

## THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON VOTER'S BEHAVIOUR: A STUDY OF THE 2023 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION OF GIWA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KADUNA STATE

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### ABSTRACT

Religion has emerged as a significant factor shaping political activities since the return of democratic governance in Nigeria. The 2023 presidential election witnessed the utilization of religious affiliations to mobilize voters, notably with the adoption of a Muslim-Muslim ticket by the APC. This strategy aimed to align with religious inclinations, contrasting with other candidates who chose running mates from different religious backgrounds to demonstrate inclusivity. This phenomenon extended to the 2023 gubernatorial election in Kaduna State, particularly in Giwa Local Government Area, where religion played a pivotal role in shaping voter behaviour. This study examines the influence of religion on electoral outcomes, the role of religious leaders in voter mobilization, and the indicators used by these leaders to sway voters based on religious inclinations. Drawing on the pluralist theory of democracy, the research explores how societal pluralism is leveraged to mobilize voters during political events. Through a multistage sampling approach and surveying 150 respondents, the study found that religion significantly influenced voter behaviour in the 2023 gubernatorial election of Kaduna State. In conclusion, religion has become a pervasive factor influencing elections in Kaduna State, emphasizing the need for a nuanced understanding of its implications on democracy. The research recommends comprehensive voter education programs to promote informed decision-making beyond religious affiliations. Additionally, fostering interfaith dialogue, ensuring transparency in political campaigning, addressing socio-economic grievances, and strengthening electoral regulations are proposed to mitigate the exploitation of religious sentiments for political gain. Implementing these recommendations can foster a more inclusive and democratic electoral environment in Giwa Local Government Area, prioritizing informed decision-making and collective socio-political interests over narrow religious affiliations.

**Keywords:** Religion, Mobilization, Voter, Voters' behaviour and Election

## 1.1 Introduction

Understanding the factors that influence voter behaviour is crucial for comprehending the dynamics of elections worldwide. From global trends to specific regional contexts, various factors shape how individuals cast their votes, ultimately impacting the outcomes of elections. In many instances, religion emerges as a significant influence on voter behaviour, a phenomenon particularly pronounced in third-world countries like Nigeria.

Nigeria, since its independence, has been deeply influenced by religion in its electoral processes. While regionalism and ethnicity initially dominated the electoral landscape in the country's early years, religion gradually asserted its influence, especially within the framework of political party compositions. The Nigerian political scene during the first Republic saw parties like the Northern People's Congress (NPC), which primarily represented the northern Muslim populace, and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), which aligned with the predominantly Christian Igbo population. Additionally, the Action Group (AG) initially rooted in ethnic identity, transitioned into a political entity representing the western part of Nigeria (Umar, 2003).

Efforts were made to mitigate the influence of religion on electoral outcomes in subsequent republics, notably during the second and third Republics. While these endeavors showed some success, it was the third Republic that witnessed a consensus among scholars that religion played a negligible role in shaping voters' choices. This was evident in the election of 1993, where the absence of religious considerations was notably observed. Additionally, the third republic stood out as the only one in Nigerian government and politics where scholars unanimously agreed that religion did not significantly influence voters' behaviour. During the election, the National Republican Convention (NRC) and Social Democratic Party (SDP) emerged as the primary contenders, with their presidential candidates hailing from diverse regions and religious backgrounds. Notably, Bashir Tofa, representing Kano State, lost his own state to his running mate, Chief M.K.O. Abiola. This outcome underscored to many scholars that religion played no decisive role in the annulled June 12, 1993 election (Oju, 2003).

However, as Nigeria transitioned into its fourth Republic in 1999, the landscape shifted once again. While religion did not significantly influence the election that

brought Olusegun Obasanjo to power, subsequent elections in 2011, 2015, and 2019 were marred by religious bigotry. The post-election violence following the 2011 election, particularly, underscored how religion had begun to shape voter behaviour in significant ways, leading to tensions and conflicts. The eruption of violence took on a distinctly religious character, as some individuals from northern regions targeted Christians residing in the North.

Zooming out from Nigeria and looking at other African countries like South Africa and Rwanda, similar patterns emerge. While factors such as historical legacies, socioeconomic conditions, and ethnic affiliations play significant roles, religion often asserts its influence, albeit to varying degrees, in shaping voter behaviour.

