

INFLUENCE OF POVERTY ON THE VOTING BEHAVIOUR OF THE ELECTORATE IN KURNA AND DALA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS DURING THE 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

DR. RILWAN ABDULLAHI ALIYU

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY ZARIA

elderawe8@gmail.com

DR. FATIMA MAHMUD

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY ZARIA

teema04@yahoo.com

DR. HAMZA AUWALU

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY ZARIA

hauwalu78@gmail.com

DANLADI ALIYU

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY ZARIA

daliyu@abu.edu.ng

DOI:<https://doi.org/10.57233/zjpd.v6i1.21>

ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of poverty on the voting behaviour of the electorate in Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas during the 2023 Presidential Election in Kano State, Nigeria. The study was motivated by persistent concerns that widespread poverty, unemployment, low income, and limited access to socio-economic opportunities increase voters' vulnerability to electoral inducements and weaken democratic participation. Specifically, the study examined the voting behaviour of the electorate, assessed the influence of poverty on voting behaviour, identified the socio-economic factors associated with poverty that influenced electoral choices, and examined the implications of poverty-induced voting behaviour for democratic governance. The study adopted a survey research design. Primary data were collected through the administration of structured questionnaires to 200 registered voters selected through a multistage sampling technique, while secondary data were obtained from relevant books, peer-reviewed journal articles, government publications, and official reports. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and presented through frequency tables and simple percentages. The study was anchored on rational choice theory, which explains voting decisions as outcomes of individuals' evaluation of expected costs and

benefits. The findings revealed that poverty significantly influenced voting behaviour by increasing voters' susceptibility to vote buying, political patronage, and other forms of electoral inducement. The study further found that unemployment, low income, economic insecurity, and inadequate educational opportunities encouraged many voters to prioritise immediate material benefits over policy issues and candidates' competence. The findings also showed that poverty-induced voting behaviour weakens electoral accountability and undermines democratic governance by promoting transactional politics and reducing the quality of electoral representation. The study concludes that poverty remains an important determinant of voting behaviour among the electorate in Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas. It recommends sustained poverty reduction programmes, employment generation, improved access to education, continuous voter education, and stricter enforcement of electoral laws to reduce vote buying and strengthen democratic governance.

Keywords: Poverty, Voting Behaviour, Electorate, Vote Buying, Democratic Governance, Kurna, Dala, 2023 Presidential Election.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Electoral processes are universally recognised as the foundation of democratic governance because they provide citizens with the opportunity to choose their political leaders and influence public policies through the electoral process. The extent to which elections produce legitimate governments depends largely on the ability of voters to make free and informed choices without coercion, intimidation, or undue influence. Consequently, voting behaviour has remained one of the most widely studied areas in political science because it explains why electorates support particular candidates, political parties, or public policies during elections. Studies have shown that voting behaviour is shaped by a combination of political, economic, social, cultural, and psychological factors, including party identification, political ideology, leadership qualities, government performance, ethnicity, religion, education, income, and prevailing economic conditions (Bornschier et al., 2021; Omotola, 2021). These factors vary across countries and political systems, making

voting behaviour a dynamic and complex aspect of democratic politics.

Globally, scholars have continued to examine how socio-economic conditions influence electoral participation and voting decisions. In many advanced democracies, voting choices are often influenced by party ideology, policy preferences, economic performance, and candidates' competence. In contrast, voting behaviour in many developing democracies is frequently shaped by additional factors such as poverty, unemployment, clientelism, political patronage, and vote buying (Ravanilla&Hicken, 2023). Under conditions of severe economic hardship, voters may place greater emphasis on immediate material benefits than on long-term policy programmes or leadership competence. As a result, economically disadvantaged citizens become more susceptible to electoral inducements that may compromise the credibility and integrity of democratic elections.

Poverty has remained one of the greatest development challenges confronting many developing countries despite sustained efforts by governments and international

development organisations to reduce its prevalence. The World Bank has consistently identified poverty reduction as a major development priority because of its far-reaching effects on economic growth, political stability, and social development (Ayoo, 2022). Poverty extends beyond inadequate income to include limited access to quality education, healthcare, employment opportunities, housing, and other basic social services required for a decent standard of living (Purvis et al., 2019). These conditions reduce citizens' capacity to participate effectively in democratic governance and increase their vulnerability to political manipulation during elections.

Nigeria continues to face serious socio-economic challenges despite being one of Africa's largest economies. High unemployment, inflation, declining purchasing power, inadequate infrastructure, and persistent income inequality have contributed to increasing poverty levels across the country (Salam et al., 2021; Sohn, 2020). Although successive governments have introduced several poverty reduction programmes and social intervention initiatives, their impact has remained limited due to implementation challenges, poor governance, and inadequate institutional capacity (Prince et al., 2023; Agudiegwu et al., 2019). Consequently, poverty continues to influence various aspects of citizens' lives, including their political participation and electoral choices.

The relationship between poverty and voting behaviour has therefore become an important subject of academic and public discourse in Nigeria. Economic hardship influences how citizens perceive political parties, candidates, and government

policies, especially during election periods when politicians often deploy financial incentives, gifts, food items, and other forms of patronage to attract electoral support. Rather than evaluating candidates based on competence, policy proposals, or previous performance, some economically disadvantaged voters may be compelled by immediate survival needs to exchange their votes for short-term material benefits (Olaide & Adewumi, 2020; Nwagwu et al., 2022). Such practices weaken democratic accountability, undermine electoral integrity, and reduce the ability of elections to reflect the genuine preferences of the electorate.

