



## **Identity Politics and Voting Pattern in the 2023 General Elections: A Study of Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna State**

By

**Maryam Muhammad Suleiman**

&

**A.A. Abdussalam, Ph.D**

**Department of Political Science, Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna State**

### **Abstract**

This study examined the influence of identity politics on voting patterns during the 2023 general elections in Chikun Local Government Area (LGA) of Kaduna State, Nigeria. Motivated by limited empirical attention to identity-driven electoral behaviour at the grassroots level, the study assessed how identity politics influenced voting patterns, examined the role of political parties in identity-based mobilisation, analysed implications for democratic consolidation, and identified measures for promoting issue-based voting. Anchored in Social Identity Theory, the study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. A structured Likert-scale questionnaire was administered to 382 respondents through simple random sampling across the twelve wards of Chikun LGA, while ten key informants were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews. Findings revealed that religion, rather than ethnicity, was the more dominant and consciously expressed determinant of voting behaviour, with 65% of respondents agreeing that religion shaped their electoral choices. Ethnicity operated more structurally, filtering candidates out at party nomination rather than as a conscious consideration at the point of voting. Identity politics also had a measurable corrosive effect on democratic consolidation, with 83% agreeing that identity-based voting weakens democratic development generally. The study concludes that identity politics in Chikun LGA operates through a two-tier mechanism, with ethnicity as a structural filter at candidate-selection and religion as a conscious consideration at the point of voting. It recommends stricter regulation of identity-based campaigning, transparent candidate screening, programmatic party competition, inter-group dialogue, and accessible mechanisms for post-election accountability.

**Keywords:** Identity Politics, Voting Pattern, Ethnicity, Religion, Democratic Consolidation



## 1.0 Introduction

Elections are a fundamental pillar of democratic governance, giving citizens the chance to select leaders and influence policy. While voting in mature democracies is expected to reflect ideology and competence, electoral behaviour in many plural, developing societies is instead shaped by identity — ethnicity, religion, and region (Ake, 1996). Identity politics, the mobilisation of political interests around shared social characteristics (Heywood, 2021), has become a defining feature of Nigerian political life.

In Africa, identity politics has colonial roots: indirect rule entrenched ethnic and regional divisions (Ekeh, 1975), and Nigeria's First Republic parties reflected regional rather than ideological interests (Sklar, 2004). Since 1999, ethnicity has continued to shape alignments among the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo, and religion has shaped alignments between the Muslim North and Christian South (Suberu, 2001; Osaghae & Suberu, 2005). The 2023 general elections, held amid economic hardship and insecurity, were nonetheless dominated by debates over power rotation, ethnic representation, and religious balancing (Omotola, 2009). Kaduna State's long history of ethno-religious contestation makes it an instructive case, and within it, Chikun LGA stands out as one of only seven LGAs the Labour Party won in the 2023 presidential poll — a result widely read as reflecting religion, minority identity, and youth mobilisation (Isenyo, 2023). This study examines the influence of identity politics on voting patterns in Chikun LGA during the 2023 elections.

### 1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

INEC recorded about 4,335,208 registered and 1,418,046 accredited voters for Kaduna State in the 2023 presidential election. The PDP's Atiku Abubakar won the state (554,360 votes), followed by the APC's Bola Tinubu (399,293) and the Labour Party's Peter Obi (294,494) — an outcome reflecting the growing influence of identity and regional sentiment. Obi won in predominantly Christian Southern Kaduna LGAs, including Chikun, while the PDP dominated central/northern Kaduna and the APC performed strongly in Birnin Gwari and Sanga (Isenyo, 2023).

Chikun's 2023 campaigns reportedly carried strong ethnic and religious undertones. Where voting is driven largely by such affiliations, democratic accountability risks becoming



secondary, weakening institutions and deepening fragmentation (Diamond, 2008). While Nigerian scholarship has examined identity politics nationally and at state level, far less attention has gone to grassroots, local-government dynamics. This study addresses that gap.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

1. How did identity politics influence voting patterns during the 2023 general elections in Chikun LGA?
2. What role did political parties play in identity-based mobilisation during the 2023 elections in Chikun LGA?
3. What are the implications of identity politics for democratic consolidation in Chikun LGA?
4. What measures can reduce the influence of identity politics and promote issue-based voting in Chikun LGA?