Despite the extensive research on the influence of religion on voter behaviour in Nigeria and some other African countries, there remains a gap in the literature regarding a comprehensive understanding of how global trends in voter behaviour interact with local contexts. This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining the multifaceted influences on voter behaviour, particularly focusing on the role of religion, in both a Nigerian and broader African context. Through this

exploration, it aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding electoral dynamics in the region.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Religion plays a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics of political engagement within Giwa Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria. The intersection of religion and politics has become increasingly significant, particularly evident during the 2023 gubernatorial election. Various actors strategically leveraged religious affiliations to influence voter behaviour, thereby altering traditional voting patterns within the Local Government Area. This study aims to investigate the following:

1. What factors influenced voter behaviour during the 2023 gubernatorial election in Giwa Local Government Area of Kaduna State?
2. Who were the primary actors responsible for mobilizing electorates to vote based on religious inclination in the 2023 gubernatorial election within Giwa Local Government Area?
3. What specific channels or avenues were utilized to mobilize voters to align with religious considerations during the 2023 gubernatorial

election in Giwa Local Government Area?

4. What were the perceived benefits of mobilizing electorates to vote in accordance with religious affiliations during the 2023 gubernatorial election in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State?

Hence, this study seeks to examine the intricacies of religious influence on electoral processes within the microcosm of Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, shedding light on the mechanisms and implications of such mobilization efforts.

### 1.3 Literature Review

#### 1.3.1 Religion

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), religion refers to “the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods.” While **from Merriam-Webster Dictionary**, religion “is the service and worship of God or the supernatural.” Religion in Nigeria is characterized by its diverse and dynamic nature, with Christianity and Islam standing as the predominant faiths (Adesina, 2018). Christianity, introduced during the colonial period, has since evolved into a multifaceted religious landscape comprising various

denominations, including Catholicism, Anglicanism, and Pentecostalism (Onyishi et al., 2019). These Christian denominations exert significant influence not only in spiritual matters but also in education, healthcare, and social welfare (Okafor, 2017). Conversely, Islam holds deep historical roots in Nigeria, particularly in the northern region, where it shapes cultural norms, legal systems, and political ideologies (Yakubu, 2016). The presence of indigenous African religions further enriches Nigeria's religious tapestry, emphasizing communal harmony and connection with the environment (Isike & Onyishi, 2019). Despite the dominance of Christianity and Islam, elements of indigenous beliefs persist, particularly in rural areas, contributing to the country's religious diversity (Adebanwi, 2020).

Religion is a complex factor that exerts a profound impact on voting patterns in Nigeria. Prior literature has explored the intricate relationship between religion and politics, highlighting the intricate ways in which faith shapes political identities, mobilizes voters, and influences electoral dynamics. In Nigeria, religion is a fundamental aspect of societal identity and plays a significant role in shaping individuals'

beliefs, values, and behaviours. With a diverse population comprising primarily of Christians and Muslims, the interplay between religion and politics has been a subject of scholarly inquiry, particularly concerning its influence on voting behaviour.

### **1.3.2 Voter's Behaviour**

Voting is one of the most commonly used terms in contemporary democratic process for recruitment of leadership and election of representatives. However, voting behaviour is a form of electoral behaviour, which indicates the way different people tend to vote. Understanding voters' behaviour can explain how and why decisions are made to vote or not to vote (Ogundiran O. J., 2020).

Voting is a form of political participation and is regarded as the main form of political participation in liberal democratic societies, while the patterns of the votes can be described as the voting behaviour. The analysis of these patterns of behaviour helps to explain the reasons why people vote and how they reach the decisions they make. (Ezedikachi N. E., 2021).

Voting behaviour is an act of aggregating individual preferences into collective decision in an election (Linberg and Morrison, 2007). When studying voting behaviour, the focus is to find out who votes

and how they vote. Being able to understand voter's behaviour would help to explain why electorates make their decisions the way they do and enable the prediction of the outcomes of elections.

According to Bartel (2008), people vote according to their original political disposition, while some others vote because of the candidates' personal characteristics, qualities and abilities.

Studies in political behaviour have found out largely the importance of political participation in democratic polity. Powell (1992) recognizes that participation by citizens in competitive elections is a distinctive characteristic of democratic politics, putting in mind that substantial citizens' involvement in meaningful elections both reflects and encourages a sense of democratic legitimacy that will help to curtail violence and encourage regular competition. Political participation is therefore a tool for managing political conflict. It is a critical activity that may help to play the essential role in enforcing elites to respond to other forms of citizens' involvement (Diamond, 2018).