The 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria presented an important opportunity to examine how prevailing economic conditions influenced voting behaviour. The election was conducted during a period characterised by high inflation, rising unemployment, fuel scarcity, and the cash shortages associated with the implementation of the naira redesign policy. These economic challenges placed significant financial pressure on many Nigerians and generated widespread concern about the extent to which poverty and economic vulnerability shaped electoral decisions. Reports on the election also highlighted persistent concerns regarding vote buying, political patronage, electoral inducements, and other forms of electoral malpractice capable of compromising democratic credibility (Briggs et al., 2023; Nwagwu et al., 2022).

Kano State occupies a strategic position in Nigeria's electoral politics because of its large voting population and its considerable influence on presidential election outcomes. The state has consistently experienced intense political

competition and high levels of voter mobilisation. Despite its political importance, many communities within the state continue to experience widespread poverty, unemployment, low household income, inadequate educational opportunities, and limited access to basic social infrastructure. These socio-economic conditions have created an environment in which many voters may become vulnerable to political patronage and other forms of electoral inducement during elections.

Among the Local Government Areas in Kano State, Kurna and Dala provide important contexts for examining the influence of poverty on voting behaviour because they experience significant socio-economic challenges that affect the daily lives of residents. The prevalence of unemployment, low income, and inadequate social amenities in these areas raises important questions about the extent to which economic hardship influences electoral participation, voter preferences, and political decision-making during elections. Although previous studies have examined voting behaviour in Nigeria from the perspectives of ethnicity, religion, electoral violence, party politics, and democratic consolidation (Omotola, 2021; Amao, 2022; Omojowo et al., 2024), relatively few have specifically investigated how poverty influenced the voting behaviour of the electorate in Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas during the 2023 Presidential Election.

This study therefore examines the influence of poverty on the voting behaviour of the electorate in Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas during the 2023 Presidential Election. By focusing on the relationship between economic

deprivation and electoral behaviour at the grassroots level, the study seeks to contribute to existing knowledge on voting behaviour in Nigeria and provide useful insights that can assist policymakers, electoral management bodies, and other stakeholders in promoting credible elections and strengthening democratic governance.

1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to examine the influence of poverty on the voting behaviour of the electorate in Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas during the 2023 Presidential Election. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the voting behaviour of the electorate in Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas during the 2023 Presidential Election;
2. Assess the influence of poverty on the voting behaviour of the electorate in Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas during the 2023 Presidential Election;
3. Identify the socio-economic factors associated with poverty that influenced the voting behaviour of the electorate in the study area; and
4. Examine the implications of poverty-induced voting behaviour for democratic governance in Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of Voting Behaviour

Voting behaviour refers to the pattern of decisions and actions that influence how individuals participate in elections and

choose among competing political parties or candidates. It encompasses the motivations, preferences, attitudes, and considerations that shape electoral choices before, during, and after an election. Voting behaviour is one of the central areas of political science because it provides insight into why citizens support particular candidates or political parties and how these decisions influence democratic governance. The study of voting behaviour enables scholars to explain electoral outcomes, assess the quality of democratic participation, and identify the factors that shape political preferences within different societies (Dalton, 2020).

Political scientists have long argued that voting behaviour is influenced by a complex interaction of social, economic, political, and psychological factors. Early studies conducted by scholars at the University of Michigan demonstrated that many voters develop long-term attachments to political parties, commonly referred to as party identification, which significantly influence their electoral choices (Campbell et al., 1960). Other scholars have argued that voters make rational decisions by comparing the expected benefits and costs associated with competing candidates and political parties before casting their votes. This perspective, popularised by Downs (1957), assumes that voters behave as rational actors who seek to maximise their personal interests through electoral participation.

Beyond party identification and rational choice, socio-economic characteristics also play an important role in shaping voting behaviour. Variables such as age, gender, education, occupation, religion, ethnicity, income, and place of residence have been

found to influence how citizens perceive political issues and make electoral decisions (Dalton, 2020; Norris, 2022). In many established democracies, voting behaviour is commonly influenced by public policy issues, government performance, political ideology, and candidates' competence. Voters often evaluate the performance of incumbent governments, compare policy alternatives presented by political parties, and support candidates they believe are capable of addressing public concerns. Consequently, electoral choices in these societies tend to reflect issue-based politics and ideological preferences.

In many developing democracies, however, voting behaviour is shaped by additional structural and socio-economic realities. Factors such as poverty, unemployment, clientelism, patronage politics, weak political institutions, ethnic identity, religious affiliation, and vote buying frequently influence electoral decisions (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007; Cheeseman, 2015). Under these conditions, voters may attach greater importance to immediate material benefits than to political ideology or long-term policy programmes. Political actors often exploit economic hardship by distributing money, food items, or other incentives in exchange for electoral support, thereby weakening democratic accountability and reducing the quality of electoral competition.

The Nigerian electoral environment reflects many of these characteristics. Although the country's democratic system provides citizens with the constitutional right to choose their leaders through periodic elections, voting behaviour is influenced by a combination of political,

economic, social, and cultural factors. Several studies have identified ethnicity, religion, party affiliation, candidate personality, incumbency, campaign strategies, security concerns, and economic conditions as major determinants of voting behaviour in Nigeria (Omotola, 2010; Lewis & Kew, 2015). In recent years, increasing economic hardship has also heightened concerns that poverty and unemployment have strengthened the influence of vote buying, political patronage, and other forms of electoral inducement, particularly among economically vulnerable voters.

