

Intersectionality and Political Participation: How Gender, Ethnicity, and Disability Shape Voter Behavior in Nigeria.

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Abstract

Political participation is a cornerstone of democracy; however, social identities such as gender, ethnicity, and disability intersect to shape individuals' experiences in electoral processes. This study investigates how these intersecting identities influence voter behavior within Nigeria's electoral system, a nation characterized by ethnic diversity, gender disparities, and challenges in disability inclusion. The research examines how gender, ethnicity, and disability interact to affect voter turnout, political preferences, and electoral participation. Employing a quantitative approach, the study integrates survey data collected independently and analyzed before merging findings, ensuring that statistical trends and personal experiences provide a comprehensive perspective. The study population comprises women, particularly from marginalized ethnic backgrounds; ethnic minorities from smaller, historically underrepresented groups; and persons with disabilities (PWDs) facing accessibility barriers in elections. A sample of 300 registered voters (50 per each of Nigeria's six geopolitical zones) was randomly selected from JONAPWD records using purposive sampling to ensure diverse representation across gender, ethnicity, and disability categories. Data were gathered through structured questionnaires administered via online Google Forms and paper-based surveys for respondents with limited digital access, capturing voter turnout, political preferences, and barriers to participation. Descriptive statistics were used to identify patterns in voter behavior, while inferential statistics, specifically logistic regression, tested the relationships between gender, ethnicity, disability, and voter participation, with analyses conducted using SPSS. Findings reveal that intersectionality significantly shapes political engagement, with women from ethnic minority groups and PWDs facing compounded obstacles such as discrimination, socio-economic constraints, inadequate electoral accommodations, logistical mobility challenges, and poor security arrangements. Cultural norms and institutional barriers further disenfranchise these groups, resulting in lower voter turnout and limited political influence. The study concludes that fostering an inclusive democracy in Nigeria necessitates targeted electoral reforms, enhanced accessibility for PWDs, and policies addressing the unique challenges of marginalized groups.

Keywords: Intersectionality, Political Participation, Gender, Ethnicity, Voter Behaviour.

Introduction

Political participation is a cornerstone of democratic governance, ensuring that citizens influence decision-making processes. However, access to political participation is not uniform across populations; it is shaped by various intersecting identities, including gender, ethnicity, and disability. The concept of intersectionality, introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s, provides a framework for understanding how these multiple identities interact to produce unique experiences of inclusion or marginalization in political life. This study explores how intersectionality influences voter behavior in Nigeria, situating the discussion within a broader global and African context.

Internationally, the right to political participation is enshrined in key human rights frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (1966), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2006). These instruments emphasize that all individuals, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or disability status, should have equal access to voting, political office, and decision-making spaces. Scholarly work on intersectionality has demonstrated that marginalized groups face compounded barriers to political participation. For instance, research in the United States and Europe has shown that women of color experience different political challenges compared to white women or men of color due to overlapping discrimination. Similarly, persons with disabilities (PWDs) worldwide encounter structural obstacles such as inaccessible polling stations, discriminatory laws, and stigma, which limit their political engagement.

In the Global South, particularly in Latin America and Asia, studies have highlighted how indigenous communities, women, and PWDs are underrepresented in electoral processes. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 10 (Reducing Inequality) and Goal 16 (Promoting Inclusive Institutions),

emphasize the need for inclusive political systems. Despite these international efforts, intersectional discrimination remains a pervasive challenge.

In Africa, political participation has historically been shaped by colonial legacies, ethnic divisions, and gendered power structures. Women, ethnic minorities, and PWDs have often been excluded from mainstream political processes due to socio-cultural norms, economic barriers, and institutionalized discrimination. The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) (2003) recognize the importance of inclusive political participation. However, many African countries still struggle with ensuring full political inclusion for marginalized groups. Gender remains a significant factor influencing voter behavior. Despite progress in women's political representation in countries like Rwanda and South Africa, women across Africa face challenges such as gender-based violence in politics, economic dependence, and patriarchal norms that discourage political engagement. Ethnicity also plays a crucial role, with ethnic identity often determining political allegiances, voting patterns, and access to power. For PWDs, the barriers to participation include inaccessible electoral processes, lack of representation, and societal discrimination. Nigeria's political landscape is deeply influenced by gender, ethnicity, and disability, reflecting broader patterns of exclusion and marginalization. Historically, voting rights in Nigeria have evolved alongside the country's socio-political development.