## **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The main objective is to examine the influence of identity politics on voting patterns during the 2023 elections in Chikun LGA. Specific objectives are to: assess how identity politics influenced voting patterns; examine the role of political parties in identity-based mobilisation; analyse the implications for democratic consolidation and political cohesion; and identify measures to promote issue-based voting in future elections.

## **1.4 Research Assumptions**

The study assumes that: (i) voters were influenced by identity-based considerations such as ethnicity and religion in the 2023 elections; (ii) political parties actively engaged in strategies reinforcing identity-based mobilisation; and (iii) identity politics negatively affects democratic consolidation by promoting polarisation and weakening cohesion in Chikun LGA.

## **1.5 Literature and Theoretical Framework**

### **Identity Politics, Ethnicity, and Voting Pattern.**

Identity politics refers to political mobilisation motivated by traits such as ethnicity and religion (Oluwole, 2019); Fukuyama (2018) describes it as groups defined by shared characteristics



forming exclusive alliances outside mainstream parties. In Nigeria it organises voters along ethnic, religious, and regional lines, diverting attention from issues such as economy and security (Alabi, Adebayo, & Omotosho, 2023). Ethnicity is a collective identity rooted in shared ancestry, culture, and territory (Atanda, Oluwashina, & Adebola, 2018), and remains central to elite calculations of political office (Babalola, 2020), broadly patterned across Nigeria's six geo-political zones (Babalola, 2019). Voting is the act of formally indicating one's choice of candidate or party (Gerber, Green, & Shachar, 2003), through which individual preferences aggregate into collective decisions on public office (Obani & Odalonu, 2019).

### **Religion and Ethnicity in Identity Politics.**

Religion is a key marker of political identity; politicians deploy religious symbols to court religiously identified voters, and religious leaders shape opinion, producing religious voting blocs (Haynes, 2015; Wald & Calhoun-Brown, 2014). Ethnicity works similarly, fostering coalitions and, at times, ethnic enclaves (Posner, 2005; Kaufmann & Paldam, 2005). Colonial indirect rule embedded ethnic and religious zoning as an organising feature of Nigerian political life (Ekeh, 1975), and post-independence instability, including the 1967–1970 civil war, exposed the destructive potential of politicised ethnicity (Adebanwi, 2018). The 2023 presidential race illustrated this vividly, with the APC's Tinubu (Muslim Yoruba), PDP's Atiku (northern Muslim), and Labour's Obi (south-eastern Christian) each drawing on identity as an electoral asset (Manuwa, 2022). Identity politics has been linked to post-election violence — including the 2011 violence that claimed over 800 lives (Ojo, 2011) — to vote-buying (Adetula, Bello, & Olarinmoye, 2019), and to eroded intergroup trust: only 36% of Nigerians trust people from other ethnic groups, and 58% believe the country has grown more divided (Afrobarometer, 2021).

### **1.6 Empirical Studies and Gaps.**

Oyedele and Adeyemi (2018) found ethnic and religious identities considerably shaped the 2015 presidential vote, though at national level. Adebanwi and Obadare (2013) emphasised identity politics' corrosive effects on Nigerian democracy. Comparative work (Hoffman & Long, 2013; Kramon & Posner, 2016) identifies ethnic identification among the strongest predictors of voting choice, while Lachat (2015) shows party identification conditions how



voters weigh policy against identity cues. This literature is heavily weighted toward national and state-level analysis, leaving a scarcity of grassroots studies and limited exploration of how ethnicity and religion might operate differently at different stages of the electoral process — the gap this study addresses through its focus on Chikun LGA.

## **1.7 Theoretical Framework:**

### **Social Identity Theory.**

The study adopts Social Identity Theory (SIT), which holds that individuals construct identities in relation to social groupings, favouring an in-group over an out-group (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), building on Tajfel's (1970) minimal group paradigm showing that even arbitrary distinctions produce in-group favouritism. Its assumptions include categorisation by ethnicity or religion (Tajfel, 1974), self-esteem drawn from group belonging (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), in-group favouritism (Hogg & Abrams, 1988), intergroup comparison (Tajfel, 1982), and the dynamic, context-dependent nature of identity (Turner, 1987). SIT is not without weaknesses — it understates how individuals navigate overlapping identities and underweights institutional context — but it is directly relevant to Chikun LGA, where overlapping ethnic, religious, and socio-economic identities help explain observed voting patterns, particularly as political activity intensifies when identities are actively activated, as occurred in the religiously charged 2023 elections.