Although voting behaviour has been widely studied across different political systems, its determinants vary according to the historical, economic, and institutional realities of each society. Consequently, no single factor can adequately explain electoral choices in all contexts. This study adopts the view that voting behaviour is shaped by multiple interacting factors, among which poverty has become increasingly important in developing democracies such as Nigeria.

2.2 Concept of Poverty and the Relationship between Poverty and Voting Behaviour

Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon that extends beyond the absence of income to include deprivation in education, healthcare, nutrition, housing, employment opportunities, and access to essential social services. Contemporary development scholars argue that poverty should not be viewed solely in monetary terms but as a condition that limits people's capabilities, choices, and opportunities to live productive and dignified lives (Sen, 1999). Similarly, the

World Bank (2022) describes poverty as pronounced deprivation in well-being, characterised by inadequate access to the resources and opportunities necessary for a minimum standard of living. This broader conception recognises that poverty affects not only material welfare but also individuals' capacity to participate meaningfully in economic, social, and political activities.

Poverty continues to pose a major development challenge across many developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, where economic inequality, unemployment, weak institutions, and limited access to public services have contributed to widespread deprivation. Although many governments have implemented poverty reduction programmes, the incidence of poverty remains high in several countries, with significant implications for governance, political participation, and democratic consolidation (World Bank, 2022). In Nigeria, poverty remains pervasive despite abundant natural resources and decades of economic reforms. Reports by the National Bureau of Statistics (2022) indicate that a considerable proportion of the population experiences multidimensional poverty, reflecting deficiencies in education, healthcare, living standards, and employment opportunities. Such conditions create socio-economic vulnerabilities that influence citizens' perceptions of government and their participation in electoral processes.

The relationship between poverty and voting behaviour has attracted increasing attention in political science because economic conditions significantly shape electoral decision-making. Voting behaviour is expected to reflect citizens'

evaluation of candidates, political parties, public policies, and government performance. However, where poverty is widespread, electoral decisions may be influenced by immediate economic needs rather than ideological preferences or policy considerations. Downs' (1957) rational choice perspective suggests that voters make decisions based on perceived costs and benefits. For economically disadvantaged citizens, the immediate benefits offered during election campaigns may outweigh expected long-term policy outcomes, making them more responsive to financial incentives and material inducements.

Scholars have identified several mechanisms through which poverty influences voting behaviour. One of the most common is vote buying, where political actors offer money, food items, clothing, or other material benefits in exchange for electoral support. Although vote buying occurs in both developed and developing democracies, it is generally more prevalent in societies characterised by widespread poverty and weak institutional enforcement (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007). Under such circumstances, economically vulnerable voters may regard election periods as rare opportunities to obtain immediate economic assistance, even when they recognise that the practice undermines democratic accountability.

Closely related to vote buying is clientelism, a political arrangement in which politicians distribute selective benefits to individuals or groups in return for political loyalty and electoral support. Clientelistic politics thrives where poverty, unemployment, and economic insecurity make citizens dependent on political

patrons for access to jobs, contracts, welfare benefits, or other forms of assistance (Stokes et al., 2013). Rather than encouraging issue-based politics, clientelism promotes transactional relationships between politicians and voters, thereby weakening electoral competition based on competence, policy alternatives, and public accountability.

Political patronage also constitutes an important channel through which poverty shapes voting behaviour. In many developing democracies, elected officials and political elites use public resources and personal influence to reward supporters with employment opportunities, appointments, cash transfers, or development projects. Citizens experiencing economic hardship may therefore align their electoral preferences with politicians who possess the resources to provide immediate assistance rather than those with superior policy proposals or governance records (Cheeseman, 2015). This pattern reinforces dependency and reduces the ability of elections to serve as effective mechanisms for democratic accountability.

Empirical studies have consistently shown that poverty affects different dimensions of electoral behaviour. Ravanilla and Hicken (2023), in their study of electoral clientelism in developing democracies, observed that economically disadvantaged voters are generally more susceptible to vote buying because immediate material assistance often addresses pressing household needs. Similarly, Nichter (2008) argues that politicians frequently target poor communities during election campaigns because these groups are more likely to respond to short-term incentives than wealthier voters. Although poverty

does not automatically determine voting decisions, it increases the likelihood that economic considerations will influence electoral choices, particularly where institutional safeguards against electoral malpractice are weak.

In Nigeria, the influence of poverty on voting behaviour has become increasingly evident during successive elections. Persistent unemployment, inflation, low household income, and inadequate social welfare have created conditions in which many voters become vulnerable to financial inducements, campaign gifts, and political patronage. Several studies have linked the prevalence of vote buying and other forms of electoral inducement to worsening socio-economic conditions, arguing that economic deprivation weakens voters' independence and compromises the credibility of democratic elections (Nwagwu, 2022; Omotola, 2021). These realities underscore the need to examine how poverty influenced the voting behaviour of the electorate during the 2023 Presidential Election, particularly in communities where socio-economic challenges remain widespread.

From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that poverty is not merely an economic condition but also an important political variable capable of influencing electoral participation and voting decisions. Although voting behaviour is shaped by multiple interacting factors, poverty creates conditions that increase voters' vulnerability to clientelism, vote buying, and political patronage. Examining this relationship within Kuna and Dala Local Government Areas provides an opportunity to understand how prevailing socio-economic conditions influenced the electoral choices of the

electorate during the 2023 Presidential Election.