According to Shambers, (2008), a number of different approaches to the explanation of voting behaviour can be distinguished in the literature. Structural or

sociological approaches concentrate on the relationship between individual and social structure, placing the vote in a social context, and examine the effects on voting of such variables as social class, language, nationalism, religion, and rural-urban contrasts. Ecological or aggregate statistical approaches relate voting patterns to the characteristic features of a geographical area (ward, constituency, state, or whatever). Social psychological approaches relate voting decisions to the voter's psychological predispositions or attitudes, for example his or her party identification, attitudes to candidates, and such like. Finally, Shambers, (2008) rational-choice approaches attempt to explain voting behaviour as the outcome of a series of instrumental cost-benefit calculations by the individual, assessing the relative desirability of specific electoral outcomes in terms of the issues addressed and policies espoused by the different parties or candidates.

In essence, voting behaviour is a form of political behaviour. It entails actions and choices individuals make when casting their votes in an election. It encompasses various factors such as political preferences, candidate evaluation, party affiliation, and demographic characteristics that influence how individuals decide to vote.

## **1.4 Empirical Review**

### **1.4.1 Factors that Influence Voters' Behaviour in an Election in Nigeria**

There exists a multitude of factors shaping voters' behaviour in Nigerian elections, with historical trends indicating the pervasive influence of religion, regionalism, ethnicity, the power of incumbency, and candidates' personalities on electoral outcomes. Empirical studies underscore the prevalence of these influences, as elucidated by Okpalike and Chika (2015), who assert that voters often align their choices with leaders sharing their religious, ethnic, or regional affiliations.

The trajectory of Nigeria's Presidential Elections, spanning ten occurrences from the First Republic to the present Fourth Republic, has been fraught with challenges such as impunity, religious bias, ethnicity, regionalism, tribalism, and electoral malpractice. This pattern underscores a departure from issue-based campaigns towards a focus on divisive factors, as highlighted by Oju (2012), who observes that voters frequently prioritize identity markers over candidates' performance records.

The 2015 elections exemplified the enduring impact of religion and ethnicity on voter choices, as noted by Sule et al. (2017),

although with diminishing significance. Additionally, media and social media played pivotal roles in shaping voter perceptions, signaling shifts in political, economic, and social contexts. Socialization mechanisms, as articulated by Sheriff and Abdullahi (2015), introduced new dynamics, including fears, insecurity, and economic expectations, which influenced voting patterns. Moreover, the 2019 Presidential Election witnessed a departure from traditional voting behaviour, with campaigns emphasizing substantive issues rather than exploiting religious, ethnic, or regional sentiments, as suggested by Rufa'i (2011).

This empirical review underscores the multifaceted nature of voter behaviour in Nigerian elections, emphasizing the dynamic interplay between identity-based affiliations, socio-economic factors, and evolving political landscapes.

### **1.5 Religion and People's Interest in Nigeria**

Religious dynamics intersect profoundly with power politics in Nigeria, where various stakeholders leverage religion to bolster their political influence. The country's elite, drawn from diverse occupational and identity-based affiliations, derive legitimacy from their positions of authority within the military,

political, traditional, and bureaucratic spheres. These elites wield significant control over government resources, often establishing patron-client relationships based on ethnic, religious, or regional affinities, both through legal and illicit means.

During pivotal electoral moments, religious affiliations can sway political allegiances significantly. For instance, in the 1999 Presidential election, Pentecostal groups threw their support behind Olusegun Obasanjo of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), viewing him as a symbol of Christian resurgence in governance. Obasanjo's public embrace of his 'born again' status while in prison and subsequent calls for national prayers underscored the entanglement of religion and politics in Nigerian governance (Ojo, 2012).

Similarly, the 2011 Presidential election witnessed intense religious rhetoric, with incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan's strategic appeal to Northern Christian voters, epitomized by a highly publicized photograph of him kneeling before a prominent Pentecostal preacher. However, this move exacerbated tensions with the Northern Muslim community, highlighting the divisive potential of religious symbolism in Nigerian politics (Ojo, 2012).