## **1.8 Methodology**

The study adopted Pragmatism as its research philosophy and a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, collecting quantitative and qualitative data concurrently, analysing them separately, and integrating them at interpretation. The target population comprised residents of Chikun LGA (projected population 550,000; National Population Commission, 2022). Applying the Taro Yamane formula at 5% margin of error yielded a minimum sample of 400, of which 382 questionnaires (95.5%) were retrieved and analysed; ten key informants — community and religious leaders, INEC and civil-defence personnel, and elected officials — were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews.

Simple random sampling distributed questionnaires proportionately across Chikun LGA's



twelve wards (Chikun, Gwagwada, Kakau, Kujama, Kunai, Kuriga, Narayi, Nasarawa, Rido, Sabon Tasha, Ungwan Yelwa, and Sabon Gari Nasarawa), while interview participants were purposively selected. Data came from primary sources (questionnaires, interviews) and secondary sources (reports, journals, news media). A five-point Likert scale was used, with quantitative data analysed via descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages) and qualitative data analysed thematically (Brar, Mann, & Saini, 2014; Goundar, 2012; Mbachu, 2011). Chikun LGA straddles Kaduna State's Muslim north and Christian south, making it a genuinely contested space where neither community claims unchallenged dominance (Kaduna State Government, 2020); its indigenous Gbagyi population coexists with settler Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo, and other minorities, and the area has experienced recurrent communal tension, including ethno-religious violence following the 2011 presidential election (Human Rights Watch, 2011; Mustapha, 2007).

### 1.9 Data Presentation and Analysis

Of 400 questionnaires distributed, 382 (95.5%) were retrieved, alongside ten key informant interviews. The sample was 55% female, 45% male; 57% Christian, 43% Muslim; and ethnically dominated by the Gbagyi (35%) and Hausa-Fulani (26%), with the remainder drawn from Adara, Bajju, Yoruba, Igbo, Atyap, and other minorities — broadly reflective of Chikun LGA's demographic character.

#### Influence of Identity Politics on Voting Patterns

**Table 1: Religion played a major role in how voters in Chikun LGA made their electoral choices**

| Response          | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 38        | 10%            |
| Disagree          | 50        | 13%            |
| Undecided         | 46        | 12%            |
| Agree             | 145       | 38%            |



|                |     |      |
|----------------|-----|------|
| Strongly Agree | 103 | 27%  |
| Total          | 382 | 100% |

Source: Field Survey, 2026

With 65% agreeing or strongly agreeing, religion emerged as the dominant identity factor. An INEC staff member rated identity politics' influence on voting at 65–70%, observing that Christian-majority wards favoured the Labour Party while its performance weakened in Muslim-majority areas; another resident-cum-ad-hoc-staff member likewise noted that Muslims tended to vote for Muslim candidates and Christians for Christian candidates rather than on credibility. This aligns with evidence that religion has historically been manipulated by Nigerian political elites for mobilisation (Kukah, 1993), and that the 2023 election, dominated nationally by debate over the APC's Muslim-Muslim ticket, was among the most religiously charged in Nigeria's democratic history (Adibe, 2023; Owonikoko, 2025).

