the wrong candidates that may not be accountable, responsible and responsive to the yearnings and aspirations of the people when they get to power/office.

In assertion of Akinyele (2007) the culture of politics in Ekiti State is characterized by rigging, political thuggery, assassination and intimidation of voters. These have robbed many political parties of their victory both in urban and rural areas during electoral process. The youths as voters also faced with these problems as a result of lack of voter education.



Through voter education, citizens acquire skills, knowledge about the ideals, principles and values of democracy in a democratic society. Ajayi (2011) opined that though no society can be said to have attained perfection in the process of election and recruiting of government personnel, the experience of electoral process in urban areas of Ekiti State have not been palatable. The urban dwellers have undergone history of electoral malpractices based on their exposure that had to do with election rigging that usually thwarts the popular will of the people which most of the time had been accompanied with social upheavals with serious negative impact on the polity.

According to Awopeju (2011), it is necessary to say that the desperation of the youths in urban and rural areas to acquire power has led to the corruption of the electoral system in the country. The methods with which these youths manipulate the system are not hidden. They perpetrate electoral fraud in Nigeria before, during, and after elections. Umobong (2006) posited that rural dwellers are found in the practice that is very pervasive in Nigeria. For instance, compilation of fictitious names on voters' registers is perpetrated by youths that are politicians and community elites so that the voting strength of their bases or communities will be higher in comparison with other communities. This gives the politicians or communities an advantage over other communities contesting the same elective positions. This act is seen to be common among the rural areas because the youths have no knowledge of voting and seem not to believe in due process and the common good of the value of democracy. This problem

might be due to the rate of unemployment among the youths. Also, they are affected by civilization and most of them do not know their rights as citizens and that their vote counts.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In any democratic society, voting is a means through which people participate in the political system. It has been observed that the attitudes exhibited by the populace during political processes are appalling. Many of the youths appear to be violence tools in the hands of the politicians to foment trouble. Youths negative attitudes towards voting could be attributed to lack of voter education which in-turn resulted into being used as thugs, riggers, sycophants, kingpins and assassins before, during and post electoral processes.

Observation also shows that many of the youths refuse to vote due to ignorance, few of them that do part take in voting cast their votes wrongly resulting into electing candidates who may not be transparent, accessible, accountable, responsible and responsive to the yearnings and aspiration of the people. These negative attitudes seem to jeopardise the development and peace of the country. The reason for these negative attitudes by the youths may be due to lack voter education. They never know that it is their rights, duties, obligation and responsibilities to take part in such popular exercise and that they have equal chance of voting and also make their vote counts. Without voter





education youths may develop the attitude of political apathy. This tends to have contributed to the electoral problems faced by the youths in the state. Therefore, this study investigated the youths' perception towards voter education and voting in Ekiti State.

### **Purpose of the study**

It investigated the youths' perception towards voter education and voting. It also explored the influence of location on youths' perception towards voter education and voting.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised for the study:

1. How do youths perceive the concept of voter education?
2. How do youths perceive relevance of voter education to voting?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were generated for the study:

1. There is no significant difference between male and female youths' perception of voter education and voting
2. There is no significant difference between rural and urban youths' perception of voter education and voting?

### **Research Method**

The study adopted a descriptive research design of the survey type. The population comprised all students in public tertiary institution in Ekiti State. The sample consisted of 200 students in the selected tertiary institutions in

Ekiti State from the three senatorial districts of Ekiti State such as Ekiti North Senatorial districts, Ekiti Central senatorial district and Ekiti South senatorial district. Three public tertiary institution were selected, one tertiary institution from each senatorial district of Ekiti State. They are 89 male and 111 female students selected through stratified sampling procedure. The face and content of the instrument were carried out through the experts in the field of education. A trial testing was carried out on 20 youths from a tertiary institution not included in the sample. The instrument was done twice on the respondents within an interval of two weeks. The reliability of the two scores was obtained and correlated using Pearson Correlation Analysis and the coefficient was 0.89 which was found to be high enough to make these instrument reliable. Data collected for the study were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The research questions were answered by using descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage. Hypotheses one and two were tested using t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance.