Political participation is seen as a cornerstone of democracy, yet significant disparities persist in electoral engagement across different social groups in Nigeria. While gender, ethnicity, and disability independently influence voter behavior, their intersection creates compounded disadvantages that further marginalize certain populations. Women, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) often face systemic barriers such as discrimination, socio-economic constraints, mobility challenges, and institutional exclusion. Despite

Nigeria's legal framework promoting inclusive electoral participation, the lived experiences of these groups indicate persistent inequalities. The lack of comprehensive studies exploring how these intersecting identities shape voter behavior creates a gap in both academic literature and policy discussions. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate how gender, ethnicity, and disability intersect to affect voter turnout, political preferences, and overall electoral participation in Nigeria.

The objectives derived for the sake of this study are as follows:

To examine how gender, ethnicity, and disability interact to influence voter behavior in Nigeria, to identify and analyze the structural and socio-economic barriers limiting political participation among women, ethnic minorities, and PWDs, to assess the role of cultural and institutional factors in shaping electoral engagement among marginalized groups and to recommend policy strategies for promoting inclusive democracy and enhancing electoral participation of underrepresented populations.

These research questions derived includes:

How does the intersection of gender, ethnicity, and disability influence voter turnout in Nigeria, What are the key barriers to political participation faced by women, ethnic minorities, and PWDs in Nigeria, how do institutional, socio-economic, and cultural factors shape the electoral choices of marginalized groups and what policy measures can enhance inclusive political participation for these groups?

This study focuses on voter behavior in Nigeria, with particular attention to the impact of gender, ethnicity, and disability on political participation. The research covers the six geopolitical zones to ensure a broad representation of Nigeria's diverse socio-political landscape. It includes both urban and rural communities to capture variations in accessibility and political engagement. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining survey data from registered voters with qualitative interviews of women, ethnic minorities, and

PWDs. While the research primarily examines electoral participation, it also explores related aspects such as political preferences and voter suppression.

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it contributes to the growing discourse on intersectionality in African politics by highlighting how overlapping identities shape political experiences. Second, it provides empirical evidence to inform policymakers, electoral bodies, and civil society organizations on the challenges faced by marginalized groups in Nigeria's democratic process. Third, the study aligns with global efforts to promote inclusive governance and electoral reforms, particularly in developing democracies. Lastly, the findings can serve as a foundation for advocacy efforts aimed at increasing accessibility, representation, and equity in Nigeria's political landscape.

Thematic Review of Related Literature

The concept of intersectionality, introduced by Crenshaw (1989), highlights how multiple social identities such as gender, ethnicity, and disability interact to create unique experiences of discrimination or privilege. In political science, intersectionality provides a framework for understanding the barriers that marginalized groups face in democratic processes (Hancock, 2007). Studies in African and global contexts indicate that individuals who belong to more than one disadvantaged group experience compounded obstacles in electoral participation (Lowe & Balarabe, 2020). However, gender remains a critical factor in political participation worldwide. In Nigeria, studies indicate that women's voter turnout is lower than that of men due to socio-cultural restrictions, economic disparities, and security concerns (Afolabi, 2019). Patriarchal norms often limit women's access to political engagement, reinforcing gender-based exclusion (Ogbuagu & Enwere, 2021). However, women's participation has seen incremental improvements through advocacy and affirmative action policies (Omoniyi, 2022). In the same vein, Nigeria's electoral landscape is deeply influenced by ethnic affiliations, often shaping voter preferences and political party alignments (Suberu, 2001). Ethnic politics has historically led to

clientelism, where voters prioritize ethnic solidarity over policy considerations (Mustapha, 2014). Research suggests that ethnic minorities face systematic marginalization in political representation and electoral processes, contributing to lower engagement in formal political structures (Ezeibe, 2016).