**Table 2: Voters in Chikun LGA voted based on ethnic or religious loyalty rather than candidate competence**

| Response          | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 31        | 8%             |
| Disagree          | 42        | 11%            |
| Undecided         | 38        | 10%            |
| Agree             | 153       | 40%            |
| Strongly Agree    | 118       | 31%            |
| Total             | 382       | 100%           |

Source: Field Survey, 2026

A combined 71% agreed that identity loyalty took precedence over candidate competence — the strongest finding under this question. A religious leader observed that most voters choose candidates from their own church, mosque, or village rather than on merit; yet one civil defence officer pointed to a partial exception — an Igbo candidate elected to the House of



Representatives on the strength of perceived competence despite being non-indigenous. Combined with survey data showing 65% disagreed that ethnicity directly influenced their individual voting decision, the evidence suggests ethnicity operates less as a conscious factor at the point of voting than as a structural filter at party nomination, where non-indigenous candidates in Gbagyi-dominated wards rarely make the ballot. A politician-stakeholder confirmed that historically a candidate needed to be a Chikun indigene, though the Igbo candidate's win signalled the beginning of change — consistent with Nnoli (1978) on ethnicity operating through structural party channels, and Bello (2016) on religion overtaking ethnicity as Kaduna's dominant mobilising identity.

**Table 3: Identity Profile of Candidates for House of Representatives, State Assembly, and Governorship Contests in Chikun LGA (2023)**

| Contest                   | Party | Candidate                                | Religion  | Ethnicity             | Outcome   |
|---------------------------|-------|------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------|
| House of Reps<br>(Gen.)   | LP    | Hon. Ekene Adams<br>Abubakar             | Christian | Hausa-<br>Fulani/Igbo | Winner    |
| House of Reps<br>(Gen.)   | PDP   | Hon. Yakubu Barde                        | Christian | Gbagyi                | Runner-up |
| House of Reps<br>(Gen.)   | APC   | Hon. Caino Cafrá Boaz                    | Christian | Kadara                | —         |
| House of Reps<br>(By-el.) | APC   | Hon. Felix Bagudu                        | Christian | Gbagyi/Adara          | Winner    |
| House of Reps<br>(By-el.) | PDP   | Hon. Princess Esther<br>Ashivelli Dawaki | Christian | Adara                 | Runner-up |
| House of Reps<br>(By-el.) | LP    | Hon. Alexander Adanu                     | Christian | Gbagyi                | —         |
| State Assembly<br>(Gen.)  | PDP   | Late Hon. Madami<br>Garba Madami         | Christian | Adara                 | Winner    |



|                            |     |                           |           |                      |                            |
|----------------------------|-----|---------------------------|-----------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| State Assembly<br>(Gen.)   | APC | Hon. Alexander Adanu      | Christian | Gbagyi               | Runner-up                  |
| State Assembly<br>(By-el.) | APC | Hon. Jesse David          | Christian | Gbagyi               | Winner                     |
| State Assembly<br>(By-el.) | PDP | Hon. Maria Samuel<br>Dogo | Christian | Gbagyi               | Runner-up                  |
| State Assembly<br>(By-el.) | LP  | Hon. Adamu Solomon        | Christian | Gbagyi               | —                          |
| Governorship               | PDP | Isah Mohammed Ashiru      | Muslim    | Hausa-Fulani         | Won Chikun                 |
| Governorship               | APC | Senator Uba Sani          | Muslim    | Hausa-Fulani         | Lost Chikun<br>(won state) |
| Governorship               | LP  | Jonathan Asake            | Christian | Kataf (S.<br>Kaduna) | 3rd in Chikun              |

Source: Field compilation, 2026

A review of candidates fielded for Chikun's constituency seats across three parties, two general elections, and two by-elections provides documentary confirmation of structural filtering. As Table 3 shows, all eleven constituency-level candidates were Christian, and all but two belonged to Chikun's principal indigenous groups (Gbagyi, Adara, or Kadara); no party fielded a Muslim or Hausa-Fulani candidate for a seat contested wholly within Chikun. This pattern held across parties despite their sharply different religious appeals at the presidential level. By contrast, the governorship contest — reflecting Kaduna State's demographic balance rather than Chikun's — saw both leading candidates as Muslim and Hausa-Fulani. This corroborates the observation that minority-group candidates rarely present themselves for constituency seats, confirming that ethnicity in Chikun LGA operates as an effective precondition for candidacy rather than merely an indirect influence on voter choice.