Religion remains a potent force shaping political dynamics in Nigeria, as evidenced by contemporary scholarship. The country's elite, spanning military, political, traditional, and bureaucratic spheres, leverage religious affiliations to consolidate power and distribute resources along ethnic, religious, or regional lines (Adegbola, 2021). Recent elections have witnessed strategic appeals to religious sentiments, such as the 2019 Presidential election, where incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari's outreach to Muslim communities underscored the enduring entanglement of religion and politics (Osaghae & Suberu, 2019). Notably, the rise of Pentecostalism has added a new dimension to Nigeria's political landscape, with scholars highlighting its role in shaping voter behaviour and influencing electoral outcomes (Omotola, 2018). However, this fusion of religion and politics has also exacerbated societal divisions, as seen in the increasing polarization along religious lines (Onapajo & Olayiwola, 2020). Consequently, contemporary discourse emphasizes the imperative of understanding and addressing the complex interplay between religion and politics to foster national cohesion and stability (Afolabi, 2022).

Today, Nigeria stands more divided along sectarian and religious fault lines than ever before. The government and ruling party have demonstrated a willingness to exploit religious divisions to consolidate power, exacerbating societal cleavages for political gain.

This contemporary analysis underscores the enduring entanglement of religion and politics in Nigeria's socio-political landscape, emphasizing the need for nuanced understanding and constructive dialogue to mitigate polarization and promote national cohesion.

### **1.6 Campaign's Avenues in Nigeria**

The landscape of election campaigns in Nigeria has undergone significant transformations since the transition from military rule to democracy, marked by a notable evolution in campaign methodologies and media utilization. Traditionally, electioneering efforts primarily relied on personal contact and political rallies, but the advent of democratic governance has witnessed a surge in the popularity of political advertising, reflecting a heightened awareness of its efficacy among political actors (Oju, 2012). This shift is exemplified by the increasing prominence of political advertisements as a means to shape

public perception and convey candidates' platforms and qualities (Olujide, 2010). In the past, resources were predominantly allocated to traditional campaign activities like rallies, speeches, and direct outreach in key demographic hubs such as schools, religious centers, and markets.

However, the role of mass media in shaping political awareness and discourse has become increasingly significant. Zaller (1996) elucidates the intricate relationship between mass media exposure and political awareness, suggesting that exposure to diverse messages can lead to varying levels of awareness among the electorate. Moreover, the mass media, encompassing radio, television, newspapers, and magazines, are acknowledged as pivotal ideological apparatuses of the state (Oso, 2002). Oso emphasizes the indispensable role of the mass media in informing, educating, and mobilizing citizens, highlighting the potential repercussions of a dysfunctional media landscape, including arbitrary exercise of power, citizen disengagement from the political process, and limited mobilization efforts.

In essence, the evolution of election campaign strategies in Nigeria underscores the dynamic interplay between traditional

and modern approaches, with an increasing reliance on political advertising and mass media engagement shaping contemporary electoral dynamics.

### **1.7 Understanding Political Participation in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects**

Political participation is indispensable for the stability and progress of any democratic system, demanding active engagement from citizens in civic and political affairs. Appadorai (2004) underscores the essentiality of rational conduct and participation in governance for the sustenance of democracy, a sentiment particularly pertinent in the context of Nigeria's tumultuous political history marked by turbulence, violence, and electoral malpractices since the First Republic. Despite the imperative of citizen involvement in political processes, Nigeria grapples with widespread disillusionment towards politics, often perceived as a corrupt and volatile arena to be avoided.

Awolowo and Aluko (2010) elucidate the fundamental objectives of political participation, emphasizing its role in seeking power, influencing decision-making, and contributing to national development. Adelekan (2010) reinforces the significance of individual participation in democratic

governance, stressing the importance of citizens' engagement in decision-making processes that impact their lives.

However, political participation in Nigeria is influenced by myriad factors, including cultural, economic, religious, and educational backgrounds, as well as levels of political awareness and confidence in the political process. Ethnic and religious considerations further exacerbate political dynamics, with elections often characterized by divisive rhetoric and polarization along regional and religious lines (Adeyemo, 2011).

Noticeably, the dichotomy between the North and South, as highlighted by former Deputy Senate President Albert Legogie, underscores the deep-seated ethnic and religious tensions that permeate Nigerian politics, posing significant challenges to the realization of inclusive and participatory governance.

