

**ETHNICITY AND VOTING IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF THE 2023
GENERAL ELECTIONS IN EDO STATE**

BY

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BENIN CITY**

FEBRUARY, 2025

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**BIENG A PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF
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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (B.Sc.)
DEGREE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE.**

FEBRUARY, 2025

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project was carried out by Emmanuel Olayinka Braimoh with Matriculation Number SSC2010592 of the Department Political Science in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Science Degree (B.Sc.) in Political Science, University of Benin.

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Date

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to God almighty for his unmerited favor, sustainability and good health. I also dedicate this research work to my Late Dad who sacrificed alot for my education in ensuring I achieve my dream of obtaining a B.S.C degree and preparing me for the future. Unfortunately he is not here to witness my final year project which in turn makes me a Bonafide graduate of the University Of Benin.

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ABSTRACT

The study examined ethnicity and voting in Nigeria: A case study of the 2023 general elections in Edo State. The objectives of the study were to examine how ethnicity act as significant determinant of political allegiance in Nigeria; to evaluate whether ethnic Composition of Edo State influence the Political Landscape; to ascertain if ethnic voting patterns in the 2023 General Election in Edo State, to find out factors influencing ethnicity and voting in 2023. The study adopted survey design using questionnaires as instrument of data. The study adopted the percentage and chi-square statistical instrument to analyze the data collected from field survey. The findings revealed that ethnicity act as significant determinant of political allegiance in Nigeria, this implies that key drivers included a sense of ethnic solidarity, the perception of political exclusion, and promises of local development. Many voters expressed the belief that electing a candidate from their ethnic group would result in better access to government services and development projects. The ethnic composition of Edo State influence the political landscape, while ethnic voting can be seen as a reflection of communal solidarity, it also poses a threat to democratic ideals by undermining merit-based selection of leaders. It promotes division, fosters electoral violence, and reduces the likelihood of cross-ethnic cooperation. The ethnic voting patterns in the 2025 General Election in Edo State, that is analysis of voting data revealed a strong correlation between ethnic identity and candidate preference. Voters from specific ethnic groups predominantly supported candidates from their communities, particularly in local government areas with high ethnic homogeneity. The study recommended that strengthen civic education programs to emphasize the importance of competence, integrity, and policy alignment in candidate selection. Voters should be educated on the negative consequences of ethnic voting and the benefits of merit-based leadership. Governance foster inclusive equitable distribution of development projects and public appointments across all ethnic groups. This can reduce the perception that political power benefits only specific communities. Introduce electoral reforms to promote proportional representation, which would encourage candidates to seek support beyond their ethnic constituencies. This could be achieved by adjusting constituency boundaries or introducing multi-member constituencies. Political parties should be mandated to promote diversity in candidate selection and ensure that party tickets are distributed in a manner that reflects ethnic balance. Parties should also be held accountable for promoting inclusion and tolerance.

Keywords: Ethnicity and Voting, General Elections, Political Allegiance, sense of ethnic solidarity, the perception of political exclusion, and promises of local development.

CHAPTER ONE

Background to the Study

1.1 Introduction

Elections in Nigeria have historically been influenced by ethnic affiliations, reflecting the country's diverse and complex demographic structure. In Edo State, located in the South-South geopolitical zone, ethnicity played a nuanced role in shaping voting patterns during the 2023 General Elections (Idowu & Iyabode, 2024). This study examines the intersection of ethnicity and electoral behavior in Edo State, highlighting the impact on political outcomes, challenges, and implications for democratic consolidation.

Election takes place in Nigeria at different levels. In the Fourth Republic, from 1999 to the 2023 General Elections, there are seven electoral offices constitutionally including the Presidential, Senatorial, Federal House of Representatives, Gubernatorial, State House of Assembly, Chairmanship and Councillorship (Nigerian 1999 Constitution as amended). One of the most interesting episodes in Nigerian politics is the Presidential Election. This is because of the significant effect of ethnicity on voting pattern and political behaviour of the Nigerian voters towards electing their leaders, which most often is basically ethnically oriented (Kaliyev & Ventsel, 2021). This makes the battle for the Presidential seat intense, chaotic and threatening, sometimes to the extent of national disintegration. The culture of ethnic, religious and regional voting inherited from the nationalists during the colonial period spillover to the present era and it seems to be continuous (Afolabi, 2024; Sule, et al., 2017)

The 2023 elections in Edo State demonstrated a gradual shift from ethnic to issue-based voting, particularly among younger and urban voters. However, the enduring influence of ethnicity highlights the need for: Policies that ensure equitable representation of all ethnic groups. The 2023 General Elections in Edo State bring about programs to promote issue-based voting and discourage ethnic partisanship, independent electoral bodies and judiciary to mitigate ethnic manipulation in elections. The 2023 General Elections in Edo State showcased a complex interplay of ethnicity, socio-economic factors, and youth-driven political awakening. While ethnic loyalties remain significant, the rise of issue-based voting suggests a growing maturation of Nigeria's democracy (Jatula, 2024). To sustain this trend, efforts must be made to address ethnic inequalities and promote inclusive political participation, and the study is motivated to fill gap in literature by examining, ethnicity and voting in Nigeria: A study of the 2023 general elections in Edo State.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

- a. The problem of ethnic loyalty and its influence on voting patterns in Edo State.
- b. Ethnic group problem including the Bini (majority in Edo South), the Esan (in Edo Central), and the Afemai (Edo North, including the Etsako, Owan, and Akoko-Edo communities), aligned themselves.
- c. For instance, the regional divide was stark, with the Northern region predominantly supporting Atiku Abubakar of the PDP.

- d. Diversity is a cultural strength, it often creates challenges during elections in Edo State.
- e. Nigeria's general elections in 2023 brought to light the ongoing issue of ethnic differences in voting patterns.

The issue of ethnicity and voting behaviour in Nigeria has long been a source of political division, and the 2023 general elections underscored this challenge. Ethnic loyalty has a significant influence on voting patterns, often overshadowing the merits of candidates or their policy platforms. This phenomenon was particularly evident during the 2023 presidential elections, where candidates garnered strong support from their respective ethnic or regional bases, reinforcing Nigeria's existing political fragmentation. Ethnic groups, including the Yoruba, Hausa-Fulani, and Igbo, along with other smaller groups, aligned themselves with candidates from their regions, creating clear ethnic and regional voting blocs (Alemika, 2023; Osaghae, 2023). The 2023 elections exposed the continuing challenge of ethnic polarization in Nigerian politics. Voting patterns were heavily influenced by regional and ethnic identities, with many voters casting ballots based on these affiliations rather than on the basis of national issues such as governance, economic development, or security. This led to a fragmented electoral process where the majority of votes came from candidates' home regions, diminishing the potential for broader national unity (Bello, 2023; Alemika, 2023). Alemika (2023) examined, ethnicity, electoral politics, and national integration in Nigeria using a study of the 2023 Elections;

Adebayo (2023) examined Regionalism and Electoral Politics in Nigeria: A Look at the 2023 Presidential Elections. Consequently, Osaghae (2023) explored regional voting patterns in the 2023 Nigerian general elections: the ethnic divide.

Election is the process of choosing leaders in a democratic process where a legitimate change of government is constitutionally allowed (Johari, 2011). Election in Nigeria has been taking place since 1922 and since that period, election occurred continuously until 1960 when the political independence was gained from Britain. After political independence, election took place in 1964 but the democratic regime was short-lived because of bloody military coup. In 1979, Nigeria dropped the parliamentary system of government and switched to presidential system. The Aborted Third Republic in 1991 did not witness a smooth transition until in 1999 when the Fourth Republic emerged and remains the longest democratic transition in the history of the country (Sule, 2023). To address these challenges, several solutions have been suggested. First, promoting national integration and unity is vital. National campaigns emphasizing shared identity, mutual respect, and the common good of the country can reduce ethnic divisions. Efforts from both the government and civil society to foster a sense of national pride and belonging, rather than regional or ethnic pride, could encourage more inclusive voting behaviour (Nnoli, 2023).

It's from the foregoing, that this study seeks to examine ethnicity and voting in Nigeria: A study of the 2023 general elections in Edo State.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the above discussion on the main objective of the study, the following research question were raised to guide the study

1. To what extent does ethnicity act as significant determinant of political allegiance in Nigeria?
2. Does the Ethnic Composition of Edo State influence the Political Landscape?
3. What are the ethnic voting patterns influences the 2023 General Election in Edo State?
4. What are the Factors Influencing Ethnicity and Voting in 2023?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to appraise ethnicity and voting in Nigeria using the 2023 general elections in Edo State. The specific objectives are given as:

1. To examine how ethnicity act as significant determinant of political allegiance in Nigeria
2. To evaluate whether ethnic Composition of Edo State influence the Political Landscape
3. To ascertain if ethnic voting patterns in the 2023 General Election in Edo State
4. To find out factors influencing ethnicity and voting in 2023

1.5 Hypothesis of the Study

2. There is no significant relationship between ethnicity and political allegiance in the 2023 General Election in Edo State.
3. 1. There is no significant relationship between ethnic composition and Political Landscape in the 2023 General Election in Edo State
4. There is no significant relationship between ethnic voting patterns and the 2023 General Election in Edo State.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on ethnicity and voting in Nigeria using the 2023 general elections in Edo State. The study will be limited to the three senatorial districts in Edo State (Edo North, Edo Central and Edo South). The study will be based on survey methodology on the bases of which questionnaire will be used to source data for the empirical analysis.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This research work will be of immense relevance to the political elite and electorate in Edo State. It will go a long way in enlightening them on the concept of public sector accountability as key to national development. This research work will as well be of benefit to students and researchers because it will broaden their scope on the information based on the relationship between ethnicity and voting of the electorate during election, it will also be relevant to policy makers on the best policy to adopt in making Edo State and the nation at large a well development place for the wellbeing of

the citizens. The study will be relevant to Department of Political Science as it will be of help to improve on regional choice of political candidate resulting from ethnic influence

1.8 Conceptualization and Clarification of Terms

The following are conceptualization of terms as used in the study. The descriptions may help readers to appreciate its application in the study;

Ethnicity: Refers to a significant factor in elections in Edo State, often overshadowing developmental priorities and democratic values. It reflects the state of cultural diversity, its misuse in politics undermines unity and good governance.

Determinant: Refers to a factor or element that decisively influences the outcome or nature of something. It is a critical variable or cause that affects a particular situation, condition, or process. Determinants can be applied in various contexts, including mathematics, sociology, economics, and health sciences.