### Role of Political Parties in Identity-Based Mobilisation

**Table 4: Party structures in Nigeria contribute to the reinforcement of identity-based**



## politics

| Response          | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 15        | 4%             |
| Disagree          | 31        | 8%             |
| Undecided         | 68        | 18%            |
| Agree             | 153       | 40%            |
| Strongly Agree    | 115       | 30%            |
| Total             | 382       | 100%           |

Source: Field Survey, 2026

With 70% agreement — alongside 64% agreeing that parties use ethnic and religious appeals — this was among the strongest findings overall. A community leader and Imam who took part in campaign activities described food-supply gifts distributed during rural campaign visits to influence voters, noting that legislative candidates needed little campaigning since they were already indigenous to Chikun. An INEC staff member noted such appeals are rarely stated outright, relying on coded language emphasising shared local origin. A former councillor argued that if parties rigorously vetted candidates for competence rather than identity fit, identity-based mobilisation would be unnecessary — consistent with the view that Nigerian parties function less as ideological institutions than as vehicles for identity groups (Amuwo, Agbaje, Suberu, & Herault, 1998; Ake, 1996).

## Implications for Democratic Consolidation

**Table 5: Voting based on ethnicity or religion weakens democratic development in Nigeria**

| Response          | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 8         | 2%             |
| Disagree          | 31        | 8%             |



|                |     |      |
|----------------|-----|------|
| Undecided      | 27  | 7%   |
| Agree          | 133 | 35%  |
| Strongly Agree | 183 | 48%  |
| Total          | 382 | 100% |

Source: Field Survey, 2026

This recorded the highest agreement rate (83%) in the study, alongside 73% agreeing identity politics has increased division and 75% agreeing it has reduced intergroup trust. A former councillor described Chikun as "a melting pot that refuses to melt," with residents clustering along identity lines; a resident noted that in Millennium City, Kujama ward, the express road effectively divides a Muslim population on one side from a Christian population on the other, arguing that voters now look for whom they can identify with rather than for competence — consistent with the argument that where electoral competition maps onto ethnic or religious lines, it hardens communal divisions, leaving democracy formally intact but substantively weaker (Horowitz, 1985; Mamdani, 1996). Notably, only 59% agreed that identity-based voting is itself undemocratic, with 23% disagreeing and 18% undecided, suggesting a genuinely held belief that a same-identity candidate is more likely to represent one's interests absent credible programmatic alternatives.

### Measures to Reduce Identity Politics and Promote Issue-Based Voting

**Table 6: Strengthening political accountability will reduce ethnic and religious voting patterns**

| Response          | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 23        | 6%             |
| Disagree          | 35        | 9%             |
| Undecided         | 76        | 20%            |
| Agree             | 114       | 30%            |



|                |     |      |
|----------------|-----|------|
| Strongly Agree | 134 | 35%  |
| Total          | 382 | 100% |

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Sixty-five percent agreed that strengthening political accountability would reduce identity-based voting, and 70% supported regulating parties to discourage identity-based campaigning — the two most strongly supported measures. By contrast, electoral reform (55%, 23% undecided) and voter education (50%, 27% undecided, the highest undecided rate in the study) attracted more scepticism, which interview data attributed to disappointment with unimplemented reforms and voter-education campaigns that fail to reach those who most need them.

### 1.9 Testing of Research Assumptions

**Assumption One** (identity-based influence on voters) is strongly supported: 65% agreed religion shaped their choices, and while a majority disagreed that ethnicity directly influenced their individual decision, this reflects structural filtering at nomination rather than an absence of ethnic influence.

**Assumption Two** (party reinforcement of identity mobilisation) is strongly supported: 70% agreed party structures reinforce identity politics, and interviews confirmed parties built strategies around identity from candidate selection through ward-level outreach.

**Assumption Three** (negative effect on democratic consolidation) is strongly supported: 83% agreed identity-based voting weakens democratic development, 73% reported deepened division, and 75% reported reduced intergroup trust, with divisions visible in settlement patterns and everyday community interaction.

### 1.10 Summary of Major Findings

- Religion, not ethnicity, was the more consciously expressed driver of voting behaviour in Chikun LGA in 2023 (65% agreement); ethnicity operated more structurally, through candidate selection, than as a conscious factor at the point of voting.
- Political parties were active participants in identity politics: 70% identified party



structures as a key driver, and 64% believed parties deliberately used ethnic and religious appeals, typically through coded language and gift-giving.