## Results

**Research Question 1:** How do youths perceive the concept of voter education?

**Table 1:** Perception of the concept of voter education by the youths

S/N	Items	Agree	%	Disagree	%
1.	Voter education provides citizens of a democracy basic information about participating in elections.	199	99.5	1	0.5
2.	Voter education enhance the development of competence and motivation to engage actively in community issues	170	85	30	15
3.	Voter education is an educational programme that provides the citizenry with knowledge, skills and value necessary for the development of the society	157	78.5	43	21.5
4.	Voter education is an education self-governance	154	77	46	23
5.	Voter education is the tools of breaking ignorance and apathy noted with electoral process	187	93	13	6.5
	<b>Total Average</b>	<b>173.4</b>	<b>86.7</b>	<b>26.6</b>	<b>13.3</b>

Table 1. shows how youths perceive the concept of voter education. Item 1 shows that 199 representing 99.5% agree that voter education provides citizens of a democracy basic information about participating in elections. Item 2 shows that 170 representing 85% agree that voter education is the development of competence and motivation to engage actively in community issues. Item 3 shows that 157 representing 78.5% agree that voter education is an

educational programme that provides the citizenry with knowledge, skills and value necessary for the development of the society. Item 4 shows that 154 representing 77% agree that voter education is an education in self - governance. Item 5 shows that 187 representing 93.5% agree that voter education is the tools of breaking ignorance and apathy noted with electoral process. It therefore revealed that youths have high perception about the concept of voter education.



**Research Question 2:** How do youths perceive relevance of voter education to voting?

**Table 2:** Youths' perception of relevance of voter education to voting

S/N	Items	Agree	%	Disagree	%
1.	Voter education helps citizens to make informed judgment about the nature of democratic system.	173	86.5	27	13.5
2.	Voter education promotes the understanding of the nature and importance of democratic society and the art of good governance.	184	92	16	18
3.	Voter education gives individuals the self-confidence needed to engage in discussions on issues of governance	168	84	32	16
4.	Voter education affords people the information required to make informed judgment.	171	85.5	29	14.5
5.	Voter education facilitates active involvement of the citizens in political processes by making adequate information accessible to the people.	181	90.5	19	9.5
	Total Average	17.54	87.7	24.6	14.3

Table 2 shows how youths perceive the relevance of voter education. Item 6 shows that 173 representing 86.5% agrees that voter education helps citizens to make informed judgment about the nature of democratic system. Item 7 shows that 184 representing 92% agree that voter education promotes the understanding of the nature and importance of democratic society and the art of good governance. Item 8 shows that 168 representing 84% agree that voter education gives individuals self-confidence needed to engage in discussions on issues of governance. Item 9 shows that 171 representing 85.5% agrees that voter education affords people the information required to make informed judgment. Item 10 shows that 181

representing 90.5% agree that voter education facilitates active involvement of the citizens in political processes by making adequate information accessible to the people. The result shows that youths have right perception of voter education and voting.



**Hypothesis 1:** 1. There is no significant difference between male and female youths' perception of voter education and voting

**Table 3:** t- test Analysis on youths' gender and perception of voter education and voting.

Gender	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-tab
Male	89	85.26	7.17	198	0.863	1.96
Female	111	84.29	8.44			

$P > 0.05$  (not significant)

Table 3 above shows the t- calculated and t-tabulated as 0.863 and 1.96 respectively at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated value is lower than the tabulated value, therefore it is concluded that there is no significant difference between the male and female youths' perception of voter education and voting. Thus the null hypothesis is accepted.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference between rural and urban youths' perception of voter education and voting?

**Table 4:** t- test Analysis on youths' location and perception of voter education and voting.

Location	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-table
Urban	67	84.57	7.57		0.194	1.96
Rural	133	84.8	8.08	198		

$P > 0.05$  (not Significant)

Table 4 above shows the t-calculated and t- tabulated as 0.194 and 1.96 respectively at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated value is lower than the tabulated value is lower than the tabulated value, it can therefore be concluded that there is no significant difference between rural and urban youths. Thus the null hypothesis is accepted.

## Discussion

Analysis of data revealed that political process is perceived as a dirty game in which only male youths can be involved obviously because of the absurd way many of them practice it: Political process cannot be seen as

dirty game if those involved in the practice are believed to be clean and honest. It is an undeniable fact that Nigeria politics is characterized by rigging, disrespect for other people, intolerance, assassination, thuggery, intimidation, violence and ethnic





pluralism which have given birth to all sorts of ill feelings and hence scare the youths about the electoral process.

The result of hypothesis one revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female youths' perception of voter education and voting. Perception of both male and female respondents shows that there is no sex determinant in the youths' perception of voter education and voting. This agrees with the study of Ajayi (2011) who opined that voter education is an education in self-governance that is concerned with promoting the understanding of the ideals of democracy and a reasoned commitment of the values and principles of democracy. The high level of male and female youths' perception of voter education and voting in terms of the relevance of voter education agrees with the study of Aibiye (2008) who described voter education as an educational programme that provides the citizenry with knowledge, skills and values necessary for the development of the society.