Political Allegiance: Refers to an individual's or group's loyalty and support for a particular political party, ideology, leader, or system. It is shaped by various social, economic, cultural, and psychological factors and influences political behavior, including voting patterns, activism, and policy preferences.

Ethnic Composition: Refers to the demographic makeup of a population in terms of the ethnic groups that constitute it. It highlights the diversity of cultural, linguistic, religious, and ancestral characteristics within a specific geographic area, such as a country, region, or community

Political Landscape: The political landscape refers to the overall structure and dynamics of politics within a specific region, country, or globally. It encompasses the distribution of political power, the roles of institutions, parties, and leaders, as well as the prevailing ideologies, alliances, and trends shaping governance and policymaking.

Ethnic Voting Patterns: Ethnic voting patterns refer to the tendencies of voters from specific ethnic groups to support particular political parties, candidates, or policies based on shared cultural, linguistic, religious, or ancestral identities. In societies with diverse ethnic compositions, voting behaviors are often influenced by a sense of belonging, historical experiences, and perceived group interests.

General Election: A general election is a formal process through which eligible citizens of a country vote to select their representatives in government. It is the cornerstone of democratic systems, where voters elect officials to fill public offices, including the executive (e.g., presidents, governors) and legislative bodies (e.g., parliaments, congresses).

Factors Influencing Ethnicity: Ethnicity refers to a group of people sharing common cultural traits, ancestry, language, religion, or historical experience. It is shaped by various social, political, economic, and environmental factors that influence how individuals identify with or express their ethnic affiliations.

Voting: Refers to the act of formally expressing an opinion or choice on a particular issue, candidate, or policy, typically during an election. It is a fundamental component of

democratic governance, enabling citizens to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives and communities.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

This chapter contains the literature review which is subdivided into conceptual framework, the concept of ethnicity, ethnicity act as significant determinant of political allegiance in Nigeria, ethnic composition of Edo State and its influence on the political landscape, ethnic voting patterns in the 2023 general election in Edo State, factors influencing ethnicity and voting in Edo 2023 and review of theoretical framework

2.1 Conceptual Framework

Ethnicity affects a person's life in various ways, even though it is essential for securing a position in a political system founded on ethnic clientelism. According to Tilly (2005), ethnic groups can also be seen as institutions or identity-based "trust communities" that form in the absence of a state in order to provide their members with collective goods, encourage contact among member groups, and allow opportunity-hoarding conduct. Rules that promote cooperation and reciprocity within the group or "technologies" that allow members to spot and punish those who violate group commitments are commonly used to maintain these networks (Habyarimana, Humphreys, Posner, & Weinstein, 2009).

Nonetheless, parties have their regional strongholds which often coincide with ethnic groupings where they normally win elections (Wahman & Boone, 2018). Voters in

the strongholds are usually more partisan, and vote along identity cleavages to protect their interests (Lindberg & Morrison, 2005). In these party strongholds, switching out of the popular party is expected to negatively affect (re)election chances, since voters are invested in the party and therefore less likely to move. In Nigeria, voters in the south-east and south (Niger Delta) have often voted for the People's Democratic Party (PDP), with the All Progressive Congress (APC) struggling to get even as little as 10% of the votes (Angerbrandt, 2020). This may be a result of the PDP sponsoring Nigerian presidents from the South, making the party popular in the region. The APC on the contrary is often viewed with suspicion in the south as its political appointments have mostly favoured the north under President Buhari's administration. BusinessDay (2017) released a controversial report showing that President Buhari appointed 81 northerners among his 100 appointees as of 2017, and another report from the International Centre for Investigative Reporting (ICIR) revealed that 75% of the recruits into state security services as of 2021 were of northern extraction (ICIR, 2021).

To enhance suspicions of ethnic appointments, President Buhari who once said he was 'for nobody and everybody' at his inaugural speech, backtracked a few months later by disclosing that 'the constituents [that], for example, gave me 97% [of the votes] cannot in all honesty be treated on some issues with constituencies that gave me 5%' (Sahara Reporters, 2015). This suggests that what is often labelled ethnic voting is 'defensive voting' aimed at protecting group interests, where coethnics are voted into

office not just because they are coethnics, but to protect group interests in settings with a history and widespread expectations of state bias. According to Carlson (2015), ‘voters prefer coethnic politicians because they expect coethnics to provide better future economic and political goods’, especially because they do not trust outsiders to channel these to them given a history of prior ethnic discrimination.

While candidates’ ethnicity is less of an issue during constituency-based elections because those running are likely to be from the same or neighbouring ethnic groups, the regional/ethnic appeal of the candidates’ political party as opposed to the ethnicity of the candidates themselves could be a major deciding factor here. The rotation of power among ethnic groups is a discussion often had more at the national rather than the constituency level, thereby differentiating the salience of ethnicity at the national and regional levels. This rotation of power has also been identified in other African states, with Cheeseman (2010) observing that ‘in highly diverse countries such as Kenya and Mali, successful parties must be multiethnic coalitions in which the presidential candidacy rotates among the different groups’. While this is expected at national level, the salience of ethnicity takes on a different nature in constituency-based elections where candidates are likely to be from the same or neighbouring ethnic groups. As a result of their ethnic homogeneity, the regional/ethnic popularity of their party becomes the leverage that one candidate has over another (Aboi, 2024; Ostrowski, 2023).

2.1.1 The Concept of Ethnicity

Elkind (1978) defines *ethnicity* as the interactions between individuals from many varied social groups. Consequently, an ethnic group comprises individuals who share a common lineage, language, and culture and are recognised as such by others. It is a social formation characterised by their boundaries' communal nature. Nnoli emphasised that language is the paramount component in ethnic identification. However, for individuals to be considered members of an ethnic group, they must possess a collective culture, language, and customs and inhabit the same geographical area. According to Mair (1962), an *ethnic group* is a collective of individuals with a common history, culture, language, and shared beliefs about the future. According to liberal theorists, an ethnic group is comprised of individuals who share a belief that they have shared interests and destiny. These theorists argue that ethnic groups often promote a cultural symbolism reflecting unity. Ethnic groups are distinct from other groups due to their diverse composition, encompassing individuals from all stages of life and social strata. It is suggested that the symbol of one's ethnic identity is unavoidable (Aboi, 2024; Ostrowski, 2023).

Therefore, ethnicity does not necessarily carry the negative connotations that are frequently associated with it. The mix-ups in ascription commonly occur when ethnicity is erroneously confused with ethnocentrism, which refers to differentiation based on origin. It refers to a form of conduct in which a collective of individuals exhibits

contempt towards others and engages in discriminatory actions against them. Ethnocentrism might be seen as a conviction in the exceptional worth and correctness of one's group. At times, such as when Nnabuihe, Aghemalo, and Nwosu (2014) argue that ethnocentrism can be seen as either a harmless or a first stage of ethnicity, the confusion becomes even more complicated due to unclear concepts. Nevertheless, Otteh and Ezech (2012) state that ethnicity is defined as the construction of a social identity based on culturally specialised customs and a distinct collection of symbols and beliefs. A shared belief in a shared ancestry and a widely accepted shared past results in the transmission of symbols, heroes, events, values, and social hierarchies, which shape the social identities of both those inside the group and those outside of it.

According to Okemiri (2000), ethnicity is defined to mean “the consciousness of somebody, relative to the norms and the values of his or her culture, of which other peoples socio-cultural background may be deemed to be inferior”. Ilechukwu noted that ethnicity is likened to a hydra-headed monster which breeds social chaos, and has had a pervasive influence on every aspect of Nigerian life and which calls for a multifaceted attack from all and sundry to combat it. Offiong (2001) submitted that ethnicity is a situation whereby people of a given territory shared a common belief, religion, culture, language, dressing, historical background, which may be different from others. Offiong specifically tells us that; “If we accept the expressions of ethnic, religious and cultural preferences are a natural phenomenon and consistent with expression of individual liberty,

then we realize that attempts to suppress such preferences are futile and cannot lead to peaceful coexistence” (30). Instead, we need to better understand the positive roles that ethnicity and other characteristics with which individuals strongly identify with can play in the organization of societies. A country harboring many ethnic groups as Nigeria is bound to have some level of ethnicity.

2.1.2 Ethnicity act as significant determinant of political allegiance in Nigeria

In Nigeria, ethnicity is one of the most influential factors shaping political allegiance and behavior. This prominence is rooted in the country's historical, cultural, and socio-political dynamics. While other factors such as religion, socioeconomic status, and ideology also play roles, ethnicity has consistently served as a major driver of voter preferences and political alignments. Ethnicity is one of the most influential factors shaping political allegiance and behavior (Kpodee & Peters, 2024). This prominence is rooted in the country's historical, cultural, and socio-political dynamics. While other factors such as religion, socioeconomic status, and ideology also play roles, ethnicity has consistently served as a major driver of voter preferences and political alignments. Ethnic leaders often act as intermediaries between political aspirants and their communities (Aboi, 2024). They appeal to group solidarity, fostering perceptions that an ethnic group's interests are at stake. Politicians exploit ethnic identity to frame elections as contests between "us" and "them," particularly in contexts of limited resources or insecurity (Agboga, 2024).

Campaign slogans, during British colonial rule, policies such as indirect rule and regionalism reinforced ethnic divisions. The establishment of regional governments (Northern, Western, and Eastern regions) encouraged political competition along ethnic lines, as each region sought to advance its group's interests. At independence in 1960, political parties like the Northern People's Congress (NPC), Action Group (AG), and National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) were largely regional and ethnically based. (Brigevich & Oritsejafor, 2024) Ethnicity became a tool for mobilizing support, particularly as groups vied for control of the federal government.

Political parties in Nigeria often reflect ethnic or regional alliances despite constitutional requirements to have a national outlook. Candidates frequently rely on their ethnic groups for support, especially during presidential and gubernatorial elections (Adrienne, 2017). Elections in Nigeria reveal strong correlations between ethnic identity and voter behavior. For example: The Northern region predominantly supports candidates from the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group. The South-West aligns with Yoruba candidates or parties perceived to favor Yoruba interests. The South-East and South-South often back Igbo candidates or those promoting minority rights (Afolabi, 2024).