### **1.8 Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts the theoretical framework known as “A Theory of Democracy in Africa,” synthesized from the works of several scholars including Joseph (1981), Jackson (1984), Bretton (1994), Ross (2001), Salih (2003), and Tenuche (2009). This framework elucidates the challenges faced by African states in transitioning to democratic

governance within the context of post-colonial legacies and ongoing socio-political complexities.

African nations, particularly those of larger size, contend with the enduring legacies of arbitrary colonial borders and multicultural diversities (Joseph, 1981; Jackson, 1984). These historical imprints have resulted in the inheritance of fragile state structures lacking the necessary institutions and mechanisms for effective democratic governance. The absence of robust democratization processes is compounded by the prevalence of primordial sentiments such as ethnic affiliations, religious ties, and regional loyalties among emerging political elites (Bretton, 1994; Ross, 2001).

The theory posits that democracy in Africa faces inherent challenges due to its historical context, characterized by prolonged colonial subjugation and subsequent state formation (Salih, 2003). The absence of essential prerequisites for democratic consolidation, including political mobilization, socioeconomic development, and institutional capacity, hinders the effective operation of democratic principles. Socioeconomic disparities such as poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment further exacerbate the obstacles to democratization,

perpetuating a cycle of fragile governance structures (Tenuche, 2009).

African states, constrained by historical legacies and external influences, often operate within a framework of “failed democracy,” characterized by the manipulation of primordial sentiments by ruling elites to attain and maintain power (Joseph, 1981; Ross, 2001). Elections, ostensibly a hallmark of democratic governance, frequently serve as platforms for the reinforcement of ethnic, religious, and regional identities, rather than as forums for substantive policy debate. Consequently, electoral outcomes are often determined by patrimonial affiliations rather than considerations of good governance or developmental agendas.

The Nigerian democratic process exemplifies the pervasiveness of primordial attachments in shaping political behaviour and voting patterns (Jackson, 1984). Electorates often prioritize patrimonial and primordial considerations over the evaluation of candidates based on their ability to address pressing socio-economic challenges and foster national development through effective governance. The case of the 2023 gubernatorial election underscores the persistence of these dynamics, with voters

exhibiting allegiance to religious affiliations in certain regions, rather than engaging in issue-based selection.

In essence, the theoretical framework of “A Theory of Democracy in Africa” provides insights into the complex interplay between historical legacies, socio-political dynamics, and democratization processes on the continent. By elucidating the challenges inherent in the transition to democratic governance, particularly within the Nigerian context, this framework offers a nuanced understanding of the enduring influence of primordial sentiments on political behaviour and electoral outcomes in Africa.

### **1.8.2 The weaknesses of the theory**

The theoretical framework of “A Theory of Democracy in Africa” provides a comprehensive lens through which to understand the challenges inherent in the democratization processes across the continent. Drawing upon the synthesis of various scholarly works spanning several decades, the framework elucidates the complex interplay between historical legacies, socio-political dynamics, and the quest for democratic governance in African states. It highlights how the enduring effects of colonialism, compounded by multicultural diversities and fragile state structures, have

posed significant obstacles to the establishment of robust democratic institutions and mechanisms.

However, despite its analytical depth, the theory is not without its weaknesses. One notable limitation lies in its tendency to generalize the democratization experiences of diverse African nations. By treating Africa as a monolithic entity, the framework overlooks the distinct historical, cultural, and socio-political contexts that shape democratization trajectories in individual countries. This oversimplification risks masking important nuances and variations in the democratization processes across different regions of the continent.

Moreover, while the theory offers valuable theoretical insights, its empirical foundations may be somewhat limited. While it references the works of various scholars, there may be a dearth of comprehensive empirical studies to substantiate its claims empirically across diverse African contexts. This reliance on theoretical synthesis rather than robust empirical evidence could undermine the credibility and applicability of the framework in informing evidence-based policymaking and scholarly discourse.

Another weakness of the theory lies in its somewhat static analysis of democratization in Africa. While it adeptly identifies structural constraints such as historical legacies and socio-economic disparities, it may not fully account for the dynamic nature of democratization processes. Democracies are inherently fluid systems shaped by evolving political, social, and economic dynamics. Failing to account for these dynamic changes may limit the theory's capacity to accurately capture and explain shifting democratization trends over time.

Furthermore, the framework could be critiqued for potentially perpetuating ethnocentric biases by framing African democratization within Western theoretical paradigms. While not explicitly stated, this framing may inadvertently marginalize indigenous perspectives and experiences, thereby limiting the theory's relevance and applicability to African contexts. A more inclusive approach that incorporates diverse voices and perspectives could enhance the theory's comprehensiveness and utility.

