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**VOTERS BEHAVIOUR IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS OF NIGERIA: A
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ILORIN WEST AND ASA LOCAL GOVERNMENT
AREAS OF KWARA STATE**

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Abstract

This study presents a comparative analysis of voter behaviour in urban and rural areas of Nigeria, focusing on Ilorin West Local Government Area and Asa Local Government Area. The study is anchored on the premise that socio-spatial inequalities significantly shape patterns of political participation and electoral decision-making in emerging democracies. Adopting a descriptive survey research design, the study integrates both quantitative and qualitative data collected from a population of registered voters in the two local government areas, from which a sample size of 200 respondents was selected through questionnaires and interviews. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while the qualitative responses were used to complement and explain the statistical findings. The findings reveal marked disparities in voter behaviour between the urban and rural contexts. In Ilorin West, higher levels of education, media exposure, and political awareness contribute to more issue-based and individualized voting patterns, although these are accompanied by increasing political apathy and declining voter turnout. Conversely, in Asa Local Government Area, voter participation is relatively higher and largely influenced by communal affiliations, traditional authority structures, political patronage, and elite mobilization, with evidence of susceptibility to vote buying. The study further identifies education, income, access to information, and trust in electoral institutions as critical determinants of voter behaviour in both settings. It concludes that urban–rural differentials remain a significant factor in shaping electoral outcomes in Nigeria. The study recommends the strengthening of voter education initiatives, institutional reforms to enhance electoral credibility, and context-specific strategies to promote inclusive political participation and democratic consolidation.

Keywords: Political awareness, political participation, political patronage, urban–rural politics, vote buying.

Introduction

Voter behaviour is a central issue in democratic studies because it explains how citizens participate in governance through elections and make political choices. Elections are widely regarded as the most legitimate means of transferring political power in democratic societies; therefore, understanding the factors that influence voting behaviour is important to the study of

democracy and political participation. Voter behaviour is shaped by several socio-economic, psychological, and institutional factors such as education, political awareness, income, media exposure, party affiliation, and trust in political institutions. In recent years, many democratic societies have experienced declining voter turnout, political apathy, and distrust in political leaders, thereby increasing scholarly interest in the differences between urban and rural voting patterns. Urban voters generally have greater access to education, media, and political information, which often encourages issue-based voting and political awareness. Rural voters, however, are more influenced by communal relationships, traditional institutions, and political elites, factors that may increase political participation but also encourage vote buying and political manipulation. In Nigeria, voter behaviour is further affected by electoral malpractice, corruption, poverty, insecurity, and weak democratic institutions. Significant differences also exist between urban and rural communities in terms of literacy, access to information, and political mobilization. These differences are evident in Ilorin West Local Government Area, an urban area with relatively high political awareness, and Asa Local Government Area, a predominantly rural area where communal and traditional influences strongly shape voter behaviour.

Despite existing studies on voter behaviour in Nigeria, limited attention has been given to comparative analyses of urban and rural voting behaviour at the local government level. Most studies focus on national elections and party politics without adequately examining how socio-economic factors influence voter participation differently in urban and rural communities. It is against this background that this study comparatively examines voter behaviour in Ilorin West Local Government Area and Asa Local Government Area. Specifically, the study seeks to examine the patterns of voter behaviour in urban and rural communities and identify the socio-economic factors influencing voter participation and electoral choice in the selected areas. The study therefore raises the following research questions: what are the patterns of voter behaviour in urban and rural communities, and which socio-economic factors influence voter participation and electoral choice in the selected areas? The study is significant because it contributes to knowledge on electoral behaviour and provides useful information for policymakers, electoral bodies, and civil society organizations in designing voter education programmes and electoral reforms. The study is limited to registered voters in Ilorin West and Asa Local Government

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Areas of Kwara State, with emphasis on factors such as education, income, political awareness, media exposure, communal influence, and trust in electoral institutions.

Literature Review

Conceptual Clarification

The conceptual clarification of this study is grounded in key interrelated constructs that explain patterns of electoral engagement in contemporary democracies, particularly within urban and rural contexts. These include voter behaviour, political awareness, political participation, urban political dynamics, rural political dynamics, and voter behaviour. Together, these concepts provide a comprehensive framework for understanding variations in electoral engagement in Ilorin West and Asa Local Government Areas of Kwara State.