Many Nigerians associate their political and economic wellbeing with having "their own" ethnic group in power. Ethnic representation in leadership positions (such as the presidency or governorships) is seen as a safeguard against marginalization. Ethnic-driven politics undermines national cohesion by fostering division and competition

among groups (Aboi, 2024). Smaller ethnic groups or those not in powers feel excluded from governance and resource allocation. Ethnic allegiance often prioritizes group interests over national development, leading to ineffective governance and corruption. Ethnic voting may overshadow candidates' competence or vision, reducing elections to contests of ethnic strength rather than merit (Uwaifo, 2016). Recent elections, such as the 2023 General Elections, demonstrated a growing trend of issue-based voting, particularly among younger, urban voters. Movements like the Labour Party's "Obidient Movement" showed cross-ethnic support, suggesting a shift toward prioritizing governance over ethnicity.

Policies promoting fair representation and resource allocation can reduce ethnic tensions and mistrust. Strengthening institutions like the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to ensure free and fair elections reduces the appeal of ethnic manipulation. Encouraging voters to focus on candidates' competence and policies through civic education programs can weaken ethnic allegiances. Initiatives emphasizing shared national identity over ethnic divisions can foster unity and a sense of collective purpose (Aboi, 2024; Ostrowski, 2023). Ethnicity remains a dominant factor in shaping political allegiance in Nigeria due to historical, socio-political, and structural factors. While recent developments indicate a gradual shift toward issue-based voting, particularly among the youth, ethnic politics continues to influence electoral outcomes and governance. Addressing this challenge requires deliberate efforts to promote

inclusivity, equity, and national cohesion, alongside fostering a more issue-driven political culture.

2.1.3 Ethnic Composition of Edo State and Its Influence on the Political Landscape

The ethnic composition of Edo State significantly influences voting behavior and electoral outcomes. Each ethnic group tends to exhibit strong regional voting patterns, often aligning their political preferences with candidates or parties perceived to represent their interests. Edo State, located in Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone, has a rich ethnic diversity that significantly shapes its political landscape (Ibemere, 2020). The interplay of its major ethnic groups Bini, Esan, and Afemai (Etsako, Owan, and Akoko Edo) has been central to electoral dynamics, governance, and resource distribution. This ethnic diversity drives political allegiances, party dominance, and leadership preferences within the state.

Governance in Edo State is shaped by efforts to balance representation among the major ethnic groups. Informal zoning arrangements within political parties aim to ensure equitable access to leadership positions, fostering a sense of inclusion and fairness across the state (Adekaiyaoja, 2024). Ethnic diversity also plays a crucial role in resource allocation, as communities advocate for development projects and government investments that address their unique needs. This often leads to political negotiations where ethnic groups leverage their electoral influence to secure benefits for their regions. The interplay between Edo State's major ethnic groups Bini, Esan, and Afemai has been

central to shaping its political landscape. While this diversity enriches the state's political and cultural life, it also necessitates strategies for managing competing interests to promote unity and sustainable development (Abati, 2024).

Edo State is broadly divided into three senatorial districts, each reflecting its ethnic composition. Edo South (Bini Majority) which is dominated by the Bini ethnic group, the largest and most influential in Edo State, and is home to Benin City, the state capital, which serves as the economic and political hub. Edo Central (Esan Majority) which is predominantly populated by the Esan ethnic group and known for its distinct cultural identity and historical role in state politics. Edo North (Afemai Majority) which comprises of Etsako, Owan, and Akoko Edo subgroups collectively known as Afemai. Politically they are active with significant contributions to state and national politics. This ethnic distribution reflects the state's diverse cultural heritage and shapes its political dynamics.

Being the largest ethnic group, the Bini wield significant political influence, often determining the outcomes of gubernatorial and other elections. Candidates from Edo South are more likely to secure broad support, given the region's numerical advantage (Ibemere, 2020). The Esan people traditionally vote cohesively, often backing candidates from their ethnic group or parties that promise equitable representation. Politically assertive, the Afemai region often supports candidates from their area and has been pivotal in power-sharing arrangements within the state.

Political parties in Edo State often adopt informal zoning arrangements to ensure fair representation among the major ethnic groups. This practice influences party nominations for key positions, such as governorship, senatorial seats, and House of Assembly candidates (BBC News Pidgin, 2024). Traditional rulers and community leaders play a significant role in shaping political opinions and allegiances. The influence of the Oba of Benin extends beyond the Bini ethnic group, as the monarch is highly revered across the state. Politicians often seek his endorsement to bolster their legitimacy. Ethnic leaders from these regions act as intermediaries between their communities and political aspirants, advocating for regional interests.

Political parties in Edo State leverage the state's ethnic composition to build support:

- i. **People's Democratic Party (PDP):** Historically strong in Edo Central, where the Esan people form its core support base.
- ii. **All Progressives Congress (APC):** Has a significant following in Edo North (Afemai region) and parts of Edo South.
- iii. **Labour Party (LP):** Emerging as a force in Edo South and urban areas, appealing to youth and non-ethnic voters in recent elections.

Smaller ethnic groups within Edo North (e.g., Akoko Edo) sometimes feel underrepresented in the political landscape dominated by larger ethnic groups. Politicians often exploit ethnic sentiments to gain support, diverting attention from broader governance and developmental issues. Ethnic rivalry can exacerbate tensions during

elections, leading to disputes over fairness in resource distribution and political appointments. Ensuring that all ethnic groups have a voice in governance through appointments and political office distribution can promote inclusivity (Abdullahi & Itodo, 2024). Encouraging voters to prioritize policies and competence over ethnic affiliation can reduce the dominance of ethnic politics. Transparent electoral processes and strong institutions can mitigate the manipulation of ethnic identity for political gain. The ethnic composition of Edo State significantly influences its political landscape, with ethnicity shaping voting patterns, party strategies, and leadership selection (Ostrowski, 2023). While this diversity enriches the state's cultural and political life, it also presents challenges, such as ethnic rivalry and marginalization. Moving toward a more inclusive and issue-based political culture is crucial for harnessing the strengths of Edo State's ethnic diversity and fostering sustainable development

2.2 Ethnic voting patterns in the 2023 General Election in Edo State

The ethnic voting patterns in the 2023 general elections in Edo State highlighted the interplay between ethnicity, political affiliations, and individual party dynamics. The ethnic voting patterns in the 2023 general elections in Edo State likely underscore the complex relationship between ethnicity, political affiliations, and the dynamics of individual parties. Edo State, with its diverse ethnic composition primarily the Bini, Esan, and Afemai (Etsako, Owan, and Akoko-Edo) has historically shown that ethnicity plays a significant role in shaping political behavior, though it interacts with broader factors such

as party strategies and leadership. In Edo State, voters often align with candidates who share their ethnic background. This is partly due to a perception that such candidates might better represent their community's interests. The influence of ethnicity may have been evident in local support for candidates from dominant ethnic groups in particular regions, such as the Bini in Edo South, Esan in Edo Central, and Afemai in Edo North.

Key observations include:

Labour Party Surge: Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP) gained significant traction, winning in five local government areas, including Esan Central, Esan North East, and Egor. This surge was attributed to his appeal among youth and urban voters, as well as the growing influence of the "Obident" movement, transcending traditional ethnic lines in some areas.

Edo North Dominance by APC: In Edo North, the APC maintained its dominance, influenced by the presence of strong political figures such as Adams Oshiomhole. Ethnic alignment and longstanding political loyalty played a critical role here.

Edo Central's Mixed Results: Historically a PDP stronghold, Edo Central showed signs of shifting allegiances. While the Labour Party made inroads, the PDP's influence remained significant due to its deep roots in the region. However, some areas saw victories by other parties, showcasing a diversification in voting preferences (Iruke, 2024).

Edo South as a Battleground: With the highest voter population, Edo South saw intense competition among LP, PDP, and APC. The Labour Party's victory in several local governments here reflected an emerging trend of issue-based voting over strict ethnic considerations. Overall, ethnicity remained a factor but was increasingly moderated by the appeal of individual candidates, youth mobilization, and changing party loyalties in urbanized regions. These dynamics indicate evolving political behaviors beyond traditional ethnic voting in Edo State .

2.3 Factors Influencing Ethnicity and Voting in Edo 2023

The 2023 Edo general election was shaped by a combination of ethnic dynamics and broader political trends, influencing how voters align with candidates and parties. Below are the key factors that will influence ethnicity and voting behavior in the election. Here are the key factors:

Ethnic Solidarity and Representation: Ethnic solidarity and representation play a significant role in shaping the political dynamics of Edo State. With its diverse ethnic makeup, which includes the Bini, Esan, Afemai (Etsako, Owan, Akoko Edo), and other smaller groups, ethnic affiliations strongly influence voting patterns and party allegiance in the state. During the 2023 general election, these ethnic dynamics were key factors in determining how candidates position themselves and which issues resonate with voters. Ethnic solidarity often manifests in how communities support political candidates who they feel will represent their interests (Babalola, 2024). In Edo State, ethnic groups may

show solidarity in supporting of candidates from their own regions or ethnic backgrounds, seeking representation and the protection of their cultural values. This is particularly visible in the way that different ethnic groups in the state align with political parties or specific candidates who belong to their ethnic group or who promise to address ethnic-based issues (Suberu, 2007).

The Bini people, as the largest ethnic group in the state, hold significant influence in Edo politics. The group has traditionally supported candidates from within its ranks, particularly in the Benin City and surrounding areas. In the 2023 election, Bini ethnic solidarity was likely continue to have played a role in determining the political preferences of voters, especially as issues like local development, representation in government, and the preservation of cultural heritage are important concerns for the group. The Esan and Afemai communities, which are smaller but still politically active, often seek greater representation and attention from political leaders (Ostrowski, 2023). They may rally behind candidates who promise to address regional inequalities, including infrastructural development and equitable resource allocation. These ethnic groups often look for candidates who will push for policies that benefit their specific communities within the broader context of Edo State's politics.

Influence of Political Elites and Traditional Leaders: The 2023 general election in Edo State was likely to be significantly shaped by the influence of both political elites and traditional leaders. These two groups have historically played key roles in the state's

electoral process, from shaping political alignments to mobilizing voters. Their influence is particularly important in a state like Edo, where local politics and traditional institutions are intertwined with the broader political landscape. Political elites in Edo State include high-profile figures within major political parties, influential public officeholders, and former governors. Political elites often have access to state resources, which they can leverage to influence election outcomes.

This also included using state funds for development projects in the lead-up to elections, which can help sway public opinion, particularly in rural areas. Their influence also extends to securing patronage jobs and public sector positions for their supporters. In Edo State, the endorsement of political elites is critical for the success of a candidate, as they can influence the decision-making of political parties. Their support is often crucial in primaries or intra-party selection processes, as they command significant influence within the party apparatus. In the 2024 election, the backing of influential figures will likely determine who gets party tickets and who can mount a serious challenge (Babalola & Onapajo, 2024).