The result also revealed that there is no difference in the perception of both the rural and urban youths' perception of voter education and voting in terms of relevance of voter education. In the observation of Babatunde, Ifedayo and Ishola (2013), both male and female youths in Ekiti State, sees politics largely as a business venture through which those youths who are involved could amass stupendous wealth quickly. Little wonder then why the political godfathers and leaders could spend the last naira in their pocket to sponsor candidates in anticipation of

getting back in thousand folds whatever they might have invested on any candidate after securing juicy political positions for them. Therefore the youths including males and females are used as tools by the politicians to disrupt the electioneering process. Males are used as kingpin or thug while females are sponsored to involve in multiple voting. These problems arise as a result of lack of voter education and also the knowledge that their votes would count.

The study supports is in a study of Afigbo (2008) which revealed that male youths have undergone history of electoral malpractices that had to do with election rigging that thwarts the popular will of the people and most of the time had been accompanied with social upheavals with negative impacts on the polity. If they are able part take in voter education, those problems they are facing during political processes would be minimal. The finding is also in agreement with Anyanwu (2001) observation that the females have developed the attitude in which they can hardly give their support and votes to contestants freely without collecting their dues from them. These politicians also become philanthropists by doling out money and materials like umbrellas, T-shirts, face caps, bags, rice and soup ingredients, to win the mind of the female youths. Therefore, if youths are able to know their rights, duties and responsibilities through voter education, they are then likely to have the knowledge and skills to know that



they have equal chance to vote and not to sell out their votes for materials and money collected from the politicians.

Hypothesis two states that there is no significant difference between rural and urban youths' perception. The result revealed that there is no significant difference between rural and urban youths' perception of voter education and voting in terms of concept of voter education. There is high perception of rural and urban youths' perception of voter education in terms of concept of voter education and that the interest of some youths is influenced by the politicians. Gifts such as money, clothes, food items or contract affect the decision of some youths in the rural areas to vote for a political party. Some of the aspirants became philanthropists overnight and doll out money to the youths so that they could vote for them to win. This in turn affects their voting decision because many of these youths in the rural areas are influenced by these materials due to lack basic knowledge of voting.

This agree with the assertion of Akinyele (2004) that the culture of politics in Ekiti State is characterized by rigging, political thuggery, assassination and intimidation of voters. These have robbed many political parties of their victory both in urban and rural areas during electoral process. The youths as voters faced these problems as a result of lack of voter education. Through voter education, citizens acquire skills, knowledge about the ideals, principles and values of democracy in a democratic society. The high perception in rural and urban youths also agree with the study of Hassan

(2011) who opined that for Ekiti State to achieve good and sustainable governance, citizens must possess skills, values, and manifest the appropriate behaviours which promote good governance. Voter education helps citizens to make informed judgment about the nature of democratic system, politics, government and such knowledge could promote the understanding of the nature and importance of democratic society and the art of good governance.

This finding agrees with the assertion of Banks (2005) that the youths never know the value of voter education as educational programme that provides the citizenry with knowledge, skills and value necessary for the development of the society. Voter education in a democratic society promotes peaceful and happy community, social responsibilities, reduction in poverty, high sense of co-operation and social justice within the political system. The finding also supports the study of Umobong (2006) who posited that rural dwellers are found in the practice that is very pervasive in Nigeria. Compilation of fictitious names on voters' registers is perpetrated by youths that are politicians and community elites such that the voting strength of their bases or communities will be high in comparison with other communities. This gives the politicians or communities an advantage over politicians from other communities contesting the same elective position. This act is common among the rural areas because the youths have no knowledge of voting and never believe in due process and the common good of the value of democracy. This problem arises as a result of the



unemployment on the part of the youths. Also, they are affected by civilization and the fact that most of them do not know their rights as citizens and that each vote counts. Youths should get informed on these values of voter education and thereby avert the negative attitudes exhibited by them before, during and after political processes.

### **Conclusion**

It is concluded from the findings of this study that youths' perception about the concept of voter education was very high. The youths' perception about relevance of voter education was also high. There was no difference between male and female youths' perception towards voter education and voting. Also, there was no difference between rural and urban youths' perception towards voter education and voting. Youths have positive perception of voter education and voting.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government should sponsor voter educational programmes in the media, such as radio, television and newspaper to educate youths who have not got the opportunity to be involved in voter education programme on voting exercise. These youths will be knowledgeable on due process and electoral credibility during political processes.

2. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should organise conferences and workshops to educate youths on values of voter

education and on their rights towards voting, as females and males have rights and responsibilities towards voting exercise. The wrong notion of the females about voting exercise will be minimized. Female will develop the spirit to be involved in voting exercise and to be found in public places like males.

3. The National Orientation Agency (NOA) should organize conference for both rural and urban dwellers on right attitude to voting, with a view to avert the negative attitudes in which the politicians use them as violent tools such as assassins, election riggers, thugs and touts to foment trouble during electoral processes.



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