In addition, persons with disabilities (PWDs) face significant barriers to electoral participation due to inaccessible polling units, mobility challenges, and inadequate voter education (Adetula & Ajayi, 2020). The Nigerian legal framework, including the Disability Act (2019), mandates inclusivity, but implementation remains weak (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2021). Studies reveal that many PWDs encounter discrimination and logistical hurdles that discourage active engagement in elections (Obaniyi, 2023). Beyond identity-based discrimination, socio-economic status significantly affects political participation. Unemployment, financial constraints, and educational disparities contribute to lower voter turnout among women, ethnic minorities, and PWDs (Omotosho, 2022). Studies in Nigeria show that individuals with lower socio-economic status often lack the resources to engage in political activities, exacerbating voter apathy and disillusionment (Adebayo, 2018). Nigeria's electoral system poses challenges for marginalized groups through voter suppression tactics, security threats, and inadequate electoral reforms (Jega, 2019). Institutional weaknesses, such as ineffective voter registration processes and lack of accessible voting materials, disproportionately affect vulnerable populations (Umar, 2021). Research highlights the need for stronger policies to ensure equitable participation across all demographics (Oladapo, 2023).

Methodology

The study adopts quantitative survey data, which involves collecting and analyzing both independently before integrating findings. This approach ensures that statistical trends and personal experiences complement each other, offering a well-rounded perspective. The research focuses on three key demographic

groups in Nigeria: Women i.e especially those from marginalized ethnic backgrounds, ethnic minorities i.e Individuals from smaller ethnic groups with historically lower political representation and persons with Disabilities (PWDs) – Individuals facing accessibility challenges in elections.

A total number of 300 registered voters (50 per geopolitical zone) were selected at random for the purpose of this research from the record of Joint Association of persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD) nationwide. A purposive sampling technique was used to select marginalized individuals of diverse representatives from different ethnic groups, genders and disability categories across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. It was also used to select marginalized individuals. A structured questionnaire was administered to registered voters across Nigeria which includes voters' turnout (past elections, likelihood of future voting), political preferences (party affiliation, candidate selection criteria) and their barriers to participation (security concerns, accessibility issues, socio-cultural restrictions). The questionnaire is divided into 4 sections, each section represents the research questions and a 4 Likert scale was used to administer the questions. Data collection tool used includes online and face-to-face surveys using google forms and paper-based questionnaires for respondents with limited digital access.

Descriptive Statistics (Frequency distributions and cross-tabulations) was used to examine patterns in voter behavior and Inferential Statistics (Logistic regression) was used to test the relationship between gender, ethnicity, disability, and voter participation. SPSS was used for statistical analysis.

Results

Table 1 showing Gender, ethnicity, and disability significantly influence voter turnout in Nigeria

North-West (50 respondents)	North-East (50 respondents)	North-Central (50 respondents)	South-West (50 respondents)	South-East (50 respondents)	South-South (50 respondents)	Total Responses (300)
Agree:35 (70%), Disagree:10 (20%), Neutral:5 (10%)	Agree:40 (80%), Disagree:5 (10%), Neutral:5 (10%)	Agree:30 (60%), Disagree:15 (30%), Neutral:5 (10%)	Agree:25 (50%), Disagree:15 (30%), Neutral:10 (20%)	Agree:45 (90%), Disagree:3 (6%), Neutral:2 (4%)	Agree:32 (64%), Disagree:12 (24%), Neutral:6 (12%)	Agree:207 (69%), Disagree:60 (20%), Neutral:33 (11%)

North-East and South-East have the highest agreement rates, while South-West has lower agreement.