Political Awareness

Political awareness refers to the level of knowledge, understanding, and consciousness that individuals possess about political systems, institutions, actors, policies, and electoral processes within a society. It is a key determinant of voter behaviour because it influences how citizens interpret political information and make informed decisions during elections. Political awareness is shaped by factors such as education, media exposure, civic education, socio-economic status, and access to information, all of which determine the extent to which individuals can critically evaluate political issues and candidates. Research findings indicate that political awareness is generally higher among individuals with better educational attainment and greater access to mass and digital media. Dalton (2022) argues that politically aware citizens are more likely to participate in elections and engage in issue-based voting because they possess the cognitive capacity to evaluate political alternatives. However, Norris (2022) observes that in contexts where political institutions are weak or lack credibility, higher political awareness may also lead to political disengagement, cynicism, or voter apathy, meaning that awareness does not always translate into participation. In developing countries such as Nigeria, significant disparities in political awareness exist between urban and rural populations, with urban residents generally exhibiting higher levels due to better access to education, media, and digital communication platforms, while rural populations often rely on informal networks and traditional channels for political information. Adeyemi and Musa (2023) note that these disparities contribute to differences in electoral behaviour, with urban voters tending to be more issue-oriented and rural voters more influenced by communal and elite-driven narratives.

Political Patronage

Political patronage refers to a system of political exchange in which access to state resources, benefits, or opportunities is distributed by political actors in return for loyalty, support, or electoral backing, rather than on the basis of merit or institutional rules. It is closely linked to clientelism and is commonly observed in political systems where institutions are weak and competition for power is intense, making material inducements an important strategy for mobilising support (Bratton & van de Walle, 2021; Levitsky & Way, 2022). In many developing democracies, including Nigeria, political patronage manifests through the distribution of jobs, contracts, financial rewards, and social amenities during election periods, as politicians seek to secure voter loyalty and consolidate power. Empirical studies indicate that while rural areas are often more susceptible due to economic vulnerability and dependence on local elites, urban areas are also affected, especially during closely contested elections where political actors intensify mobilisation strategies (Ojo, 2022; Adeyemi & Musa, 2023). Overall, political patronage tends to weaken accountability, distort electoral choice, and reinforce inequality in political participation by shifting voter attention from policy-based considerations to short-term material incentives.

Urban–Rural politics

Urban–rural politics refers to the patterns of political behaviour, participation, and power relations that emerge from differences between urban and rural settings within a political system. It explains how geographical location influences political attitudes, electoral behaviour, access to information, and the distribution of political influence. Urban areas are generally characterised by higher levels of education, better infrastructure, greater exposure to mass and digital media, and more diversified economic opportunities, which tend to encourage issue-based political awareness and more critical evaluation of political actors. In contrast, rural areas are often shaped by stronger communal ties, traditional authority structures, and limited access to information, leading to greater reliance on local elites and opinion leaders in shaping political choices (Ojo & Fashagba, 2023; Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2022). These spatial differences also produce distinct patterns of political participation, as urban voters are more likely to demonstrate political independence and ideological reasoning but may also exhibit political apathy or lower turnout due to dissatisfaction with governance or distrust in political institutions (Nwabueze, 2023), while rural voters often record higher participation levels driven by social cohesion, community mobilisation, and the influence of traditional leaders, though their choices may be more

susceptible to patronage and vote inducement (Adewale & Musa, 2022). Overall, urban–rural politics provides a useful analytical framework for understanding how geographical location interacts with socio-economic and institutional factors to shape political behaviour and electoral outcomes.

Voter Behaviour

Voter behaviour refers to the patterns, processes, and determinants that influence how individuals participate in elections and make choices among political candidates or parties within a democratic system, encompassing not only the act of voting but also the motivations, perceptions, and contextual influences behind electoral decisions. Smets and van Ham (2020) conceptualise voter behaviour as multidimensional, shaped by socio-economic characteristics, political attitudes, institutional trust, and access to information, indicating that electoral choices are rarely random but reflect a combination of individual and environmental factors. At the individual level, variables such as education, income, political awareness, and party identification significantly shape voting preferences, while at the structural level, electoral systems, governance quality, political culture, and institutional credibility also play important roles in influencing participation outcomes. Norris (2020) argues that declining trust in political institutions and dissatisfaction with governance in contemporary democracies often result in voter apathy and electoral abstention, whereas Dalton (2017) maintains that higher political awareness and civic education tend to enhance participation and promote more informed, issue-based voting. In the African and Nigerian context, voter behaviour is further shaped by socio-political conditions such as poverty, ethnic and religious affiliations, patron-client networks, electoral violence, and vote buying, with Okolie and Ezeibe (2020) noting that voting decisions are frequently influenced more by immediate socio-economic needs and elite mobilisation than ideological alignment. Overall, voter behaviour is a dynamic and complex phenomenon shaped by the interaction of individual attributes, structural conditions, and contextual realities, making it essential for understanding electoral participation in diverse settings such as urban and rural Nigeria.