2.3 Empirical Review

Several empirical studies have examined the factors influencing voting behaviour across different political systems. Although the determinants of electoral behaviour vary across countries, scholars generally agree that socio-economic conditions, political institutions, ethnicity, religion, party identification, and candidate characteristics influence voters' decisions.

In the United States, Campbell et al. (1960) conducted one of the earliest and most influential studies on voting behaviour through "The American Voter". Using survey data from presidential elections, the study demonstrated that party identification plays a dominant role in shaping electoral choices. The authors found that voters often develop long-term psychological attachments to political parties, making party loyalty a stronger predictor of voting behaviour than short-term campaign issues. Although the study was conducted within an established democracy, it laid the foundation for subsequent research on electoral behaviour across different political systems.

Downs (1957), in his study of electoral decision-making in advanced democracies, developed the Rational Choice Theory of voting. Through a theoretical analysis, he argued that voters behave as rational individuals who evaluate competing political parties based on the expected costs and benefits associated with each electoral choice. According to the study, citizens support candidates whom they believe will maximise their welfare.

Although Downs' work was largely theoretical, it remains one of the most influential explanations of electoral behaviour and provides an important basis for understanding how economic considerations influence voting decisions.

Using comparative evidence from Latin America, Asia, and Africa, Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007) examined the relationship between poverty, clientelism, and democratic accountability. Their analysis found that vote buying and patronage politics are more prevalent in societies characterised by widespread poverty and weak political institutions. The study concluded that economically disadvantaged voters are generally more susceptible to material inducements during elections because immediate economic needs often outweigh long-term political considerations.

Similarly, Nichter (2008) examined vote buying in several developing democracies and found that political parties strategically target poor communities during election campaigns because economically vulnerable citizens are more likely to respond to financial incentives. The study argued that politicians frequently distribute money, food, and other material benefits not only to persuade voters but also to mobilise turnout among existing supporters. These findings highlight the important relationship between poverty and electoral behaviour.

More recently, Ravanilla and Hicken (2023) reviewed empirical evidence on clientelism and vote buying across developing democracies. Their study found that poverty does not automatically determine electoral choices; however, it

significantly increases voters' vulnerability to clientelistic exchanges where politicians provide selective material benefits in return for political support. The authors concluded that improving economic conditions and strengthening democratic institutions are essential for reducing the influence of money politics during elections.

In Nigeria, Omotola (2010) examined voting behaviour during the country's Fourth Republic and found that electoral choices are influenced by multiple factors, including ethnicity, religion, political parties, incumbency, and candidate personality. The study argued that although democratic institutions have improved since 1999, electoral behaviour continues to reflect Nigeria's complex socio-political environment. The study recommended strengthening democratic institutions to encourage issue-based politics.

Lewis and Kew (2015), in their assessment of Nigeria's 2015 General Election, observed that economic conditions increasingly influenced electoral outcomes alongside traditional factors such as ethnicity and religion. They argued that public dissatisfaction with economic performance contributed significantly to changes in voting patterns during the election. Their findings suggest that voters consider both identity-based and economic factors when making electoral decisions.

Nwagwu et al. (2022) investigated vote buying and electoral integrity in Nigeria using evidence from recent elections. The study found that worsening economic conditions, unemployment, and declining household income increased the vulnerability of many voters to electoral inducements. The authors concluded that

poverty remains one of the principal factors sustaining vote buying and weakening electoral accountability in Nigeria.

Amao (2022) examined the determinants of voting behaviour in Nigeria and reported that education, occupation, income level, political awareness, and party performance significantly influence electoral choices. The study found that voters with higher educational attainment were less likely to exchange their votes for material benefits than economically disadvantaged citizens. This finding reinforces the argument that poverty influences electoral decision-making by increasing voters' dependence on immediate financial assistance.

Omojowo et al. (2024) analysed the role of political actors in shaping electoral behaviour during recent elections in Nigeria. The study found that campaign strategies, political mobilisation, candidate credibility, and financial inducements all contribute to voting decisions. It further observed that politicians frequently exploit existing socio-economic inequalities to influence electoral outcomes, particularly in communities experiencing widespread poverty.

Although these studies have made significant contributions to the literature on voting behaviour, important gaps remain. Most international studies focus on the general relationship between poverty, clientelism, and electoral behaviour without examining the peculiar socio-economic realities of Nigeria's 2023 Presidential Election. Likewise, many Nigerian studies concentrate on ethnicity, religion, electoral violence, party politics, or vote buying at the national or state

level. Comparatively few studies have specifically investigated how poverty influenced the voting behaviour of the electorate in Kuna and Dala Local Government Areas during the 2023 Presidential Election. This study addresses this gap by providing empirical evidence from the study area and examining how prevailing economic conditions shaped electoral choices during one of Nigeria's most economically challenging election periods.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Rational Choice Theory, which was developed by Anthony Downs in his seminal work "An Economic Theory of Democracy" (1957). The theory explains voting behaviour by assuming that individuals are rational actors who make decisions after evaluating the expected costs and benefits associated with available alternatives. According to Downs (1957), voters participate in elections because they expect their choices to maximise personal welfare. Rather than acting solely on emotions or long-standing political loyalties, rational voters compare political parties, candidates, and policy proposals before deciding which option best serves their interests.

The central assumption of Rational Choice Theory is that individuals seek to maximise utility and minimise costs in their decision-making. In the electoral context, voters assess competing candidates based on factors such as expected economic benefits, public policy proposals, leadership competence, and government performance. Political parties, on the other hand, design campaign strategies and policy promises to attract the greatest number of voters. The theory

therefore views elections as a process in which both voters and political actors behave strategically in pursuit of their respective interests (Downs, 1957).