Lastly, while the theory adeptly identifies challenges to democratization, it may offer limited guidance on effective policy interventions or strategies for fostering democratic consolidation in African states.

Without actionable recommendations, its utility for policymakers and practitioners seeking to promote democratic governance may be diminished. Enhancing the theory's policy relevance by offering concrete prescriptions for addressing democratization challenges could enhance its practical utility and impact on governance reform efforts in Africa.

## **1.9 Methodology**

### **1.9.1 Research Design**

The paper adopted a descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey research is an approach of descriptive research that blends quantitative and qualitative data to provide the researcher with relevant and accurate information. This design makes the researcher to understand the research problem by looking at what and how the problem has occurred. It also helped the researchers of understanding the nature of the problem and how it has remain a reoccurring issue. The researchers observed the phenomenon before investing on how it has shaped the 2023 governorship election of Giwa Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

### **1.9.2. Method of Data Collection**

Secondary and primary method of data were employed for data as the two main sources of data collection. The secondary source was achieved by the used of available text books, journals, both published and unpublished articles. Most of the information that were used to study the nature of the problem were generated from the secondary sources. While the data that was used in analyzing the result that was gotten from the field was generated from the primary sources. The primary data is the first hand information that the researchers got from the fieldwork.

### **1.9.3. Instrument of Data Collection**

Two instruments of data collection were used. These instruments are questionnaire and in-depth interview. The questionnaire consists of number of ended questions, which are the main indicators that are used to check the voters' activities. The in-depth interview was also employed to help the researchers to corroborate the data to ensure validity of the two instruments there were used.

## **1.10. Result and Discussion of Findings**

**Table 1: What is Factor that Influence Voters to Vote in Line of Religious Inclination in 2023 Gubernatorial Election of Giwa local government area of Kaduna State?**

<b>Factors</b>	Frequency	Percentage %
Religion	69	46
Ethnicity	5	3.3
Incumbency	50	33.3
Personality	26	17.3
<b>Total</b>	150	100

*Source: Field work, 2023*

Table 1 outlines factors influencing voter behaviour in an empirical review. Religion had the highest influence at 46%, followed by incumbency at 33.3%, personality at 17.3%, and ethnicity at 3.3%. The data indicates that religion predominantly influenced voter behaviour in the recent gubernatorial election in Giwa Local Government Area, with incumbency also significantly impacting voter choice. However, candidate personality and ethnicity had comparatively lesser influence. This suggests that religious considerations, followed by the advantage of incumbency, were pivotal factors shaping electoral outcomes in the region.

This corroborates the interview conducted with one of the respondents as he opines that:

Yes, religion is the dominant factor that

influence voters' behaviour in the gubernatorial election in Giwa Local Government Area. The Muslim-Muslim ticket was one of the main reason why some voters in Giwa voted for APC because we have to protect our religious interest. You cannot vote for someone who picked a Christian as his running mate and leave the one that picked a Muslim as his running, even God will not be happy with you. It is added that, there are some PDP members who voted for an APC gubernatorial candidate because of the Muslim-Muslim ticket. Emphasis was made by most respondent that religion played a vital role above all other factors that influence voters' behaviour in the election (Field work, 2023).

**Table 2: Who Mobilizes the Voters to Vote in line with Religious Inclination in the 2023 Gubernatorial Election of Giwa Local Government Area of Kaduna State?**

<b>Mobilizers</b>	Frequency	Percentage %
Politicians	59	39.3
Religious Leaders	55	36.7
Individuals/Electorates	30	20
Traditional Leaders	6	4

<b>Total</b>	150	100	entirely discounted, albeit it may be less pronounced compared to other actors.
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**Source: Field work, 2023**

Table 2 illustrates that politicians received the highest percentage at 39.3%, followed closely by religious leaders at 36.7%, individuals at 20%, and traditional leaders at 4%. This data suggests that politicians are primarily responsible for introducing the use of religion to influence voter behaviour along religious lines. Religious leaders, possessing a deep understanding of religious sentiments, play a significant role in mobilizing voters based on religious inclinations. They leverage their knowledge to interpret religious texts and persuade voters accordingly. Consequently, religious leaders have become contentious figures in modern society due to their perceived manipulation of religious beliefs for political ends. Additionally, individuals play diverse roles during elections, including as voters and campaign directors, affording them opportunities to influence voters along religious lines. This underscores the multifaceted nature of individual influence during electoral processes. While traditional leaders received fewer responses, indicating a less overt role, their influence cannot be