Emergence of Issue-Based Voting: The 2023 general election in Edo State is expected to see a significant shift towards issue-based voting, where voters focus more on the candidates' policies, performance records, and solutions to pressing challenges rather than traditional ethnic or party allegiances. This change is driven by several factors including increasing political awareness, the youth vote, and the growing demand for

better governance. Edo State has a growing young population, especially in urban centers like Benin City (Babalola, 2020). Young voters are becoming increasingly disillusioned with the politics of patronage, ethnic favoritism, and party loyalty. They are more inclined to vote based on concrete issues that affect their daily lives, such as education, unemployment, healthcare, and infrastructure.

One of the key issues driving the trend towards issue-based voting is the demand for better infrastructure. Voters are looking for candidates who can effectively address issues such as road networks, transportation, housing, and urbanization. With increasing migration into urban centers, the need for sustainable urban planning and development becomes more urgent. Youth unemployment remains a critical challenge in Edo State. Voters are keenly interested in candidates who have practical solutions for job creation, skills development, and entrepreneurship. Candidates who present clear, actionable plans for tackling unemployment will likely gain significant support.

Social Media and Civic Awareness: Social media has revolutionized voter engagement, particularly among younger, urbanized voters. Social media platforms allow candidates and civic organizations to directly educate voters about the electoral process, registration procedures, and the importance of voting. Information about the election timeline, polling units, and voter ID requirements can be disseminated easily to a wide audience. Candidates can use social media to reach a large and diverse group of potential voters.

Campaigns can be tailored to address specific regional or ethnic concerns while also promoting national unity.

Digital content such as videos, memes, and infographics can resonate more effectively with younger voters compared to traditional campaign methods. Edo State, particularly its urban areas, has a large proportion of young voters who are tech-savvy and more likely to engage with political content online. Social media allows them to connect with candidates, participate in discussions, and influence political narratives in a way that traditional media cannot match.

Religion as an Overlapping Identity: Religion plays an important, though often secondary, role in shaping political identity and voting behavior in Edo State. While ethnicity remains the dominant factor influencing voting patterns, religion increasingly overlaps with ethnic and regional factors, influencing voter preferences and campaign strategies in the lead-up to the 2024 elections. Edo State is predominantly Christian, with a sizable Muslim minority, especially in urban areas.

The religious makeup of the state has implications for political campaigning and candidate selection. Benin City, the state capital, is a religiously diverse urban center, where political parties may need to cater to both Christian and Muslim communities, especially in terms of policy priorities and political alignment. The Christian community in Edo State tends to dominate voting patterns, particularly in urban areas like Benin City, Esan, and Oredo Local Government Areas. In this context, political parties may focus on

policies that appeal to Christian values, such as education, health, and social welfare. While smaller in number, the Muslim population in Edo, especially in the northern parts of the state, may also play a critical role in determining outcomes in specific local elections or swing areas. Their support can influence candidate choice, particularly if religious sentiments are mobilized.

Urbanization and Cosmopolitan Shifts: Edo State, like many other parts of Nigeria, has been experiencing significant urbanization, particularly in the state capital, Benin City, and other major urban centers. This urbanization is accompanied by a cosmopolitan shift, where a more diverse, mobile, and politically informed electorate is emerging. These shifts are expected to have a substantial impact on the 2023 general elections, influencing both voting patterns and the political strategies of candidates. Urbanization in Edo State is evident in the growing number of residents in Benin City, which serves as the economic, cultural, and political hub. The city attracts people from various ethnic groups across the state, creating a melting pot of cultures, beliefs, and interests.

As more people migrate to urban centers for better economic opportunities, they bring with them different political allegiances and expectations. Cities like Benin City are home to a large proportion of Nigeria's youthful population, many of whom are first-time voters. This demographic is generally more politically aware and increasingly prioritizes issues such as economic opportunity, employment, and good governance, which are less tied to ethnic lines. Urban areas in Edo State are becoming more cosmopolitan as people

from diverse ethnic backgrounds coexist. This shift influences political preferences, as cosmopolitan voters may lean toward candidates who emphasize national unity and issue-based campaigns over ethnic or regional loyalty.

Party Structure and Zoning Arrangements: Party structure and zoning arrangements are critical frameworks in Nigerian politics, particularly for maintaining balance in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. These mechanisms influence party organization, candidate selection, and electoral outcomes, as demonstrated during the 2023 general elections. The APC's rotational presidency strategy influenced Northern support for Tinubu, while the Labour Party challenged traditional zoning norms. While some voters stuck to their party regardless of ethnicity, others prioritized ethnic representation. Political parties in Nigeria are organized hierarchically, with structures extending from the national to the grassroots levels. Key components include:

- **National Executive Committee (NEC):** Responsible for policy direction and decision-making.
- **State and Local Chapters:** Coordinate party activities within states and local governments.
- **Ward-Level Units:** Serve as the foundation for mobilizing voters at the grassroots level.

Zoning is an informal power-sharing agreement designed to ensure equitable distribution of political offices among Nigeria's geopolitical zones and ethnic groups. It emerged as a strategy to mitigate ethnic tensions and foster unity in a diverse society.

Electoral Transparency and Voting Technology: Electoral transparency has been significantly enhanced by advancements in voting technology, especially in countries like Nigeria, where systemic electoral challenges have historically undermined credibility. In the 2023 general elections, technological tools, particularly the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV), played crucial roles in fostering accountability and confidence in the electoral process. The deployment of BVAS (Bimodal Voter Accreditation System) reduced instances of electoral fraud, making votes more reflective of true ethnic and individual preferences (Ostrowski, 2023). BVAS is a biometric device introduced to eliminate issues of voter impersonation and multiple voting by using fingerprints and facial recognition for voter verification. Its implementation in 2023 had the following impacts:

- **Improved Accuracy:** BVAS ensured that only eligible voters were accredited, minimizing fraudulent voting.
- **Faster Processes:** The system expedited voter accreditation compared to manual methods, though some technical glitches were reported.
- **Challenges:** Delays in BVAS deployment and its occasional malfunctioning in some polling units highlighted the need for further optimization. While ethnicity

continues to shape voting patterns in Nigeria, the 2023 elections showcased a gradual shift towards issue-based and personality-driven voting, particularly among younger voters and in urban areas. The interplay between ethnic identity, economic realities, and modern political movements marked a turning point in Nigeria's electoral dynamics

2.4 Review of Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework provides a structured approach to analyzing the relationship between ethnicity and voting in Nigeria. In the context of this subject, relevant theories can help explain how ethnicity influences voting behavior, political alignments, and the electoral process. Below is a detailed theoretical framework for understanding ethnicity and voting in Nigeria:

Ethnic Identity Theory

According to ethnic identity theory, people tend to align politically with candidates or parties that represent or have strong ties to their ethnic group. This is particularly visible in Nigeria, where political campaigns often involve ethnic mobilization and appeals to ethnic sentiments (Adebayo, 2023). Ethnic identity is arguably one of the most significant factors in determining political allegiance in Nigeria. Nigeria's diverse ethnic makeup with over 250 ethnic groups creates a context where ethnic loyalty often supersedes party affiliation or ideological alignment. In the Nigerian context, the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo groups are historically considered the

dominant ethnic groups, with smaller ethnic groups frequently aligning with one of these larger groups for political gain (Sani, 2023). These ethnic alignments affect both regional and national elections, influencing voting behavior and political outcomes. Ethnic identity often dictates the choice of candidates in Nigeria's highly competitive and often polarized political environment, where national candidates may leverage ethnic affiliations to solidify support. For example, political leaders in Nigeria have often formed alliances based on ethnic blocs to secure political power. Such alliances show how ethnic groups collaborate to advance common political goals, demonstrating that ethnicity plays a central role in the dynamics of political allegiance (International Republican Institute, 2023).

Edo State, located in the southern region of Nigeria, has a diverse ethnic composition, with significant groups such as the Bini, Esan, and Afemai. Ethnic identity theory helps explain how the state's ethnic composition influences its political landscape. The Bini people, who dominate the central region of Edo State, have historically held political and cultural significance, often influencing political outcomes. As the state capital (Benin City) is predominantly Bini, ethnic solidarity within this group has often influenced the region's political decisions. Conversely, the Esan and Afemai ethnic groups, which are scattered across other parts of the state, may have different political preferences that lead to fragmentation in support for political candidates (Adebayo, 2023).

The influence of ethnic identity on the political landscape of Edo State is further seen in the way political parties campaign. Candidates often seek the endorsement of ethnic leaders or group representatives to strengthen their electoral chances. This ethnically-driven political mobilization is typical in Edo, where ethnic affiliations can often determine the outcome of an election (National Institute for Legislative Studies, 2023). The 2023 general elections in Edo State, like previous elections, demonstrated ethnic voting patterns influenced by both historical ethnic allegiances and the contemporary political climate. According to recent studies and election reports, political parties and candidates in Edo State tailored their campaigns to appeal to various ethnic groups, with an emphasis on the Bini people, given their numerical strength (Okoro,2022). One major observation from the 2023 general elections is that ethnic groups within Edo State showed distinct voting preferences. For example, while the Bini people may have tended to support candidates that emerged from their ethnic group or those with strong ties to the region, other ethnic groups such as the Esan and Afemai may have sought candidates that more directly addressed their unique concerns, such as infrastructural development and educational reforms in their regions (Adebayo, 2023).

Ethnic identity theory helps explain this pattern. The theory posits that ethnic identity often dictates not only political preferences but also the motivation behind voter turnout. It provides a framework to understand why voters might prioritize candidates of the same ethnic background, or at least those who demonstrate cultural sensitivity to their

group's needs. Several factors influenced ethnic voting behavior during the 2023 elections, especially in Edo State: Political parties and candidates continued to employ ethnic mobilization strategies, leveraging local ethnic elites to garner votes (Sani, 2023). Leaders within each ethnic group played pivotal roles in shaping electoral outcomes. Many voters maintained loyalty to political figures from their ethnic group or those who have historically represented them. This loyalty often outweighed other factors such as party ideology or candidate competence. Ethnic groups in Edo State, particularly the Esan and Afemai, expressed concerns over regional development. Voters were influenced by the perceived ability of candidates to address the specific needs of their ethnic regions, leading to patterns of ethnic-based voting. While ethnic identity is a powerful force in Edo's politics, internal conflicts between ethnic groups also played a role in voting patterns. The rivalry between the Bini and Esan, for example, was evident during the elections, as candidates from these groups sometimes emphasized the need for balance in resource distribution and political representation.