Although Rational Choice Theory was developed primarily to explain electoral behaviour in advanced democracies, it has been widely applied in studies of voting behaviour in developing countries. In societies characterised by widespread poverty, unemployment, and weak social welfare systems, the calculation of costs and benefits often reflects immediate economic realities. Voters experiencing severe financial hardship may perceive cash gifts, food items, employment promises, or other material incentives offered during election campaigns as tangible benefits that outweigh future policy commitments. Under such circumstances, electoral decisions may be influenced more by short-term economic considerations than by political ideology or candidate competence.

The theory is particularly relevant to the Nigerian context because elections frequently occur within an environment marked by economic hardship, patronage politics, and vote buying. Persistent poverty and unemployment increase the vulnerability of many citizens to financial inducements, allowing political actors to influence electoral choices through material incentives. Rational Choice Theory provides a useful explanation for this behaviour by suggesting that economically disadvantaged voters respond to immediate benefits when those benefits are perceived as meeting urgent personal or household needs. Consequently, poverty becomes an important variable in explaining why some voters may support particular candidates

despite reservations about their leadership qualities or policy programmes.

Despite its strengths, Rational Choice Theory has attracted criticism. Critics argue that the theory places excessive emphasis on individual self-interest and assumes that voters always possess sufficient information to make rational decisions. In reality, electoral choices are also influenced by factors such as ethnicity, religion, culture, emotions, political socialisation, and party identification, which may not always reflect rational cost-benefit calculations (Green & Shapiro, 1994). Others contend that the theory oversimplifies human behaviour by assuming that individuals consistently act to maximise personal utility, whereas many voting decisions are shaped by social norms, moral values, and group identities.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, Rational Choice Theory provides an appropriate analytical framework for this study because it offers a convincing explanation of how economic conditions influence electoral decision-making. The theory helps explain why poverty may increase voters' susceptibility to vote buying, political patronage, and other forms of electoral inducement during elections. It therefore provides a suitable framework for examining the influence of poverty on the voting behaviour of the electorate in Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas during the 2023 Presidential Election.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a survey research design. A survey design is appropriate for studies that seek to collect data from a

sample of respondents in order to describe their opinions, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours regarding a particular phenomenon. It enables researchers to obtain first-hand information through the use of structured questionnaires and analyse the data quantitatively to answer the research objectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The design was considered suitable for this study because it facilitated the collection of data on the influence of poverty on the voting behaviour of the electorate in Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas during the 2023 Presidential Election.

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas of Kano State, Nigeria. Kano State is located in the North-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria and is one of the country's thirty-six states. Created on 27 May 1967, the state comprises forty-four Local Government Areas, with Kano serving as the state capital (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2022). Kano is recognised as Nigeria's most populous state and remains an important commercial, industrial, and political centre in Northern Nigeria (National Population Commission [NPC] & ICF, 2019).

Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas were purposively selected because of their active political participation, high population density, and prevailing socio-economic challenges, including unemployment, low income, and poverty. These characteristics make the two Local Government Areas suitable for examining how poverty influenced the voting behaviour of the electorate during the 2023 Presidential Election.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population of this study comprised all registered voters in Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas of Kano State who were eligible to participate in the 2023 Presidential Election. Registered voters constituted the target population because they possessed the legal right to vote and were therefore in the best position to provide relevant information on the influence of poverty on voting behaviour.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample of 200 registered voters was selected for the study. The sample size was considered adequate to achieve the objectives of the study, taking into account the scope of the research, accessibility of respondents, the time available for data collection, and the available resources. Creswell and Creswell (2018) note that the adequacy of a sample should be determined by its ability to provide sufficient and meaningful data for addressing the research objectives. Similarly, Kothari (2004) argues that a sample should be representative of the target population and capable of producing reliable findings.

The study adopted a multistage sampling technique. First, Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas were purposively selected because they constituted the focus of the study. Thereafter, respondents were selected using the simple random sampling technique through the balloting method. This ensured that every eligible registered voter had an equal opportunity of being selected, thereby minimising selection bias and enhancing the representativeness of the sample.

3.5 Sources of Data

The study utilised both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected through the administration of structured questionnaires to registered voters in Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas. Secondary data were obtained from textbooks, peer-reviewed journal articles, government publications, official reports, conference papers, and other relevant documentary materials relating to poverty, voting behaviour, elections, and democratic governance.

3.6 Method of Data Collection

The questionnaire served as the principal instrument for data collection. Before administering the questionnaire, the researcher sought permission from relevant community leaders and explained the purpose of the study to the respondents. Copies of the questionnaire were administered personally to respondents in the selected areas of Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas. The completed questionnaires were retrieved after completion and carefully checked to ensure that the responses were suitable for analysis.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

Data collected through the questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques. The responses were coded, organised, and presented in frequency distribution tables and simple percentages. Descriptive statistics were adopted because they provide a clear and straightforward means of summarising respondents' views and explaining patterns observed in the data. The findings were interpreted in line with the objectives of the study to determine the influence of poverty on the voting behaviour of the electorate in Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas during the 2023 Presidential Election.

4.0 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

To provide a baseline profile of the study area, the demographic characteristics of the 200 respondents surveyed in Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas are presented across age, sex, and educational qualifications.