- Identity politics had a measurable corrosive effect on democratic consolidation: 73% reported deepened division, 75% reported reduced intergroup trust, and 83% — the highest figure in the study — agreed identity-based voting weakens democratic development.
- Only 59% viewed identity-based voting as inherently undemocratic, indicating a meaningful share of the electorate regards a shared-identity candidate as a rational proxy for shared interest absent credible programmatic alternatives.
- Strengthening political accountability (65%) and regulating political parties (70%) received the strongest support as remedial measures, while electoral reform (55%) and voter education (50%) met greater scepticism rooted in past disappointment.

### 1.11 Conclusion

Chikun LGA is a microcosm of the Nigerian democratic condition: ethnically and religiously diverse, close to the seat of state power, and shaped by an electorate whose 2023 choices confirm established scholarship on identity-driven voting while revealing something more precise about how it operates. Identity politics in Chikun LGA does not function as a single, undifferentiated force; ethnicity and religion work at different stages of the electoral process. Ethnicity performs most of its work before the voter reaches the polling unit, through nomination processes favouring the dominant Gbagyi group; religion enters with the voter, actively debated and consciously weighed, amplified in 2023 by the national controversy over the APC's Muslim-Muslim ticket. The study concludes that identity politics in Chikun LGA operates through a two-tier mechanism: ethnicity as a structural filter at candidate-selection, and religion as a conscious consideration at the point of voting.

This distinction matters for how identity-driven voting might be addressed. That a meaningful share of voters do not regard identity-based voting as undemocratic, but as a reasonable response to a political environment offering no credible programmatic alternative, suggests voter-education campaigns premised on ignorance are unlikely to succeed alone. Democracy in Chikun LGA is not failing for want of understanding — what is required is a shift in the



underlying incentive structure, so that parties compete on programme and performance and voters have accessible means of holding representatives to account.

### 1.12 Recommendations

**Promote inclusive, transparent candidate selection.** As Table 3 shows, every 2023 constituency candidate in Chikun was Christian and overwhelmingly Gbagyi, Adara, or Kadara. INEC should enforce Electoral Act provisions on transparent party primaries, and parties should review candidate-selection criteria to open candidacy across ethnic lines rather than allowing informal ward-level gate-keeping.

**Promote programmatic rather than identity-based party politics.** INEC should require candidates to submit a written manifesto for local government accreditation; broadcasters should be held accountable for substantive policy coverage; and the Kaduna State Independent Electoral Commission should strengthen oversight of campaign conduct.

**Rebuild inter-group trust.** The Chikun Local Government Council, with peacebuilding agencies, should establish sustained inter-group dialogue bringing together community, religious, and traditional leaders, youth, and women around shared development priorities, decoupled from the electoral cycle.

**Redesign voter education.** INEC and civil society should redesign voter-education programmes to engage honestly with the representation logic behind identity voting, delivered through trusted local leaders in local languages at the ward level.

**Establish accessible post-election accountability mechanisms.** The Council, supported by INEC and civil society, should develop accessible platforms — radio, town halls, social media — for tracking representatives' performance, with Ward Development Committees empowered as formal accountability bodies.

### 1.13 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge on identity politics and voting behaviour in Nigeria in two ways. First, it demonstrates that ethnicity and religion influence electoral behaviour through different mechanisms: ethnicity exerts influence primarily at candidate emergence through party nomination, while religion operates directly at the point of voting — a two-tier



distinction, corroborated by documentary candidate-composition evidence, offering an analytical framework potentially useful for other multi-ethnic, multi-religious LGAs in Northern Nigeria. Second, the study establishes that identity-based voting is often a rational, deliberate choice rather than a consequence of inadequate awareness; although most respondents acknowledged that identity politics weakens democratic development, many also perceived same-identity candidates as better able to represent their interests, suggesting that addressing identity politics requires stronger political accountability and credible, issue-based party competition, not voter education alone.