Recent studies have highlighted the continued relevance of ethnicity in Nigerian elections. According to a 2023 report by the National Institute for Legislative Studies, ethnic identity remains a strong determinant in voter behavior, with candidates frequently resorting to ethnic-based appeals to win support. Similarly, the International Republican Institute (2023) noted that ethnic voting behavior is shaped by perceptions of fairness, resource distribution, and ethnic solidarity (Adebayo, 2023).

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (SIT), developed by Henri Tajfel in the 1970s, offers a framework for understanding how individuals' group affiliations especially to social categories like ethnicity shape their behaviors, including voting. Social identity theory has increasingly been applied in recent political science research to explain political behaviours (Huddy & Bankert, 2017). Political scientists particularly draw on social identity theory to clarify the nature of partisanship and its political consequences. Partisanship is one of the most essential variables in political behavior, explaining vote choice or political engagement; however, some disagreement remains on the exact nature of partisanship. Many studies (Hogg & Reid, 2006; Huddy & Bankert, 2017) begin with assumptions that voters make decisions according to policy preferences and trade-offs involving costs and benefits. Social Identity Theory has profound implications for ethnic voting patterns in Nigeria, where ethnicity plays a pivotal role in political behavior. In the Nigerian context, ethnicity is not just a matter of cultural or linguistic similarity but a core component of group identity that significantly impacts voting preferences (Zeedan, 2024).

Social identity theory, developed by Henri Tajfel, explains that individuals derive a sense of self from the groups to which they belong. Ethnic identity, therefore, can shape individuals' preferences and behavior, including voting. This theory explains why many Nigerian voters tend to support candidates from their ethnic or regional backgrounds.

Voters may perceive candidates from their ethnic group as more representative of their interests and as champions of their cultural values (Verkuyten, 2007). Example: A Hausa-Fulani voter might prefer a candidate from the same ethnic group, perceiving that such a candidate will prioritize policies beneficial to their group. Similarly, the ethnic-based alignment seen in the Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa-Fulani presidential preferences demonstrates how ethnic identity shapes electoral choices (Huddy & Bankert, 2017).

According to SIT, individuals tend to favor members of their own ethnic group (the "ingroup") over members of other ethnic groups (the "outgroup"). This is a form of ingroup favoritism, where individuals exhibit loyalty to their ethnic group and act in its interests, often at the expense of outgroup members. In Edo, many voters are likely to support candidates from their ethnic or regional group, seeing them as "representatives" of their identity and interests (Sato, 2024).

This can lead to strong regional voting patterns, where voters in the southern regions (e.g., Yoruba or Igbo) tend to favor candidates from their region, while voters in the north (e.g., Hausa-Fulani) might prioritize candidates from their own ethnic group. In presidential elections, there is often a clear ethnic dimension. The Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa-Fulani populations, for example, typically exhibit a preference for candidates from their ethnic group, perceiving them as champions of their community's needs and values (Kalin & Sambanis, 2018).. SIT suggests that group members compare their own group's standing with that of other groups, which can lead to a sense of superiority or rivalry.

Ethnic groups within Nigeria often engage in these intergroup comparisons, which influence political decisions (Verkuyten, 2007). Ethnic groups in Nigeria are often in competition for political and economic power. Voters may support candidates who are seen as the best positioned to ensure their group's political dominance and secure greater resources for their ethnic community. This competitive dynamic can lead to ethnic-based voting where groups seek to "win" political office in a bid to maintain or enhance their status. The competition between the northern and southern political elites often intensifies ethnic loyalty and voting along ethnic lines. For example, the push for a president from the southeastern region (Igbo) after years of being underrepresented in the presidency stems from a desire to rectify perceived marginalization (Huddy & Bankert, 2017).

Social identity theory also emphasizes collective action based on group identity. When ethnic groups feel that their interests are threatened or underrepresented, there is often a greater sense of solidarity and collective mobilization to assert their rights or gain political power. In Edo, ethnic solidarity manifests in political alliances, ethnic-based parties, or support for candidates who are seen as belonging to a particular ethnic group. This solidarity is particularly evident during periods of electoral tension, where ethnic groups rally behind candidates who promise to defend or advance their group's interests (Kalin & Sambanis, 2018). The creation of ethnic-based political parties or coalitions, such as the Yoruba-based Action Group or the All Progressives Congress (APC) in more recent times, reflects the desire for ethnic groups to consolidate their power through

collective political action. Ethnic solidarity also manifests in strong voting patterns, especially in elections where regional and ethnic considerations outweigh other factors.

Critics pointed SIT suggests that when a group perceives its identity, resources, or status to be under threat from an out group, members of the in-group are more likely to adopt defensive or protective behaviors, including political mobilization. In Nigeria, ethnic groups may vote along ethnic lines if they perceive their group's interests to be under threat, particularly in contexts of political instability, economic disparities, or historical marginalization (Zeedan, 2024). A candidate's ability to represent and protect an ethnic group's interests often becomes a key factor in electoral choices. During the civil unrest in Nigeria, or after periods of perceived political exclusion (such as after the military regimes), ethnic groups may strongly rally behind candidates who are viewed as protectors of their group identity and interests (Kalin & Sambanis, 2018). The strong ethnic polarization in Nigerian politics during these times reflects the group's sense of existential threat.

Ethnic Mobilization Theory

Ethnic mobilization theory focuses on the way political elites organize ethnic groups for political gain. Ethnic groups can be mobilized to either support or oppose certain political movements, often leading to ethnic-based political parties or alliances. Edo's multi-ethnic society is often subject to ethnic mobilization, where politicians use ethnic sentiments to create political majorities or gain political power. This mobilization

can sometimes exacerbate ethnic tensions, particularly in regions where ethnic groups feel marginalized or underrepresented. The rise of ethnoregional parties, such as the Yoruba-based Action Group (AG) in the past or the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) representing regional interests in contemporary times, demonstrates how ethnic mobilization occurs within Nigerian politics (Okechukwu, Onuigbo & Asadu, 2018). Ethnicity remains a central factor in Nigerian politics, influencing voting behavior and the political landscape. While theories like primordialism, instrumentalism, and social identity theory emphasize the importance of ethnicity as a determinant in voting, others such as ethnic competition, clientelism, and patronage highlight how political elites mobilize ethnic identities for political gain. Understanding the complex dynamics of ethnicity and voting in Nigeria requires considering both historical factors and contemporary political realities (Dudley & Gitelson, 2002).

Ethnic Mobilization Theory is a framework that analyzes the role of ethnicity in political behavior, particularly how ethnic groups can influence voting patterns and electoral outcomes. In the context of Edo State, Nigeria, the theory may examine how ethnic identities shape political alliances, voting preferences, and party support, often leading to ethnic-based mobilization during elections. In Edo State, like many other regions in Nigeria, ethnicity plays a significant role in determining political behavior

(Howe, 2006). Voters are often influenced by the ethnic background of political candidates, their own ethnic affiliations, and the perceived interests of their group.

Groups may support candidates who are perceived to represent their ethnic interests, leading to vote sharing within the ethnic community. Political leaders may use ethnic ties to build support through patronage and clientelist networks, rewarding loyal ethnic groups with political appointments and resources. The impact of ethnic loyalty on voting behavior, especially in highly contested elections, whether ethnic groups in Edo State vote as a bloc or if there is significant cross-ethnic voting (Verkuyten, 2007). To explore this topic further, you can look into political science journals, Nigerian electoral studies, and publications that focus on ethnic politics in West Africa. For more in-depth reading, you can search academic platforms like Google Scholar, JSTOR, or university libraries for research papers specifically addressing "Ethnic Mobilization Theory" and "Voting in Edo State

Criticism, one of the main criticisms is that the theory tends to overemphasize ethnicity as the primary factor influencing political behavior, often neglecting other significant variables like class, ideology, religion, economic interests, and personal political beliefs. Critics argue that it reduces complex political dynamics to ethnicity alone, ignoring other factors that could be just as important in shaping voter behaviour. Ethnic Mobilization Theory often assumes that ethnic identities are fixed and immutable, suggesting that people's voting behavior is solely dictated by their ethnic background.

Critics argue that ethnicity is not always the most important identity or the sole basis for political action. People may identify with multiple groups and may prioritize other factors such as economic policies or personal grievances over ethnic affiliations. Ethnic identities are often fluid and shaped by social, economic, and political circumstances.

Critics argue that ethnic mobilization theory fails to account for the changing nature of ethnic identity over time, especially in urbanized societies or among younger generations who may not have strong ethnic ties or may be more cosmopolitan in their outlook. Critics argue that ethnic mobilization theory overlooks the role of class in political behavior. In many contexts, economic issues or class-based politics may be just as important as ethnicity, and parties or candidates may mobilize voters based on class interests or shared economic grievances, not just ethnic identity.

Criticism ethnic mobilization theory often reduces political behavior to ethnic identity, disregarding other crucial factors like class, ideology, gender, or economic interests. This simplification fails to account for the complexity of voter behavior, where many other influences (e.g., socioeconomic status, policy preferences, or personal grievances) can be just as important as ethnicity in shaping voting decisions. The theory assumes that ethnicity is a fixed, primordial, and unchanging factor that determines political allegiance. Critics argue that ethnic identity is more fluid and dynamic, shaped by historical, social, and political contexts, rather than being an inherently static factor.

The theory tends to treat ethnic groups as monolithic entities with uniform political preferences. However, within any ethnic group, there is often significant diversity in terms of class, religion, ideology, and political preferences. This homogenization oversimplifies complex internal dynamics and overlooks the fact that not all members of an ethnic group will vote the same way. Ethnic mobilization theory often fails to account for the variation in voting behavior within ethnic groups. For example, in some cases, individuals from the same ethnic background may prioritize issues like economic policies, governance, or security over ethnic identity when casting their votes.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Method

This chapter discusses the method that was used in this study. The data for this study were obtained through field survey and desk research which consist of textbooks, journals, newspapers, internet as well as government publications and books from libraries that are relevant to the research.

3.2 Research Instrument

The major research instrument for this study is designed questionnaire which comprises of introductory part section ‘A’ and section ‘B’. The introductory part gave a brief description of the respondents. The section B of the questionnaire was made up of the items themselves. Section ‘A’ contained demographic information of the respondents such as sex or gender, Age and educational qualification. Section ‘B’ was designed to measure “ethnicity and voting in Nigeria: A study of the 2023 general elections in Edo State”. It contains 15 closed-ended questions.