In an interview with another respondent, he puts that:

The notion of bringing religion into politics is engineered by the politicians because the politicians often choose their running mate along religious line in most of the pluralist state, where there are ethnic and religious differences. If the politicians did not consider religion as a main factor of winning election; therefore, no electorate would also think of voting along religious line or any cleavages. The religious leaders involve themselves because the politicians are the ones that sold the ideas to them. Today, we live in a capitalist society where nobody wants to be poor, so the politicians sometimes give the religious leaders and other people money to mobilize the electorate to vote for them at any cost, whether religiously or any other means (Field work, 2023). A series of meeting was held between the politicians and the members of the council of Ulama and councils of Imams. This is because local government has a concern with the council of Ulama, and they listen to all their advices and request.

**Table 3: What are the Avenues where Voters were mobilized to Vote in Line of Religious Inclination of the 2023 Gubernatorial Election of Giwa Local Government Area of Kaduna State?**

Avenues	Frequency	Percentage %
At Worship Centers	39	26
At Religious Schools	27	18
At Formal Schools	4	2.6
At Market Places	21	14
At People's Residence/Streets	30	20
On the Media	9	6
At Polling Unit	20	13.3
<b>Total</b>	150	100

**Source: Field work, 2023**

Table 3 outlines the various avenues through which voters are mobilized to vote in alignment with religious inclinations. According to the responses, 26% of mobilization occurred at worship centers, 18% at religious schools, 2.6% at formal schools, 14% at market centers, 20% at people's residences, 6% through media, and 13.3% at polling units. The data suggests that worship centers serve as the primary mobilization points, uniting religious believers on political matters. Additionally, religious schools have emerged as forums for

political discourse rather than solely for religious education. Some formal schools were also utilized for political campaigns. Market centers were identified as significant sites for influencing voters along religious lines. Moreover, political campaigns and rallies predominantly occur at people's residences, facilitating easy mobilization of voters based on religious sentiments. While the media played a minor role in political campaigning, it still contributed to influencing voter behaviour. Lastly, polling units were also used by individuals to

influence voters along religious lines, albeit to a lesser extent compared to other avenues.

In an interview with some respondents, they shade more light that:

The main epicenter of influencing voters' behaviour along religious line are the worship centers and some religious places. Most of the meetings that were held between the religious bodies and politicians were done in either mosques or religious centers. When the council of Ulama and Imams met with the party aspirant, they did all their meeting at Giwa Juma't mosque and at the office of the council of Ulamas. Some people, especially religious teachers were sent to people's residencies to preach for then to vote for Muslim-Muslim ticket. However, in some Islamic schools, students were also informed to vote along religious line to safeguard their religious interest (Field work, 2023).

**Table 4: What Benefits do People Drive when they are mobilized to Vote in Line with Religious Inclination?**

Benefits	Frequency	Percentage %
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Socio-economic	50	33.3
Political	57	38
To ease Religious Tension	20	13.3
It has no Benefits	23	15.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field work, 2023**

Table 4 reveals the benefits associated with voting along religious lines: 50% cite socio-economic development, 57% cite political advantages, 20% mention easing religious tensions, and 23% believe there are no benefits. These findings suggest that a significant portion of respondents' view voting for candidates of the same religious background as a means to safeguard their political interests and expect socio-economic dividends from leaders sharing their religious affiliation. However, a minority express skepticism, possibly due to past experiences where perceived benefits were not realized under similar religious alignments.

An interview conducted in the same area explains that:

A meeting was held between religious leaders and politicians. The religious leaders have a cordial relationship with the local government and in most case, it influences some of the stakeholders' decision. The council of Ulama discussed with some party aspirants for socio-economic benefit before the cast their vote in line with religious inclination. The body demanded for the rehabilitation of their primary and secondary schools and other infrastructural development before the buy the idea of the Muslim-Muslim ticket.