## References

- Abdullahi, A., Mubarak, S. J., & Lawal, A. A. (2023). Identity politics and its implication on the Nigerian electoral process. *African Journal of Politics and Administrative Studies*, 16(1).
- Adebanwi, W. (2017). *Nation as grand narrative: The Nigerian press and the politics of meaning*. University of Rochester Press.
- Adebanwi, W. (2018). Making sense of the Nigerian civil war. *African Affairs*, 117(468), 310–325.
- Adebanwi, W., & Obadare, E. (2013). When ethnic identity and democracy collide: Lessons from Nigeria's Fourth Republic. *Ethnopolitics*, 12(4), 379–397.
- Adetula, V., Bello, A., & Olarinmoye, O. (2019). Identity politics in Nigeria: Implications for democratic governance. In *Identity politics and political conflicts in Africa*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Adewale, A. A. (2018). Ethnic and religious identity politics in Nigeria: Implications on democratic stability. *International Journal of Political Science and Development*, 6(2), 40–50.
- Adibe, J. (2023). The 2023 Nigerian elections and the crisis of identity politics. *African Affairs*, 122(488), 1–18.
- Afrobarometer. (2021). Afrobarometer Round 8 survey results: Nigeria. Afrobarometer Network.



- Ake, C. (1996). *Democracy and development in Africa*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Alabi, T., Adebayo, R., & Omotosho, M. (2023). Identity politics and the 2023 general elections in Nigeria: Implications for democratic governance. *Journal of African Political Economy and Development*, 8(1), 45–67.
- Amuwo, K., Agbaje, A., Suberu, R., & Herault, G. (Eds.). (1998). *Federalism and political restructuring in Nigeria*. Spectrum Books / IFRA.
- Atanda, A. I., Oluwashina, M. A., & Adebola, R. B. (2018). Ethnicity and election outcomes in Nigeria: Interrogating the 2015 presidential election. *Journal of African Elections*, 17(6).
- Babalola, D. (2019). *The political economy of federalism in Nigeria*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Babalola, D. (2020). Ethno-religious voting in Nigeria: Interrogating voting pattern in the 2019 presidential election. *Research Space*.
- Bello, A. (2016). Religious identity and electoral behaviour in Kaduna State: An analysis of Christian-Muslim voting patterns. *Nigerian Journal of Social Sciences*, 13(2), 88–106.
- Brar, B. S., Mann, B. J. S., & Saini, A. S. (Eds.). (2014). *Research methodology: Quantitative and qualitative approaches*. Kalyani Publishers.
- Diamond, L. (2008). *The spirit of democracy: The struggle to build free societies throughout the world*. Henry Holt and Company.
- Ekeh, P. P. (1975). Colonialism and the two publics in Africa: A theoretical statement. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 17(1), 91–112.
- Fukuyama, F. (2018). *Identity: The demand for dignity and the politics of resentment*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Gerber, A., Green, D., & Shachar, R. (2003). Voting may be habit-forming: Evidence from a randomized field experiment. *American Journal of Political Science*, 47(3), 540–550.
- Goundar, S. (2012). *Research methodology and research methods*. Victoria University of Wellington.
- Guardado, J., & Wantchekon, L. (2017). Do electoral handouts affect voting behaviour? *Afrobarometer Working Paper*.



- Haynes, J. (2015). Religion and politics: The state of the field. In *The international studies encyclopedia* (pp. 4530–4554). John Wiley & Sons.
- Heywood, A. (2013). *Politics* (4th ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Heywood, A. (2021). *Political ideologies: An introduction* (7th ed.). Red Globe Press.
- Hoffman, B. D., & Long, J. D. (2013). Parties, ethnicity, and voting in African elections. *Comparative Politics*, 45(2), 127–146.
- Hogg, M. A., & Abrams, D. (1988). *Social identifications: A social psychology of intergroup relations and group processes*. Routledge.
- Hogg, M. A., & Williams, K. D. (2000). From I to we: Social identity and the collective self. *Group Dynamics*, 4(1), 81–97.
- Horowitz, D. L. (1985). *Ethnic groups in conflict*. University of California Press.
- Human Rights Watch. (2011). 'They do not own this place': Government discrimination against 'non-indigenes' in Nigeria. Human Rights Watch.
- Isenyo, G. (2023, March 1). Kaduna election results: How each LGA voted in presidential poll. *Punch Newspapers*.
- Kaduna State Government. (2020). *Local government profile: Chikun Local Government Area*. Ministry of Local Government Affairs.
- Kaufmann, D., & Paldam, M. (2005). The economics of ethnicity [Special issue]. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 57(3), 267–348.
- Kramon, E., & Posner, D. N. (2016). Ethnicity and the swing vote in Africa's emerging democracies: Evidence from Kenya. *British Journal of Political Science*.
- Kukah, M. H. (1993). *Religion, politics and power in Northern Nigeria*. Spectrum Books.
- Lachat, R. (2015). The role of party identification in spatial models of voting choice. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 3(3), 641–658.
- Manuwa, T. (2022). The pivotal influence of identity politics in shaping electoral outcomes in Nigeria. *Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies*, 5(3).