3.3 Population of the Study

The study population covers all population of Edo State in the three senatorial districts (Edo south (949,556), Edo Central (418,994) and Edo north (562,254) in Edo State (NPC, 2006). The total population selected from three senatorial districts, is (1,930,804) as displayed in the table below:

The table below displays the population of the three senatorial districts:

S/N	Edo North Senatorial District	Population
1	Akoko-Edo	163,151
2	Etsako Central	54,158
3	Etsako East	80,922
4	Owan East	88,073
5	Owan West	57,670
6	Etsako West	118,280
	Total	562,254
	Edo Central Senatorial District	
1	Esan Central	60,604
2	Esan West	80,010
3	Esan South-East	95,873
4	Esan North-East	71,562
5	Igueben	40,509
6	Uhunmwode	70,436
	Total	418,994
	Edo South Senatorial District	
1	Egor	209,715
2	Ikpoba-Okha	221,364
3	Oredo	237,188
4	Orhionmwon	105,807
5	Ovia North-East	95,828
6	Ovia South-West	79,654
	Total	949,556

National Population Commission 2022

Authors Compilations

Taro Yamane formula; $n = N/1+N(e)^2$

Where: n=signifies the sample size

N=signifies the population under study

e=signifies the margin error= 0.05

Thus,

$$n = N / 1 + N(e)^2$$

$$n=34547/1+34547 (0.05)^2$$

$$n=34547/1+34547 (0.0025)$$

$$n=34547/1+86.37$$

$$n=34547/87.37$$

$$n=395.41$$

$$\approx 400$$

The above table shows the population of the 18 local government areas as represented in the senatorial districts. However, this study did a survey in the three senatorial districts namely Edo south, Edo Central and Edo north senatorial districts.

3.4 Sample Size

Sample size is the number of respondents or individuals included in a study or experiment. The table below shows the sample population of the three senatorial districts. The sample for Edo North Senatorial District from the actual population of 562,254 which is 105, the sample size for Edo Central Senatorial District from the actual population of 418,994 which is 85 and Edo South Senatorial District from the actual population of 949,556 which is 210 respondents.

S/N	Local government	Youth population	Sample size
	Edo North Senatorial District	562,254	105
	Edo Central Senatorial District	418,994	85
	Edo South Senatorial District	949,556	210
Total		1,930,804	400

Given the population in Edo State, which is made up of three senatorial districts as selected in the above table: A sample of 400 is selected from the population. As a

result, four hundred (400) copies of questionnaires were administered across the senatorial districts using purposive and simple random technique with emphasis on ethnicity and voting in Nigeria: A study of the 2023 general elections in Edo State. Samples were drawn from three senatorial districts as mentioned above based on the sample 210 respondent in Edo south, 85 respondents Edo Central and 105 respondent Edo north using Taro Yamane.

4.5 Sampling Technique

This study adopted the stratified sampling technique. The selection process is probabilistic without bias as it typically requires a random number to go through the three senatorial districts. Because each respondent has an equal chance of being selected, it ensures that the sample is unbiased. This helps in achieving a representative sample, which is essential for generalizing the findings to the entire population. Simple random sampling is straightforward to implement. It does not require complex procedures or stratification, making it an easy and objective method to ensure randomness. Similarly, it has clear statistical foundation, cost-effective for small populations. Consequently, convenience sampling involves selecting respondents who are easiest or most convenient to reach, such as those nearby or readily accessible to the researcher. Convenience sampling is highly efficient in terms of time and resources. Researchers can collect data quickly from a readily available group, which is beneficial when time or budget

constraints are present. Because resources are limited, convenience sampling provides a way to collect a sample without the need for extensive preparation.

3.6 Instrument of Data Collection

The research instrument used in this study is the questionnaire. Which is a well-constructed and self-develop structured questionnaire titled “ethnicity and voting in Nigeria: A study of the 2023 general elections in Edo State Questionnaire (EVNAGEESQ)” is use to get the desire information from the students. The questionnaire was divided into two sections (A and B). Section A was for collection of information on personal data of respondents while Section B consisted of questions that elicited responses from the respondents with response options: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UN), Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D).

3.7 Method of Data Collection

The study adopted personal administration of the research instrument which is a structured questionnaire to source data from targeted respondents’ selected from senatorial region. The study adopts a one-time survey method where questionnaire is shared and collected on the spot.

3.8 Validity of the Instrument

The word validity means to cross check how useful the instrument is to the study or work. Face validity were employed in this study, face validity were done by the

supervisor through cross checking of the instrument if it was well-structured with respect to the research objectives and questions in chapter one.

3.9 Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability is to check if the instrument used is reliable. Reliability checks were done by submitting a sample of the research instrument to the supervisor for perusing to add input and expert contribution on the questionnaires.

3.10 Method of Data Analysis

The research adopted the use of simple percentage, frequency tables of analysis to analyze data collected. Chi-square was used to test the relationship between the variables, so that the population of the study was given an unbiased estimation of the data. This method is complimented by the instrument such as the questionnaire, to source the data for this study.

$$\text{Simple Percentage (\%)} = \frac{n}{N} \times 100$$

$$\text{Chi square } X^2 = \frac{(c-1)(r-1)}{2 \times 1}$$

This Implies that:

$$X^2 = \frac{n(ad-bc)}{(a+b)(c+d)(a+c)(b+d)}$$

Where: a, b, c, d = Observed Frequency

The Statistical Formula

$$X^2 = \sum_i^{n=1} \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$$

X^2 = Chi-Square symbol

f_o = Actual frequency

f_e = Frequency expected

$\sum_{i=1}^{n=1}$ = Summation

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.0 Introduction

This chapter is an empirical research presentation and analysis of data sourced from the survey administration of questionnaires to targeted participants. This study is aimed at “ethnicity and voting in Nigeria: A study of the 2025 general elections in Edo State”. During the survey, four (400) hundred and fifty questionnaires were administered to the respondents and three hundred and ninety seven were returned. The presentation of the results is tabulated below.

4.1 Analysis of Respondents Characteristics

Table 4.1 Genders Of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	259	65.24
Female	138	34.76
Total	397	100.0
Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Under 30 years	167	42.06
31-35 years	109	27.45
36-40 years	67	16.88
41-45 years	29	7.31
Others	25	6.30
Total	397	100
Educational qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Primary/O'Level	78	19.65
B.A/BSC	156	39.30
Masters	163	41.05
Total	397	100
Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Christian	299	75.31
Muslim	24	6.05
African Traditional Religion	45	11.34
Others	29	7.31
Total	397	100

Source: Field Survey, (2025)

According to Table 4.1, 259 respondents, or 65.24% of the total, are male, and 138 respondents, or 34.76%, are female. This suggests that there were more men than women represented. Table 4.2 above shows that 167 respondents representing 42.06% were under 30 years, 109 respondents representing 27.45% were 31-35 years, 67 respondents representing 16.88% were 36-40 years, while 29 respondents representing

7.31% were 41-45 years, while 25 respondents representing 6.30% were older than 45 years. This suggests that every respondent is in the young age range.

According to Table 4.3, 78 respondents, or 19.65%, had a primary or O-level degree, 156 respondents, or 39.30%, had a B.A. or BSC, and 163 respondents, or 41.05%, had a master's degree. Table 4.4 above, shows that (75.31%, which translated to 299 respondents) were Christians, (6.05%, which translated to 24 respondents) were Muslims, (11.34%, which translated to 45 respondents) were African traditional religion, while (7.31%, which translated to 29 respondents) were practicing other forms of religion.

4.2 Presentation and Analysis of Questionnaires

Research Question 1: To what extent does ethnicity act as significant determinant of political allegiance in Nigeria?

Analysis of single table

		SA	A	UND	SD	D
	To what extent does ethnicity act as significant determinant of political allegiance in Nigeria?	%	%	%	%	%
1	Ethnicity plays a significant role in determining voting preferences in Nigerian elections.	195 (49.12%)	132 (33.25%)	20 (5.04%)	35 (8.82%)	15 (3.77%)
2	People are more likely to vote for candidates who share their ethnic background.	168 (42.33%)	129 (32.49%)	18 (4.53%)	60 (15.11%)	22 (5.54%)
3	Political campaigns in Nigeria often emphasize ethnic identity to attract voters.	195(49.1 2%)	109 (27.46%)	33 (8.31%)	21 (5.29%)	39 (9.82%)
4	Ethnic leaders play an influential role in shaping the political choices of their community.	149 (37.53%)	140 (35.26%)	25 (6.30%)	43 (10.83%)	40 (10.08%)
5	Ethnicity is more important than political party ideology when choosing a political candidate.	249 (62.72%)		33 (8.31%)	13 (3.28%)	13 (3.28%)

From Table 6 above, (49.12%, which translated to 195 respondents) strongly agreed, (33.25%, which translated to 132 respondents) agreed, (5.04%, which translated to 20 respondents) were undecided, (8.82%, which translated to 35 respondents) strongly disagreed, while (3.77%, which translated to 15 respondents) disagreed that ethnicity plays a significant role in determining voting preferences in Nigerian elections.

From Table 7 above shows that, (42.33%, which translated to 168 respondents) strongly agreed, (32.49%, which translated to 129 respondents) agreed, (4.53%, which translated to 18 respondents) undecided, (15.11%, which translated to 60 respondents) strongly disagreed, while (5.54%, which translated to 22 respondents) disagreed that people are more likely to vote for candidates who share their ethnic background.

Table 8 above revealed that (49.12%, which translated to 195 respondents) strongly agreed, (27.46%, which translated to 109 respondents) agreed, (8.31%, which translated to 33 respondents) undecided, (5.29%, which translated to 21 respondents) strongly disagreed, while (9.82%, which translated to 39 respondents) disagreed that political campaigns in Nigeria often emphasize ethnic identity to attract voters.

The table 9 above shows that (37.53%, which translated to 149 respondents) strongly agreed, (35.26%, which translated to 140 respondents) agreed, (6.30%, which translated to 25 respondents) undecided, (10.83%, which translated to 43 respondents) strongly disagreed, while (10.08%, which translated to 40 respondents) disagreed that ethnic leaders play an influential role in shaping the political choices of their community.

Table 10 above shows that (62.72%, which translated to 249 respondents) strongly agreed, (25.69%, which translated to 102 respondents) agreed, no respondent is undecided, (8.31%, which translated to 33 respondents) strongly disagreed, (3.28%, which translated to 13 respondents) disagreed that ethnicity is more important than political party ideology when choosing a political candidate.

Research Question Two: Does the Ethnic Composition of Edo State influence the Political Landscape?