Table 1.1: Sex Distribution of Respondents

S/N	SEX	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Male	120	60%
2	Female	80	40%
TOTAL		200	100%

The data in Table 1.1 shows that 60.0% (120 respondents) of the sample are male, while 40.0% (80 respondents) are female. This distribution establishes a representative participation of both

genders within the urban project area, with a 20 percentage-point difference reflecting the historical patterns of outdoor public electoral participation in the metropolitan areas of Kano State.

Table 1.2: Age Distribution of Respondents**Table 1.2: (Age Distribution of the Respondents)**

S/N	AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	18-22	55	27.5%
2	23-27	40	20.0%
3	28-32	23	11.5%
4	33-37	17	8.5%
5	38-42	45	22.5%
6	43-47	5	2.5%
7	48 and above	15	7.5%
TOTAL		200	100%

Based on the data in Table 1.2, the age distribution reveals a highly active, youth-dominated electorate alongside a substantial segment of middle-aged citizens. The largest single group falls within the youngest bracket of 18 – 22 years at 27.5% (55 respondents), followed closely by mature voters aged 38 – 42

years at 22.5% (45 respondents) and young adults aged 23 – 27 years at 20.0% (40 respondents). This age stratification indicates that the sample heavily captures young and middle-aged adults, who are most acutely exposed to the contemporary economic pressures of unemployment and livelihood instability in urban Kano.

Table 1.3: Educational Qualification of Respondents

S/N	QUALIFICATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	NCE (National Certificate in Education)	80	40%
2	BSc / BA / B.Ed	40	20.0%
3	MSc / MA / M.Ed	15	7.5%
4	Others (primary education, Senior Secondary School Certificates (SSCE), or non-formal traditional education).	65	32.5%
TOTAL		200	100%

The educational profile detailed in Table 1.3 shows that 40.0% (80 respondents) hold an NCE qualification, representing the largest single educational cohort. Graduates with bachelor's degrees form 20.0% (40 respondents) of the sample, while postgraduates with master's degrees

comprise the smallest professional segment at 7.5% (15 respondents). A significant portion of the population, 32.5% (65 respondents), falls under the category of "Others," which encompasses individuals with primary education, Senior Secondary School Certificates (SSCE), or

non-formal traditional education. This variation provides an ideal baseline to assess how varying degrees of educational and formal economic literacy influence cognitive resistance to political manipulation.

4.2 Empirical Assessment of Electorate Voting Behaviour

The first objective of this study isolates and analyzes the baseline voting behaviour

of the electorate in Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas during the 2023 Presidential Election before examining poverty as an intervening variable. This section tracks electoral participation, the primary considerations guiding choice of candidates, and the structural factors shaping voter alignment.

Table 1.4: Voting Behaviour and Electoral Participation Patterns

S/NO	SURVEY ITEMS	YES	NO
1	Did you actively cast your ballot at your polling unit during the 2023 Presidential Election?	185 (92.5%)	15 (7.5%)
2	Was your choice of presidential candidate primarily determined by objective evaluation of party manifestos and candidate competence?	60 (30.0%)	140 (70.0%)
3	Were your voting decisions heavily influenced by neighborhood social networks, ethnic ties, or religious endorsements?	130 (65.0%)	70 (35.0%)

The empirical data in Table 1.4 reveals a highly mobilized electorate juxtaposed with low policy-driven engagement. An overwhelming majority of 92.5% (185 respondents) actively participated by casting their ballots on election day, indicating high interest in the political transition. However, only 30.0% (60 respondents) stated that their choice was guided by objective evaluations of party manifestos or candidate competence, while a significant 70.0% (140 respondents) rejected this policy-rational approach.

Instead, 65.0% (130 respondents) explicitly acknowledged that their final electoral choices were shaped by localized social networks, identity indicators, or

religious endorsements. This baseline assessment demonstrates that voting behaviour in Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas is predominantly communal, relational, and non-ideological, establishing a vulnerability context where external material conditions can easily shift individual choices.

4.3 The Influence of Poverty on Voting Behaviour

This section addresses the second and third objectives by assessing how widespread economic deprivation and poverty-associated socio-economic factors directly altered the baseline voting behaviour patterns identified above.

Table 1.5: Poverty-Driven Voting Vulnerabilities and Material Alterations

S/NO	SURVEY ITEMS	YES	NO
1	Direct material inducements (distribution of cash, food items, or clothing) caused you to change your candidate choice on election day.	125 (62.5%)	75 (37.5%)
2	Severe household economic hardship makes local voters easily dependent on immediate financial incentives from party agents.	150 (75.0%)	50 (25.0%)
3	Widespread socio-economic vulnerability and low literacy levels make the electorate susceptible to empty political promises.	110 (55.0%)	90 (45.0%)

The data in Table 1.5 provides evidence of the direct influence of poverty on voting decisions. A substantial 62.5% (125 respondents) confirmed that direct material inducements, such as the distribution of cash, food packs, or fabric, directly caused them to alter their candidate choice at the polling unit. This confirms that for a majority of the electorate, severe poverty acts as a structural compromise that overrides independent ideological choice.

Furthermore, 75.0% (150 respondents) agreed that severe household economic hardship induces an immediate dependency on short-term financial survival packages distributed by party agents. Additionally, 55.0% (110

respondents) indicated that low literacy combined with daily economic vulnerability reduces the capacity of voters to critically filter clientelist propaganda, leaving them susceptible to empty political promises. This data demonstrates that economic deprivation turns the democratic vote into a short-term survival commodity.

4.4 Micro-Level Political Transacting and Campaign Inducements

This section examines the activities of political actors, focusing on how campaign financing strategies, clientelist resources, and local patronage networks were deployed to target poor voters in Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas during the 2023 electoral cycle.