- Mamdani, M. (1996). *Citizen and subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism*. Princeton University Press.
- Mbachu, H. I. (2011). *Research methods in political science and public administration*. ABIC Books.
- Mustapha, A. R. (2007). Institutionalising ethnic representation: How effective is the federal character principle in Nigeria? CRISE Working Paper, 43.
- National Population Commission. (2022). *Population projection for Nigeria, 2006–2030*. Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- Nnoli, O. (1978). *Ethnic politics in Nigeria*. Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- Obani, E. F., & Odalonu, B. H. (2019). Election and voting behaviour in Nigeria. *South-East COEASU Journal of Teacher Education*, 5(1), 122–131.
- Obi-Ani, N., Obi-Ani, P., & Isiani, M. (2016). The mistake of 1914: 100 years after? *Nsukka Journal of the Humanities*, 24(2), 27–35.
- Ojo, E. O. (2011). Elections: An exploration of theoretical postulations. *Journal of African Elections*, 8(1), 9–32.
- Oladiran, A. (2013). Ethnic politics and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 3(12), 697–704.
- Oluwole, O. (2019). The impact of identity politics on the Nigerian electoral process: A case study of the 2019 general elections. *Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 2(1), 1–10.
- Omotola, J. S. (2009). Nigerian parties and political ideology. *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, 1(3), 612–634.
- Osaghae, E. E., & Suberu, R. T. (2005). *A history of identities, violence, and stability in Nigeria*. CRISE Working Paper, 6.
- Owonikoko, S. B. (2025). Muslim–Muslim ticket, Christian–Muslim relations and peacebuilding and development in Nigeria: A reflection on Nigeria's 2023 presidential elections. *Political Theology*.



- Oyedele, R. A., & Adeyemi, S. L. (2018). Social identity theory and electoral behaviour in Nigeria: The role of identity politics in the 2015 presidential election. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 12(2), 20–30.
- Posner, D. N. (2005). *Institutions and ethnic politics in Africa*. Cambridge University Press.
- Raheem, W. M., Oyeleye, O. I., Adeniji, M. A., & Aladekoyi, O. C. (2014). Regional imbalances and inequalities in Nigeria: Causes, consequences and remedies. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(18), 163–174.
- Sherif, M. (1966). *Group conflict and co-operation: Their social psychology*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Sklar, R. L. (2004). *Nigerian political parties: Power in an emergent African nation*. Africa World Press.
- Suberu, R. T. (2001). *Federalism and ethnic conflict in Nigeria*. United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Tajfel, H. (1970). Experiments in intergroup discrimination. *Scientific American*, 223, 96–102.
- Tajfel, H. (1974). Social identity and intergroup behaviour. *Social Science Information*, 13(2), 65–93.
- Tajfel, H. (1982). Social psychology of intergroup relations. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 33, 1–39.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Brooks/Cole.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In *Psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 7–24). Nelson-Hall.
- Toye, M. (2023). The pivotal influence of identity politics in shaping electoral outcomes in Nigeria. *Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies*, 6(4), 369–382.
- Turner, J. C. (1987). A self-categorization theory. In *Social identity theory: A European perspective* (pp. 42–67). Cambridge University Press.



Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. S. (1987).  
Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory. Basil Blackwell.

Wald, K. D., & Calhoun-Brown, A. (2014). Religion and politics. In *The Oxford handbook of political behavior* (pp. 517–536). Oxford University Press.

Wikipedia. (2024). Chikun Local Government Area. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chikun>