		SA	A	UND	SD	D
	Does the Ethnic Composition of Edo State influence the Political Landscape?	%	%	%	%	%
1	The diverse ethnic composition of Edo State significantly influences political party support and voting behaviour.	279 (70.28%)	70 (17.63%)	15 (3.77 %)	14 (3.53%)	19 (4.79 %)
2	Political candidates in Edo State often use ethnic identity to gain the support of specific ethnic groups.	205 (51.64%)	131 (32.99 %)	19 (4.79%)	32 (8.06%)	10 (2.52%)
3	Ethnic groups in Edo State tend to vote for candidates who belong to their ethnic community.	185 (46.60%)	129 (32.49%)	13 (3.27%)	30 (7.56 %)	40 (10.08 %)
4	The appointment of political leaders in Edo State is often influenced by the need to balance ethnic representation.	215 (54.16%)	109 (27.46%)	28 (7.05%)	33 (8.31%)	12 (3.02%)
5	Political conflicts in Edo State are sometimes driven by ethnic differences and competition for political power.	278 (70.03%)	93 (23.43 %)	10 (2.52%)	9 (2.26%)	7 (1.76%)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

From the table above shows that, (70.28%, which translated to 279 respondents) strongly agreed, (17.63%, which translated to 70 respondents) agreed, (3.77%, which translated to 15 respondents) were undecided, (3.53%, which translated to 14 respondents) strongly disagreed, while (4.79%, which translated to 19 respondents) disagreed that the

diverse ethnic composition of Edo State significantly influences political party support and voting behaviour.

Table above also revealed that (51.64%, which translated to 205 respondents) strongly agreed, (32.99%, which translated to 131 respondents) agreed, (4.79%, which translated to 19 respondents) were undecided, (8.06%, which translated to 32 respondents) strongly disagreed, while (2.52%, which translated to 10 respondents) disagreed, that political candidates in Edo State often use ethnic identity to gain the support of specific ethnic groups.

Table 13 shows that (46.60%, which translated to 185 respondents) strongly agreed, (32.49%, which translated to 129 respondents) agreed, (3.27%, which translated to 13 respondents) were undecided, (7.56%, which translated to 30 respondents) strongly disagreed, while (10.08%, which translated to 40 respondents) disagreed that ethnic groups in Edo State tend to vote for candidates who belong to their ethnic community.

Table 14 shows that (54.16%, which translated to 215 respondents) strongly agreed, (27.46%, which translated to 109 respondents) agreed, (7.05%, which translated to 28 respondents) were undecided, (8.31%, which translated to 33 respondents) strongly disagree, while (3.02%, which translated to 12 respondents) disagreed that the appointment of political leaders in Edo State is often influenced by the need to balance ethnic representation.

From result in Table 15 above, (70.03%, which translated to 278 respondents) strongly agreed, no response from undecided, (23.43%, which translated to 93 respondents) agreed, (2.52%, which translated to 10 respondents) were undecided, (2.26%, which translated to 9 respondents) strongly disagree, while (1.76%, which translated to 7 respondents) disagreed that political conflicts in Edo State are sometimes driven by ethnic differences and competition for political power.

Research Question Three: What are the ethnic voting patterns in the 2025 General Election in Edo State?

		SA	A	UND	SD	D
	What are the ethnic voting patterns in the 2023 General Election in Edo State?	%	%	%	%	%
1	Candidate popularity and grassroots development initiatives have a greater impact on voting patterns than ethnic considerations.	265 (66.75%)	83 (20.90%)	40 (10.08%)	09 (2.27%)	(0 %)
2	Voters in Edo State are more likely to support candidates based on their party affiliation rather than their ethnicity.	136 (34.26%)	190 (47.86%)	16 (4.03%)	33 (8.31%)	22 (5.54%)
3	Traditional rulers and local leaders influence voter decisions during elections in Edo State.	191 (48.11%)	98 (24.68%)	27 (6.80%)	56 (14.11%)	25 (6.30 %)
4	Electoral violence and intimidation affect voter turnout and choices in Edo State elections.	164 (41.31%)	125 (31.49%)	33 (8.31%)	57 (14.36%)	18 (4.53%)
5	Voters in Edo State prioritize candidate competence and performance over ethnic affiliation	217 (54.66%)	110 (27.71%)	22 (5.54%)	33 (8.31%)	15 (3.78%)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The table above shows that (66.75%, which translated to 265 respondents) strongly agreed, (20.90%, which translated to 83 respondents) agreed, (10.08%, which translated to 40 respondents) were undecided, (2.27%, which translated to 9 respondents) strongly disagreed, while no respondents representing disagreed that candidate popularity and grassroots development initiatives have a greater impact on voting patterns than ethnic considerations..

The table above also shows that (34.26%, which translated to 136 respondents) strongly agreed, (47.86%, which translated to 190 respondents) agreed, (4.03%, which translated to 16 respondents) were undecided, (8.31%, which translated to 33 respondents) strongly disagreed, while (5.54%, which translated to 22 respondents) disagreed that voters in Edo State are more likely to support candidates based on their party affiliation rather than their ethnicity.

The table above shows that (48.11%, which translated to 191 respondents) strongly agreed, (24.68%, which translated to 98 respondents) agreed, (6.80%, which translated to 27 respondents) were undecided, (14.11%, which translated to 56 respondents) strongly disagreed, while (6.30%, which translated to 25 respondents) disagreed that traditional rulers and local leaders influence voter decisions during elections in Edo State.

The table also shows that (41.31%, which translated to 164 respondents) strongly agreed, (31.49%, which translated to 125 respondents) agreed, (8.31%, which translated

to 33 respondents) were undecided, (14.36%, which translated to 57 respondents) strongly disagree, while (4.53%, which translated to 18 respondents) disagreed that electoral violence and intimidation affect voter turnout and choices in Edo State elections.

Table 20 above shows that (54.66%, which translated to 217 respondents) strongly agreed, (27.71%, which translated to 110 respondents) agreed, (5.54%, which translated to 22 respondents) were undecided (8.31%, which translated to 33 respondents) strongly disagreed, while (3.78%, which translated to 15 respondents) disagreed that voters in Edo State prioritize candidate competence and performance over ethnic affiliation.

4.3 Testing of relationship of variables

Testing of relationship of variables

Research Objective One: Ethnic Composition of Edo State influences the Political Landscape in Edo State.

Option/Questions	1	2	3	Total
SA	195	168	195	558
A	132	129	109	370
UN	20	18	33	71
SD	35	60	21	116
D	15	22	39	76
Total	397	397	397	1191

Source: Field Survey, (2025)

Expected frequency = $\frac{(\text{Column total}) \text{ Row Total}}{\text{Total}}$

Grand total

$$R_1C_1 = \frac{397 \times 558}{1191} = 186.00$$

$$R_1C_2 = \frac{397 \times 370}{1191} = 123.33$$

$$R_1C_3 = \frac{397 \times 71}{1191} = 23.67$$

$$R_1C_4 = \frac{397 \times 116}{1191} = 38.67$$

$$R_1C_5 = \frac{397 \times 76}{1191} = 25.33$$

Contingency Table

Table (i) Contingency Table on Research Question I

O	E	(o-e)	(o-e) ²	(o-e) ^{2/e}
195	186.00	9.00	81.00	0.435
132	123.33	8.87	75.169	0.608
20	23.67	-3.67	13.469	0.569
35	28.67	6.33	40.069	1.398
15	25.33	-10.33	106.709	4.213
168	186.00	-18.00	324.000	1.742
129	123.33	5.67	32.149	0.261
18	23.67	-5.67	32.149	1.358
60	28.67	31.33	981.569	34.234
22	25.33	-3.33	11.089	0.438
195	186.00	9.00	81.000	0.436
109	123.33	-14.33	205.349	1.665
33	23.67	9.67	93.509	3.961
21	28.67	-7.67	58.829	2.052
39	25.33	13.67	186.869	7.377
X ²				60.747

Calculated X² = 60.747

Degree of freedom = (r-1) (c-1)

= (5-1) (3-1)

$$= (4) (2) = 8$$

& at 0.05 level = 15.507

$$60.747 > 15.507$$

$$X^2 = \sqrt{\frac{X^2}{n+X^2}}$$

Where n = total sample size = 150

$$\text{Pearson's } = \sqrt{\frac{3.413}{150+3.413}} \\ = 0.012$$

Decision: Calculated X^2 is greater than critical X^2 , therefore reject non positive relationship which states that the There is no significant relationship between Ethnic Composition of Edo State and Political Landscape in Edo State. Therefore, the degree of association of variables in X^2 revealed that r-value of 0.012 at 5% level of significance. This implies hence, there is significant relationship between ethnic composition of Edo State and political landscape in Edo State.

Testing Relationship between Variables Two

Research Objective Two: Ethnicity act as significant determinant of political allegiance in Edo State Nigeria.

Option/Questions	6	7	8	Total
SA	279	205	185	669
A	70	131	129	330
UN	15	19	13	47
SD	14	32	30	76
D	19	10	40	69
Total	397	397	397	1191

Source: Field Survey, (2025)

Expected frequency = $\frac{(\text{Column total}) (\text{Row Total})}{\text{Total}}$

Grand total

$$R_1C_1 = \frac{397 \times 669}{1191} = 223.00$$

$$R_1C_2 = \frac{397 \times 330}{1191} = 110.00$$

$$R_1C_3 = \frac{397 \times 47}{1191} = 15.67$$

$$R_1C_4 = \frac{397 \times 76}{1191} = 25.33$$

$$R_1C_5 = \frac{397 \times 69}{1191} = 23.00$$

Contingency Table

Contingency Table Two (ii)

O	E	(o-e)	(o-e) ²	(o-e) ^{2/e}
279	223.00	56.00	3136.00	1.406
70	110.00	-40.00	1600.00	14.545
15	15.67	-0.67	0.449	0.029
14	25.33	-11.33	128.369	5.068
19	23.00	-4.00	16.00	0.695
205	223.00	-18.00	323.00	1.453
131	110.00	21.00	441.00	4.009
19	15.67	3.33	11.09	0.708
32	25.33	6.67	44.489	1.756
10	23.00	-13.00	390.625	16.984
185	223.00	-38.00	1444.00	6.475
129	110.00	19.00	361.00	3.282
13	15.67	-2.67	7.129	0.455
30	25.33	4.67	21.809	0.861
40	23.00	17.00	289.00	12.565
X ²				70.291

Calculated X² = 70.291

Degree of freedom = (r-1) (c-1)

$$= (5-1) (3-1)$$

$$= (4) (2)$$

$$= 8$$

& at 0.05 level = 14.06

$$70.291 > 14.06$$

$$r = \sqrt{\frac{X^2}{n+X^2}}$$

Where n = total sample size = 150

$$r = \sqrt{\frac{14.06}{150+14.06}}$$

$$r = 0.024$$

Decision: Calculated X^2 is greater than critical X^2 , therefore reject non positive relationship, which state that ethnicity acts has no significant determinant of political allegiance in Edo State Nigeria. Hence, ethnicity acts has significant determinant effect on political allegiance in Edo State Nigeria. The degree of association between variables as show by the calculated Pearson's correlation is 0.024 at 5% level of significance.