Table 1.6: Campaign Inducements and Patronage Target Dynamics

S/NO	SURVEY ITEMS	YES	NO
1	Political party actors deliberately concentrated the distribution of money and material gifts in low-income neighborhoods to secure votes.	180 (90.0%)	20 (10.0%)
2	The severe cash crunch and economic hardship during the 2023 election increased voter reliance on political patrons for daily survival resources.	125 (62.5%)	75 (37.5%)
3	Voters willingly accepted cash for votes because they felt excluded from long-term government benefits and infrastructure development.	110 (55.0%)	90 (45.0%)

The data in Table 1.6 shows how political actors systematically target poverty to influence voting behavior. A high proportion of respondents 90.0% (180 individuals) noted that political party actors deliberately concentrated financial handouts and material gifts within low-income neighborhoods, viewing these areas as highly cost-effective zones for vote harvesting.

The structural economic shocks of the 2023 election cycle are also clear: 62.5% (125 respondents) agreed that the naira cash crunch crisis increased voter reliance on localized political patrons for immediate household survival resources.

Furthermore, 55.0% (110 respondents) stated that their willingness to sell their votes was driven by a sense of permanent exclusion from state infrastructure, prompting them to extract immediate, tangible material concessions from political actors while they had the opportunity.

4.5 Implications of Poverty-Induced Voting Behaviour for Democratic Governance

This section addresses the fourth objective by examining the systemic governance outcomes that result when voting behavior is altered by poverty and transactional exchange.

Table 1.7: Governance Implications of Poverty-Induced Voting Choices

S/NO	SURVEY ITEMS	YES	NO
1	The transactional exchange of votes for material survival benefits in Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas undermines long-term democratic accountability.	160 (80.0%)	40 (20.0%)
2	The commercialization of the ballot allows underperforming or unpopular political actors to buy their way into public office.	121 (60.5%)	79 (39.5%)
3	Poverty-induced voting behavior results in a lack of quality public service delivery and basic infrastructure in the local government area.	109 (54.5%)	91 (45.5%)

The data in Table 1.7 illustrates the cyclical consequences of poverty-induced voting on democratic governance. An 80.0% majority (160 respondents) recognized that exchanging their ballots for short-term material benefits undermines democratic accountability, as elected officials feel no obligation to fulfill campaign promises once the vote has been paid for.

Additionally, 60.5% (121 respondents) agreed that this commercialization allows

underperforming political actors to secure public office by exploiting public poverty rather than demonstrating competence. Finally, 54.5% (109 respondents) stated that this transactional cycle leads to a lack of quality public services and basic infrastructure within Dala LGA, reinforcing the local poverty trap.

4.6 Discussion of Findings

The empirical findings from this study demonstrate a strong relationship between structural poverty and the alteration of

voting behaviour in Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas during the 2023 Presidential Election. This discussion integrates the quantitative data with the theoretical baseline of Rational Exchange Theory to address the study's core objectives.

The Transactionalization of the Ballot as a Rational Survival Strategy

The baseline voting behavior data (Table 1.4) shows that while general political mobilization is high (92.5% turnout), only 30.0% of choices are guided by policy manifestos or candidate evaluations. This gap is explained by the data in Table 1.5, where 62.5% of respondents explicitly state that material inducements altered their vote choice on election day. Under Rational Exchange Theory, this represents a utility-maximizing response to severe economic hardship.

For an electorate where 75.0% acknowledge that household economic distress creates a dependence on short-term cash handouts, the ballot is transformed from a tool for long-term policy choice into an asset for short-term household survival. The immediate utility of a food pack or cash handout outweighs the uncertain utility of long-term policy promises, leading voters to make a rational exchange of their ballot for immediate material relief.

Systematic Target Infrastructure and Elite Exploitation of Economic Shocks

The findings in Table 1.6 show that this transactional behavior is reinforced by the strategic actions of political elites. The observation by 90.0% of respondents that political actors concentrated material gifts in low-income neighborhoods shows a

deliberate targeting of economic vulnerability. This targeting became more effective during the 2023 election due to the institutional shock of the central bank's currency naira crunch. This crisis left low-income families without cash, allowing political patrons to use cash and food items to secure votes from vulnerable households.

Further, the finding that 55.0% of voters accepted these inducements due to a sense of developmental exclusion shows that transactional voting is partly driven by a lack of trust in the state. Because these voters do not expect regular public service delivery from elected officials, they choose to secure immediate, tangible benefits during the election period.

The Feedback Loop of Democratic Accountability and Impoverished Governance

The systemic implications of these dynamics are reflected in Table 1.7, where 80.0% of the respondents state that poverty-induced vote transactionalism undermines long-term democratic accountability. When political actors can secure election or re-election by purchasing votes rather than delivering public goods, the traditional democratic mechanism of performance-based accountability breaks down.

As noted by 60.5% of the sample, this allows unpopular or underperforming leaders to achieve public power. This creates a continuous feedback loop: systemic poverty forces voters to sell their ballots for immediate survival, which returns unaccountable leaders to office, leading to a lack of infrastructure development (54.5%), which in turn deepens the poverty of the community and

leaves the electorate vulnerable to future manipulation.