Table 2 showing Women, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) face more challenges in voting than other groups

North-West (50 respondents)	North-East (50 respondents)	North-Central (50 respondents)	South-West (50 respondents)	South-East (50 respondents)	South-South (50 respondents)	Total Responses (300)
Agree:40 (80%), Disagree:5 (10%), Neutral:5 (10%)	Agree:42 (84%), Disagree:3 (6%), Neutral:5 (10%)	Agree:38 (76%), Disagree:7 (14%), Neutral:5 (10%)	Agree:30 (60%), Disagree:15 (30%), Neutral:5 (10%)	Agree:46 (92%), Disagree:2 (4%), Neutral:2 (4%)	Agree:36 (72%), Disagree:10 (20%), Neutral:4 (8%)	Agree:232 (77%), Disagree:42 (14%), Neutral:26 (9%)

Highest agreement rates in South-East and North-East, reflecting awareness of challenges.

Table 3 showing the intersection of gender, ethnicity, and disability discourages political participation in Nigerian elections.

North-West (50 respondents)	North-East (50 respondents)	North-Central (50 respondents)	South-West (50 respondents)	South-East (50 respondents)	South-South (50 respondents)	Total Responses (300)
Agree:33 (66%), Disagree:12 (24%), Neutral:5 (10%)	Agree:38 (76%), Disagree:8 (16%), Neutral:4 (8%)	Agree:28 (56%), Disagree:15 (30%), Neutral:7 (14%)	Agree:27 (54%), Disagree:15 (30%), Neutral:8 (16%)	Agree:44 (88%), Disagree:4 (8%), Neutral:2 (4%)	Agree:31 (62%), Disagree:13 (26%), Neutral:6 (12%)	Agree:207 (69%), Disagree:67 (22%), Neutral:32 (9%)

South-East and North-East show strong agreement, indicating a significant discouragement effect.

Table 4 showing government policies have adequately addressed the unique voting challenges of marginalized groups

North-West (50 respondents)	North-East (50 respondents)	North-Central (50 respondents)	South-West (50 respondents)	South-East (50 respondents)	South-South (50 respondents)	Total Responses (300)
Agree:15 (30%), Disagree:25 (50%), Neutral:10 (20%)	Agree:10 (20%), Disagree:30 (60%), Neutral:10 (20%)	Agree:18 (36%), Disagree:20 (40%), Neutral:12 (24%)	Agree:12 (24%), Disagree:25 (50%), Neutral:13 (26%)	Agree:5 (10%), Disagree:35 (70%), Neutral:10 (20%)	Agree:7 (14%), Disagree:30 (60%), Neutral:13 (26%)	Agree:67 (22%), Disagree:165 (55%), Neutral:68 (23%)

Most regions show high disagreement, indicating a perceived lack of policy effectiveness.

Table 5 showing security concerns (e.g., electoral violence, intimidation) prevent marginalized groups from voting

North-West (50 respondents)	North-East (50 respondents)	North-Central (50 respondents)	South-West (50 respondents)	South-East (50 respondents)	South-South (50 respondents)	Total Responses (300)
Agree:38 (76%), Disagree:8 (16%), Neutral:4 (8%)	Agree:42 (84%), Disagree:6 (12%), Neutral:2 (4%)	Agree: 34 (68%), Disagree: 12 (24%), Neutral: 4 (8%)	Agree:28 (56%), Disagree:16 (32%), Neutral:6 (12%)	Agree:40 (80%), Disagree:8 (16%), Neutral:2 (4%)	Agree:35 (70%), Disagree:10 (20%), Neutral:5 (10%)	Agree: 217 (72%), Disagree:60 (20%), Neutral:23 (8%)

Security is a major concern across all regions, particularly in North-East and South-East.

Table 6 showing limited access to voter registration centers as it disproportionately affects PWDs and ethnic minorities.