Testing Relationship between Variables

Research Objective Three: There is no significant relationship between ethnic voting patterns and 2025 General Election in Edo State.

Option/Questions	11	12	13	Total
SA	265	136	191	592
A	83	190	98	371
UN	40	16	27	83
SD	09	33	56	98
D	-	22	25	47
Total	397	397	397	1191

Source: Field Survey, (2025)

Expected frequency = $\frac{(\text{Column total}) \text{ Row Total}}{\text{Grand total}}$

$$R_1C_1 = \frac{397 \times 592}{1191} = 197.33$$

$$R_1C_2 = \frac{397 \times 371}{1191} = 123.67$$

$$R_1C_3 = \frac{397 \times 83}{1191} = 27.67$$

$$R_1C_4 = \frac{397 \times 98}{1191} = 32.67$$

$$R_1C_5 = \frac{397 \times 47}{1191} = 15.67$$

Contingency Table

Contingency Table Three (iii)

O	E	(o-e)	(o-e) ²	(o-e) ^{2/e}
265	197.33	67.67	4579.23	23.209
83	123.67	-40.67	1654.05	13.375
40	27.67	12.33	152.03	5.494
09	32.67	-23.67	560.27	20.248
-	15.67	-15.67	245.55	15.67
136	197.33	-61.33	3761.37	19.06
190	123.67	66.33	4399.69	35.566
16	27.67	-11.67	136.19	4.922
33	32.67	0.33	0.109	0.0003
22	15.67	6.33	40.069	2.557
191	197.33	-6.33	40.069	0.203
98	123.67	-25.67	658.95	5.328
27	27.67	-0.67	0.449	0.016
56	32.67	23.33	544.29	16.660
25	15.67	9.33	87.049	5.555
X ²				167.8633

Calculated X² = 167.8633

Degree of freedom = (r-1) (c-1)

= (5-1) (3-1)

= (4) (2)

= 8

& at 0.05 level = 15.507

167.8633 > 15.507

14.06 > 12.592

$$r = \sqrt{\frac{X^2}{n+X^2}}$$

Where n = total sample size = 150

$$r = X^2 = \sqrt{\frac{14.06}{150+14.06}}$$

r = 0.023

Decision: Calculated X^2 is greater than critical X^2 , therefore reject non positive relationship three, which states that there is no significant relationship between ethnic voting patterns and 2025 General Election in Edo State. The degree of association between variables as show by the calculated Pearson's correlation is 0,023 at 5% level of significance. The overview shows that there is significant relationship between ethnic voting patterns and 2025 General Election in Edo State.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The result revealed that the calculated X^2 value of 60.747 which is greater than critical X^2 , value of 15.507, therefore reject non positive relationship which states that there is no significant relationship between Ethnic Composition of Edo State and Political Landscape in Edo State. Hence, there is significant relationship between ethnic composition of Edo State and political landscape in Edo State. This study supports the study by Afolabi (2025) who found that there is significant relationship between ethnic composition and political participation.

The calculated X^2 of 70.291 which is greater than critical X^2 15.507, therefore reject non positive relationship, which state that ethnicity acts has no significant determinant of political allegiance in Edo State Nigeria. Hence, ethnicity acts has significant determinant effect on political allegiance in Edo State Nigeria. This study is in line with the study by Babalola (2020) who found that ethnicity influences political allegiance Nigeria

The result also showed that calculated X^2 value of 167.8633 which is greater than critical X^2 , 15.507, therefore reject non positive relationship three, which states that there is no significant relationship between ethnic voting patterns and 2025 General Election in Edo State. The overview shows that there is significant relationship between ethnic voting patterns and 2025 General Election in Edo State. This finding corroborates with the study by Idowu and Iyabode (2025) who found that there is significant relationship between ethnic voting patterns and electoral performance.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.2 Summary

The findings from research question one shows that ethnicity plays a significant role in determining voting preferences in Nigerian elections and revealed people are more likely to vote for candidates who share their ethnic background. The result revealed that political campaigns in Nigeria often emphasize ethnic identity to attract voters and ethnic leaders play an influential role in shaping the political choices of their community. The result also showed that ethnicity is more important than political party ideology when choosing a political candidate.

The findings from research question two revealed that the diverse ethnic composition of Edo State significantly influences political party support and voting behaviour and that political candidates in Edo State often use ethnic identity to gain the support of specific ethnic groups.

The result showed that ethnic groups in Edo State tend to vote for candidates who belong to their ethnic community and that the appointment of political leaders in Edo State is often influenced by the need to balance ethnic representation. The result showed that political conflicts in Edo State are sometimes driven by ethnic differences and competition for political power.

The response to research question three indicated that candidate popularity and grassroots development initiatives have a greater impact on voting patterns than ethnic considerations and that voters in Edo State are more likely to support candidates based on their party affiliation rather than their ethnicity. The result indicated that traditional rulers and local leaders influence voter decisions during elections in Edo State and electoral violence and intimidation affect voter turnout and choices in Edo State elections. The result showed that voters in Edo State prioritize candidate competence and performance over ethnic affiliation.

5.2 Conclusion

From the findings of this study, the following conclusion were made,

1. Ethnicity act as significant determinant of political allegiance in Nigeria, this implies that key drivers included a sense of ethnic solidarity, the perception of political exclusion, and promises of local development. Many voters expressed the belief that electing a candidate from their ethnic group would result in better access to government services and development projects.
2. The ethnic composition of Edo State influence the political landscape, while ethnic voting can be seen as a reflection of communal solidarity, it also poses a threat to democratic ideals by undermining merit-based selection of leaders. It promotes division, fosters electoral violence, and reduces the likelihood of cross-ethnic cooperation.

3. The ethnic voting patterns in the 2025 General Election in Edo State, that is analysis of voting data revealed a strong correlation between ethnic identity and candidate preference. Voters from specific ethnic groups predominantly supported candidates from their communities, particularly in local government areas with high ethnic homogeneity.

5.3 Recommendations

To address the challenge of ethnicity-driven voting in Edo State and Nigeria at large, the following recommendations are stated:

- Strengthen civic education programs to emphasize the importance of competence, integrity, and policy alignment in candidate selection. Voters should be educated on the negative consequences of ethnic voting and the benefits of merit-based leadership.
- Foster inclusive governance by ensuring equitable distribution of development projects and public appointments across all ethnic groups. This can reduce the perception that political power benefits only specific communities.
- Introduce electoral reforms to promote proportional representation, which would encourage candidates to seek support beyond their ethnic constituencies. This could be achieved by adjusting constituency boundaries or introducing multi-member constituencies.

- Political parties should be mandated to promote diversity in candidate selection and ensure that party tickets are distributed in a manner that reflects ethnic balance. Parties should also be held accountable for promoting inclusion and tolerance.

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APPENDIX

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Public Administration,
Faculty of Social Sciences,
University of Benin,
Benin City.

15th November, 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

REQUEST FOR COMPLETION OF QUESTIONNAIRE

I am an undergraduate student, undergoing a B.Sc. programme in the University of Benin. I am currently on a study “**Ethnicity and Voting in Nigeria: A Study of the 2023 General Elections in Edo State**”.

I wish to appeal to you to assist by kindly sparing a few minutes to complete this questionnaire as honest as you can. Your opinion or information supplied will be used purely for the academic purpose intended; and such information will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Thanks for your anticipated cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Researcher

SECTION A

Part A: Personal Data Please tick (✓) the option that is applicable to you.

1. Gender: a. male () b. female ().

2. Age: a. under 30 (), b.31-40 () c. 41-50 ().
3. Educational qualification: Primary/O' Level (), B.A/B.Sc. () Masters ().
4. Religion: Christian (), Muslim (), African Traditional Religion (), Others ().
- Location: Edo North District (), Edo Central District (), Edo South District ().
- Part B: Ethnicity and Voting in Nigeria: A study of the 2023 General Elections in Edo State

SECTION B

Section 1		Responses				
Item	To what extent does ethnicity act as significant determinant of political allegiance in Nigeria?	SA	A	UN	D	SD
1.	Ethnicity plays a significant role in determining voting preferences in Nigerian elections.					
2.	People are more likely to vote for candidates who share their ethnic background.					
3.	Political campaigns in Nigeria often emphasize ethnic identity to attract voters.					
4.	Ethnic leaders play an influential role in shaping the political choices of their community.					
5.	Ethnicity is more important than political party ideology when choosing a political candidate.					
Section 2						
Item	Does the Ethnic Composition of Edo State influence the Political Landscape?					
1.	The diverse ethnic composition of Edo State significantly influences political party support and voting behaviour.					
2.	Political candidates in Edo State often use ethnic identity to gain the support of specific ethnic groups.					
3.	Ethnic groups in Edo State tend to vote for candidates who belong to their ethnic community.					
4.	The appointment of political leaders in Edo State is often influenced by the need to balance ethnic representation.					
5.	Political conflicts in Edo State are sometimes driven by ethnic differences and competition for political power.					

Section 3						
Item	What are the ethnic voting patterns in the 2023 General Election in Edo State?					
1.	Candidate popularity and grassroots development initiatives have a greater impact on voting patterns than ethnic considerations.					
2.	Voters in Edo State are more likely to support candidates based on their party affiliation rather than their ethnicity.					
3.	Traditional rulers and local leaders influence voter decisions during elections in Edo State.					
4.	Electoral violence and intimidation affect voter turnout and choices in Edo State elections.					
5.	Voters in Edo State prioritize candidate competence and performance over ethnic affiliation					
Item	Factors Influencing Ethnicity and Voting in 2023.					
1.	My ethnic identity played a major role in determining my choice of candidate in the 2023 elections.					
2.	I believe that candidates from my ethnic group are more likely to represent my interests effectively.					
3.	The region a candidate comes from had a significant impact on my voting decision in the 2023 general elections.					
4.	Voting based on regional or ethnic lines in the 2023 elections is harmful to national unity.					
5.	My choice of political party in the 2023 elections was strongly influenced by ethnic considerations.					