5.1 Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of poverty on voting behavior in Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas during the 2023 Presidential Election. The findings demonstrate that systemic economic deprivation, high unemployment, and low literacy levels undermine independent political participation. The study shows that under severe economic hardship, voting decisions are often shaped by immediate survival needs, leading to transactional voting and susceptibility to clientelist networks. This transactional cycle, where votes are exchanged for short-term material gains, allows clientelist networks to persist and can result in the election of unaccountable leaders. Ultimately, the study concludes that unless the root causes of poverty are addressed, electoral reforms alone may not fully protect the integrity of the democratic process in marginalized urban areas like Kurna.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the empirical findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Targeted Economic Empowerment Programs:** Since poverty is the primary driver of transactional voting, the Kano State Government, in collaboration with local authorities, should implement targeted vocational training and micro-credit schemes specifically designed for vulnerable women and unemployed youths in Kurna and Dala Local Government Areas to reduce their reliance on political clientelism.

2. **Community-Led Civic and Voter Education:** Civil society organizations (CSOs) should design and conduct continuous, Hausa-language civic education campaigns in Dala LGA. These programs should focus on explaining the long-term developmental costs of vote-selling, helping voters understand how transactional voting affects public services.
3. **Strict Enforcement of Anti-Vote-Buying Laws:** The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and law enforcement agencies should work together to monitor polling units in vulnerable urban wards and strictly prosecute both political actors and voters engaged in financial inducements during elections.
4. **Youth Engagement and Anti-Thuggery Initiatives:** To prevent the mobilization of vulnerable youths into political thuggery, community leaders and local authorities should establish youth mentoring and peer-education programs that discourage electoral violence and promote constructive civic participation.

References

- Agudiegwu, M. O., Moses, C. L., & Agbo, E. I. (2019). Poverty reduction programmes and sustainable development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 3(9), 68–75.
- Amao, O. B. (2022). Determinants of voting behaviour in Nigeria's

- democratic process. *Journal of African Elections*, 21(2), 56–74.
- Ayoo, C. (2022). Poverty reduction strategies in developing countries. In W. Leal Filho (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of the UN Sustainable Development Goals*. Springer.
- Bornschier, S., Häusermann, S., Zollinger, D., & Colombo, C. (2021). How “us” and “them” relates to voting behaviour. *Electoral Studies*, 74, Article 102418.
- Briggs, R. C., de Kadt, D., & Krönke, M. (2023). Elections in Africa in 2023. *Journal of Democracy*, 34(4), 145–160.
- Campbell, A., Converse, P. E., Miller, W. E., & Stokes, D. E. (1960). *The American voter*. University of Chicago Press.
- Cheeseman, N. (2015). *Democracy in Africa: Successes, failures, and the struggle for political reform*. Cambridge University Press.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Dalton, R. J. (2020). *Citizen politics: Public opinion and political parties in advanced industrial democracies* (7th ed.). CQ Press.
- Downs, A. (1957). *An economic theory of democracy*. Harper & Row.
- Galston, W. A. (2020). Anti-pluralism: The populist threat to liberal democracy. *Yale University Press*.
- Green, D. P., & Shapiro, I. (1994). *Pathologies of rational choice theory: A critique of applications in political science*. Yale University Press.
- Kitschelt, H., & Wilkinson, S. I. (Eds.). (2007). *Patrons, clients, and policies: Patterns of democratic accountability and political competition*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques* (2nd ed.). New Age International.
- Lewis, P., & Kew, D. (2015). Nigeria's hopeful election. *Journal of Democracy*, 26(3), 94–109.
- National Bureau of Statistics. (2022). *Nigeria multidimensional poverty index 2022*. National Bureau of Statistics.
- National Population Commission (Nigeria), & ICF. (2019). *Nigeria demographic and health survey 2018*. NPC & ICF.
- Nichter, S. (2008). Vote buying or turnout buying? Machine politics and the secret ballot. *American Political Science Review*, 102(1), 19–31.
- Norris, P. (2022). *In praise of skepticism: Trust but verify*. Oxford University Press.
- Nwagwu, E. J., & Egwuonwu, C. (2022). Vote buying and electoral integrity in Nigeria's elections. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 57(8), 1678–1695.

- Olaide, K. A., & Adewumi, O. O. (2020). Poverty and voting behaviour in Nigeria's electoral process. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 14(2), 29–39.
- Omotola, J. S. (2010). Elections and democratic transition in Nigeria under the Fourth Republic. *African Affairs*, 109(437), 535–553.
- Omotola, J. S. (2021). *Voting behaviour and democratic consolidation in Nigeria*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Omojowo, O., Adebayo, P., & Ibrahim, M. (2024). Political actors and voting behaviour in Nigeria's electoral process. *African Journal of Politics and Society*, 8(1), 44–61.
- Prince, H. E., Adebayo, A. A., & Ibrahim, S. (2023). Poverty alleviation programmes and socio-economic development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Management Research*, 9(2), 120–136.
- Purvis, B., Mao, Y., & Robinson, D. (2019). Three pillars of sustainability: In search of conceptual origins. *Sustainability Science*, 14(3), 681–695.
- Ravanilla, N., & Hicken, A. (2023). Vote buying. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 26, 315–334.
- Salam, M. A., Alege, P. O., & Yusuf, A. (2021). Poverty, inequality, and inclusive growth in Nigeria. *Journal of African Business*, 22(4), 532–550.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Oxford University Press.
- Sohn, C. (2020). Poverty and inequality in developing countries. *Development Policy Review*, 38(S1), O18–O36.
- Stokes, S. C., Dunning, T., Nazareno, M., & Brusco, V. (2013). *Brokers, voters, and clientelism: The puzzle of distributive politics*. Cambridge University Press.
- World Bank. (2022). *Poverty and shared prosperity 2022: Correcting course*. World Bank.