North-West (50 respondents)	North-East (50 respondents)	North-Central (50 respondents)	South-West (50 respondents)	South-East (50 respondents)	South-South (50 respondents)	Total Responses (300)
Agree:30 (60%), Disagree:15 (30%), Neutral:5 (10%)	Agree:38 (76%), Disagree:7 (14%), Neutral:5 (10%)	Agree:35 (70%), Disagree:10 (20%), Neutral:5 (10%)	Agree:32 (64%), Disagree:13 (26%), Neutral:5 (10%)	Agree:41 (82%), Disagree:7 (14%), Neutral:2 (4%)	Agree:30 (60%), Disagree:12 (24%), Neutral:8 (16%)	Agree:30 (60%), Disagree:15 (30%), Neutral:5 (10%)

Limited access is a concern, particularly in South-East and North-East regions.

Table 7 showing how Socio-cultural norms discourage women from actively participating in elections.

North-West (50 respondents)	North-East (50 respondents)	North-Central (50 respondents)	South-West (50 respondents)	South-East (50 respondents)	South-South (50 respondents)	Total Responses (300)
Agree:35 (70%), Disagree:10 (20%), Neutral:5 (10%)	Agree:40 (80%), Disagree:5 (10%), Neutral:5 (10%)	Agree:33 (66%), Disagree:12 (24%), Neutral:5 (10%)	Agree:30 (60%), Disagree:10 (20%), Neutral:10 (20%)	Agree:42 (84%), Disagree:4 (8%), Neutral:4 (8%)	Agree:38 (76%), Disagree:8 (16%), Neutral:4 (8%)	Agree:220 (73%), Disagree:49 (16%), Neutral:33 (11%)

Strongest agreement in South-East and North-East, showing cultural barriers to women's participation.

Table 8 showing as persons with disabilities lack adequate electoral accommodations (e.g., ramps, braille ballots, sign language interpreters).

North-West (50 respondents)	North-East (50 respondents)	North-Central (50 respondents)	South-West (50 respondents)	South-East (50 respondents)	South-South (50 respondents)	Total Responses (300)
Agree:40 (80%), Disagree:5 (10%), Neutral:5 (10%)	Agree:42 (84%), Disagree:3 (6%), Neutral:5 (10%)	Agree:38 (76%), Disagree:7 (14%), Neutral:5 (10%)	Agree:33 (66%), Disagree:12 (24%), Neutral:5 (10%)	Agree:45 (90%), Disagree:3 (6%), Neutral:2 (4%)	Agree:41 (82%), Disagree:5 (10%), Neutral:4 (8%)	Agree: 239 (80%), Disagree:35 (12%), Neutral:26 (8%)

PWD accessibility issues are most pronounced in South-East and North-East.

Table 9 showing as Economic hardship makes it difficult for marginalized groups to participate in elections

North-West (50 respondents)	North- East (50 responden ts)	North- Central (50 responden ts)	South- West (50 responden ts)	South- East (50 responden ts)	South- South (50 responde nts)	Total Responses (300)
Agree:43 (86%), Disagree:5 (10%), Neutral:2 (4%)	Agree:45 (90%), Disagree:3 (6%), Neutral:2 (4%)	Agree:37 (74%), Disagree:10 (20%), Neutral:3 (6%)	Agree:35 (70%), Disagree:10 (20%), Neutral:5 (10%)	Agree:47 (94%), Disagree:2 (4%), Neutral:1 (2%)	Agree:40 (80%), Disagree:7 (14%), Neutral:3 (6%)	Agree:247 (82%), Disagree:37 (12%), Neutral:16 (6%)

Economic hardship affects marginalized groups in all regions, especially South-East and North-East.