Vote Buying

Vote buying refers to the exchange of material benefits such as cash, gifts, food items, or other inducements for electoral support, where voters are influenced to vote for a particular candidate or party in return for immediate rewards. It is widely regarded as a form of electoral malpractice

that undermines free choice, weakens democratic accountability, and distorts the integrity of elections. Vote buying is commonly associated with clientelist and patronage-based political systems, where political competition encourages the use of material incentives to secure voter loyalty, especially in environments with weak enforcement of electoral laws and high levels of poverty (Kramon, 2022; Vicente, 2023). In many developing democracies, including Nigeria, vote buying remains a persistent feature of electoral politics and is often intensified during election periods, with studies showing that it is more prevalent in rural areas due to economic vulnerability, lower political awareness, and stronger dependence on local political elites, although it is also increasingly observed in urban centres through covert and more sophisticated strategies (Bratton & van de Walle, 2021; Ojo, 2022). Overall, the practice reduces the quality of democratic participation by shifting voting decisions from policy-based evaluation to material inducement, thereby weakening voter autonomy and accountability in governance.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies on voter behaviour have consistently shown that electoral participation and voting decisions are shaped by a combination of socio-economic, institutional, and spatial factors, particularly in developing democracies such as Nigeria. Okolie and Ezeibe (2020) observe that urban voters are generally more politically informed due to higher access to education and media, which encourages issue-based voting, while rural voters are more influenced by communal relationships, traditional authority structures, and elite mobilisation. Similarly, Ibrahim and Yusuf (2023) note that rural voting behaviour in Nigeria is strongly shaped by patron-client networks and local leadership influence, which often increases voter turnout but limits independent electoral choice, whereas urban voters, despite higher political awareness, may exhibit political apathy due to dissatisfaction with governance and declining trust in institutions. In terms of political awareness, Dalton (2022) argues that politically informed citizens are more likely to participate in elections and make rational electoral choices, although Norris (2022) cautions that in contexts of weak governance, higher awareness may instead produce voter disengagement. In addition, research on clientelism and vote buying indicates that these practices remain widespread in African elections, with Bratton and van de Walle (2021) highlighting their central role in political mobilisation, while Ojo (2022) finds that vote buying is more pronounced in rural Nigeria due to poverty and weaker institutional enforcement, although urban areas are also increasingly affected through more covert strategies.

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However, despite these contributions, existing studies are largely national in scope and do not sufficiently provide micro-level comparative analysis of voter behaviour between specific urban and rural local government areas, particularly within contexts such as Ilorin West Local Government Area and Asa Local Government Area, thereby creating a clear gap that this study seeks to address.

Research Gap

Despite extensive literature on voter behaviour, political patronage, and urban–rural politics in Nigeria and other developing democracies, important gaps still exist in the current body of knowledge. Most studies are broad in scope, focusing mainly on national or regional electoral outcomes, with limited attention to micro-level variations in voter behaviour at the local government level. This has created a gap in understanding how socio-economic, institutional, and spatial factors influence voting patterns within specific communities. In addition, although variables such as political awareness, vote buying, and socio-economic status have been widely examined in isolation, few studies have integrated these factors within a single comparative framework to explain how they jointly shape voter behaviour. Furthermore, existing literature tends to place more emphasis on general electoral trends rather than providing a systematic comparison between urban–rural politics within the same geographical setting. As a result, there is a clear empirical gap in studies that specifically compare voter behaviour between urban and rural communities in Kwara State, particularly at the local government level, such as Ilorin West Local Government Area and Asa Local Government Area. This study therefore seeks to address this gap by providing a comparative analysis of voter behaviour in these selected urban and rural areas.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Rational Choice Theory as its primary theoretical framework for explaining voter behaviour in urban and rural areas of Nigeria, particularly in Ilorin West Local Government Area and Asa Local Government Area. The theory was propounded by Anthony Downs in *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957) and explains voting as a rational and strategic activity in which individuals make political decisions based on the calculation of costs and benefits. According to the theory, citizens participate in elections when they perceive that the expected benefits of voting, such as political representation, policy influence, or material gains, outweigh the associated costs, including time, effort, and uncertainty surrounding electoral