### **1.11 Summary of Research Findings**

The research findings shed light on the intricate web of factors that sway voter behaviour, particularly within the context of the recent gubernatorial election in Giwa Local Government Area. Table 1 encapsulates these influences succinctly, with religion emerging as the most potent force at 46%. This dominance is underscored by the significant sway of incumbency at 33.3%, highlighting the interplay between political power and religious affiliation in voter decision-making. Conversely, factors like personality and ethnicity exerted comparatively lesser influence on electoral outcomes, accentuating the overarching role

of religious considerations in shaping voter choices.

Table 2 delves into the key actors involved in steering voter behaviour. Politicians emerge as primary influencers, leveraging religious sentiments strategically by aligning themselves with specific religious affiliations. This strategic maneuvering is evident in their choice of running mates along religious lines, as highlighted by the close involvement of religious leaders in the electoral process. Religious leaders, with their profound understanding of religious sentiments, collaborate with politicians to mobilize voters based on shared religious inclinations, thereby amplifying the influence of religion on voter behaviour.

Table 3 elucidates the various avenues through which voter mobilization occurs, with worship centers serving as pivotal hubs for political discourse and mobilization. The prominence of religious schools, market centers, and people's residences further underscores the multifaceted nature of voter mobilization along religious lines. Political campaigning in these diverse settings blurs the lines between religious and political spheres, highlighting the entanglement of religious beliefs with electoral processes.

Table 4 delves into the perceived benefits associated with voting along religious lines, revealing a nuanced perspective among respondents. While socio-economic development and political advantages are cited as primary benefits, there exists a segment of respondents skeptical of such benefits. This skepticism may stem from past experiences where perceived benefits failed to materialize under similar religious alignments, indicating a degree of disillusionment among voters.

In sum, the research findings underscore the pervasive influence of religion in shaping voter behaviour in the context of the recent gubernatorial election in Giwa Local Government Area. The interplay between religious considerations, political dynamics, and socio-economic interests highlights the complexity of electoral processes and their implications for socio-political dynamics in the region. As such, understanding these factors is crucial for policymakers and electoral stakeholders in navigating the intricacies of voter behaviour and fostering inclusive and equitable electoral processes.

### **1.12 Discussions of Research Findings**

The research findings reveal a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing voter behaviour in the recent gubernatorial election

in Giwa Local Government Area. Religion emerges as a dominant force, exerting a significant sway over electoral outcomes, with 46% of respondents citing it as the primary influencer. This dominance underscores the intricate interplay between religious affiliations and political decisions, shaping voter choices in profound ways.

Moreover, the findings highlight the strategic role of incumbency, with 33.3% of respondents indicating its influence on voter behaviour. This suggests a convergence of political power and religious sentiments, wherein incumbents leverage their position to align with specific religious groups, thereby consolidating their electoral base.

Interestingly, factors like personality and ethnicity, though present, exert comparatively lesser influence on electoral outcomes. This disparity accentuates the overarching significance of religious considerations in guiding voter decisions, underscoring the complexity of the socio-political landscape within Giwa Local Government Area.

### **1.13 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the research elucidates the pervasive influence of religion on voter behaviour within the context of the recent

gubernatorial election in Giwa Local Government Area. The findings underscore the intricate web of factors, including religious affiliations, political dynamics, and socio-economic interests, which collectively shape electoral outcomes.

The close alignment between political power and religious sentiments highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of the interplay between these forces. Moreover, the findings emphasize the multifaceted nature of voter mobilization, with religious institutions serving as pivotal hubs for political discourse and engagement.

Overall, the research underscores the importance of recognizing and addressing the role of religion in electoral processes to foster inclusive and equitable democracy in the region.

#### **1.14 Recommendations:**

Based on the research findings, several recommendations can be proposed to enhance electoral processes and promote inclusivity within Giwa Local Government Area:

1. Develop comprehensive voter education programs that highlight the importance of informed decision-making beyond religious affiliations.

2. Encourage interfaith dialogue and collaboration to mitigate potential religious tensions during electoral campaigns.
3. Implement measures to ensure transparency and accountability in political campaigning, particularly regarding the strategic alignment of incumbents with specific religious groups.
4. Foster socio-economic development initiatives that address the underlying grievances of marginalized communities, thereby reducing reliance on religious affiliations as determinants of voter behaviour.
5. Strengthen electoral regulations to prevent the exploitation of religious sentiments for political gain, thereby promoting fair and equitable electoral competition.

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can work towards fostering a more inclusive and democratic electoral environment within Giwa Local Government Area, where voter choices are guided by informed decision-making and collective socio-political interests rather than narrow religious affiliations.

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