Table 10 showing as Ethnic and religious affiliations play a major role in shaping voter preferences in Nigeria

North-West (50 respondents)	North- East (50 responden ts)	North- Central (50 responden ts)	South- West (50 responden ts)	South- East (50 responde nts)	South-South (50 respondents)	Total Responses (300)
Agree:41 (82%), Disagree:7 (14%), Neutral:2 (4%)	Agree:40 (80%), Disagree:8 (16%), Neutral:2 (4%)	Agree:35 (70%), Disagree:12 (24%), Neutral:3 (6%)	Agree:30 (60%), Disagree:15 (30%), Neutral:5 (10%)	Agree:44 (88%), Disagree:4 (8%), Neutral:2 (4%)	Agree:36 (72%), Disagree:10 (20%), Neutral:4 (8%)	Agree:226 (75%), Disagree:56 (19%), Neutral:16 (6%)

Ethnic and religious factors are important, especially in the North-West and South-East.

Table 11 showing as Political parties do not provide enough opportunities for women, ethnic minorities, and PWDs to contest in elections.

North-West (50 respondents)	North-East (50 respondents)	North-Central (50 respondents)	South-West (50 respondents)	South-East (50 respondents)	South-South (50 respondents)	Total Responses (300)
Agree:36 (72%), Disagree:8 (16%), Neutral:6 (12%)	Agree:40 (80%), Disagree:5 (10%), Neutral:5 (10%)	Agree:32 (64%), Disagree:12 (24%), Neutral:6 (12%)	Agree:28 (56%), Disagree:15 (30%), Neutral:7 (14%)	Agree:45 (90%), Disagree:3 (6%), Neutral:2 (4%)	Agree:37 (74%), Disagree:9 (18%), Neutral:4 (8%)	Agree:218 (73%), Disagree:52 (17%), Neutral:30 (10%)

Political parties fail to offer opportunities, particularly for women in South-East and South-West.

Findings and Discussions

Survey data from 300 respondents across the six zones (North-West, North-East, North-Central, South-West, South-East, South-South) reveals challenges for marginalized groups in elections. Key findings:

Voting Challenges: 77% (232/300) agree women, ethnic minorities, and PWDs face greater voting obstacles, with South-East (92%) and North-East (84%) showing the strongest consensus, and South-West (60%) the least. The 77% agreement rate signals a widespread recognition that marginalized groups encounter disproportionate obstacles. The South-East (92%) and North-East (84%) stand out with near-unanimous consensus, possibly reflecting heightened local experiences of exclusion or awareness driven by historical or ongoing socio-political tensions. In contrast, the South-West's lower agreement (60%) suggests either less severe challenges or differing regional priorities, perhaps tied to its relatively urbanized and politically stable environment.

Intersectionality: 69% (207/300) agree overlapping gender, ethnicity, and disability hinder participation, especially in South-East (88%) and North-East (76%). The theme of intersectionality (69% agreement) underscores how overlapping identities amplify these difficulties. The South-East (88%) and North-East (76%) again lead, hinting that these regions may have more

pronounced cultural or structural dynamics like ethnic conflicts or gender norms that compound barriers for those with multiple marginalized identities. This finding suggests that solutions must go beyond addressing single factors and tackle their combined impact.

Policy Gaps: 55% (165/300) disagree that government policies address these issues, with South-East (70%) and North-East (60%) most critical. On policy gaps, the 55% disagreement that government efforts are sufficient reflects skepticism about institutional support. The South-East (70%) and North-East (60%) are particularly critical, possibly due to perceived neglect or ineffective implementation in areas already grappling with other issues like security. This dissatisfaction points to a need for more targeted and credible policy interventions.

Security: 72% (217/300) cite security issues like violence as barriers, with North-East (84%) and South-East (80%) most concerned. Security emerges as a major concern, with 72% citing violence and intimidation as deterrents. The North-East (84%) and South-East (80%)—regions with histories of insurgency and communal clashes report the highest worry, indicating that fear of physical harm is a tangible barrier to electoral participation. This regional pattern suggests security must be a priority for enabling equitable voting access.

Accessibility: 69% (206/300) say limited registration access affects PWDs and minorities, with South-East (82%) and North-East (76%) in strong agreement. 80% (239/300) note inadequate accommodations for PWDs, especially in South-East (90%) and North-East (84%). Accessibility issues further highlight practical hurdles. The 69% who note limited registration access and the 80% who point to inadequate accommodations (e.g., ramps, braille ballots) for PWDs show a clear infrastructure deficit. The South-East (82% and 90%) and North-East (76% and 84%) again lead in agreement, possibly due to poorer facilities or greater awareness of disability rights, emphasizing the need for physical and procedural improvements.

Socio-Cultural/Economic Barriers: 73% (220/300) agree socio-cultural norms limit women's participation, led by South-East (84%) and North-East (80%). 82% (247/300) see economic hardship as a barrier, with South-East (94%) and North-East (90%) nearly unanimous. Socio-cultural and economic barriers reveal additional layers of exclusion. The 73% agreement on socio-cultural norms limiting women's participation highest in the South-East (84%) and North-East (80%) suggests entrenched gender roles or traditions stifling political engagement. Meanwhile, the 82% who see economic hardship as a barrier, with near-unanimous concern in the South-East (94%) and North-East (90%), ties electoral exclusion to broader socio-economic inequities, like poverty or lack of resources, which may hit these regions harder.

Ethnic/Religious Influence: 75% (226/300) say ethnic and religious ties shape voting, with North-West (82%) and South-East (88%) most affected. Ethnic and religious influences (75% agreement) highlight how identity shapes voter behavior, with the North-West (82%) and South-East (88%) most affected. This could reflect the North-West's religious diversity or the South-East's ethnic homogeneity, both driving political alignments that may sideline minority voices within those contexts.

Political Exclusion: 73% (218/300) agree political parties offer few opportunities for marginalized groups, with South-East (90%) feeling this most strongly. Finally, political exclusion (73% agreement) points to a lack of opportunity within political parties, with the South-East (90%) feeling this most acutely. This could stem from historical underrepresentation or party structures that favor dominant groups, reinforcing a cycle of marginalization.

Conclusion

The survey data reveals a clear consensus across Nigeria's six geo-political zones that women, ethnic minorities, and PWDs face significant barriers to participating in elections, with the South-East and North-East consistently reporting the highest levels of concern. Key challenges include security risks,

limited accessibility, inadequate government policies, socio-cultural norms, economic hardships, and exclusion by political parties. While awareness of these issues is widespread, there is a strong perception that current interventions are insufficient, particularly in the South-East and North-East. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach involving policy reform, enhanced security, improved infrastructure, and cultural shifts. Political parties must also play a pivotal role by fostering greater inclusion. Without these changes, marginalized groups will continue to face disproportionate obstacles in Nigeria's electoral process.

Recommendations

1. Policy makers should develop and implement targeted electoral policies to address the specific needs of women, ethnic minorities, and PWDs. This includes enforcing accommodations like ramps and braille ballots, particularly in regions with high concern (e.g., South-East and North-East) [Survey data, Questions 1,4, 8].
2. INEC should increase security presence and measures during elections, especially in the North-East and South-East, to protect marginalized groups from violence and intimidation [Survey data, Question 5].
3. INEC should expand the number and accessibility of voter registration centers and polling stations, ensuring they cater to PWDs and ethnic minorities.
4. Priority should be given to regions like the South-East and North-East, where accessibility issues are most pronounced [Survey data, Questions 6, 8].
5. INEC and stakeholders should launch nationwide awareness campaigns to challenge socio-cultural norms that discourage women's participation, focusing on regions with strong cultural barriers (e.g., South-East and North-East) [Survey data, Question 7]. Provide economic support, such as transportation subsidies or stipends, to reduce financial barriers for

marginalized groups, particularly in the South-East and North-East [Survey data, Question 9].

6. The government should encourage political parties to adopt quotas or affirmative action policies to increase opportunities for women, ethnic minorities, and PWDs to contest elections, especially in the South-East, where exclusion is most strongly felt [Survey data, Question 11].
7. The government should promote electoral campaigns that emphasize national unity and reduce reliance on ethnic or religious affiliations, targeting regions like the North-West and South-East where these factors are most influential [Survey data, Question 10].

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