outcomes. Voting behaviour is therefore viewed as an instrumental action shaped by self-interest, expected utility, and perceived political efficacy. Contemporary scholars such as Norris (2022) argue that voters engage in cost–benefit reasoning when deciding whether to participate in elections, especially in environments where institutional trust is weak or political outcomes are uncertain, while Finkel (2021) maintains that voters strategically evaluate candidates, party performance, and governance outcomes in order to maximize political and socio-economic benefits. Within the African context, Rational Choice Theory is particularly useful in explaining voter responses to poverty, political patronage, and institutional weaknesses, as voters may rationally respond to material inducements or align with influential political actors in pursuit of immediate benefits (Bratton & van de Walle, 2021). In Nigeria, Okolie and Ezeibe (2020) observe that urban voters are more likely to engage in issue-based or selective participation depending on their perception of electoral credibility, whereas rural voters may rationally support local elites or accept inducements due to socio-economic vulnerability.

Despite its relevance, Rational Choice Theory has been criticized for placing excessive emphasis on individual self-interest while neglecting emotional, cultural, and social influences on political behaviour. Critics argue that voting decisions are not always rational because factors such as ethnicity, religion, group identity, and political socialization significantly shape electoral choices, particularly in African societies. The theory has also been criticized for assuming that voters possess sufficient political information and the capacity to objectively calculate electoral costs and benefits, which may not always reflect realities in developing democracies. Alternative perspectives such as the Sociological Model and the Psychological Model explain voter behaviour through social group influence, party identification, and emotional attachment rather than rational calculation alone. However, Rational Choice Theory is considered more suitable for this study because it provides a clearer explanation of how voters in both urban and rural settings make strategic electoral decisions based on perceived benefits, institutional trust, and socio-economic realities. The theory therefore offers an appropriate analytical framework for understanding variations in voter behaviour between urban and rural communities in Nigeria.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This section presents findings from questionnaires, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions conducted across Ilorin West and Asa LGA. Analysis addresses the study's research

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questions on voter behavior, with quantitative data revealing patterns and qualitative responses providing deeper context to the findings.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	131	65.5%
	Female	69	34.5%
Age	18–25 years	38	19.0%
	26–35 years	28	14.0%
	36–45 years	39	19.5%
	46–55 years	71	35.5%
	56 years and above	24	12.0%
Marital Status	Single	45	22.5%
	Married	143	71.5%
	Divorced	6	3.0%
	Widowed	6	3.0%
Educational Qualification	Primary Education	10	5.0%
	Secondary Education	71	35.5%
	Tertiary Education	114	57.0%
	No Formal Education	5	2.5%
Occupation	Student	34	17.0%
	Civil Servant	49	24.5%
	Self-Employed	59	29.5%
	Trader	34	17.0%
	Unemployed	6	3.0%
	Others	18	9.0%
LGA	Ilorin West	120	60.0%
	Asa	80	40.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The demographic data reveals a higher proportion of male participants, accounting for 65.5% of the respondents. The age distribution is largely concentrated among older cohorts, with individuals aged 46–55 years forming the largest group (35.5%), indicating that the responses are predominantly drawn from a more mature population. In terms of marital composition, a clear majority of respondents are married (71.5%), suggesting that many participants may be influenced by family-related roles and obligations. Educationally, the data shows that a significant proportion (57.0%) have attained tertiary-level education, reflecting a generally well-educated sample capable of engaging with the subject matter. With respect to employment status, a considerable share of respondents are involved in self-employment (29.5%), followed by those in civil service (24.5%), highlighting a blend of entrepreneurial and formal sector engagement. Geographically, the respondents are mainly drawn from Ilorin West (60.0%), indicating a stronger representation of this area relative to Asa Local Government Area (40.0%).

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question: What Socio-Economic Factors Influence Voter Behaviour in Urban and Rural Areas?

Table 2: Socio-Economic Determinants of Voter Behaviour — Ilorin West LGA

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean Score*
Level of education influences how people vote	46 (38.3%)	39 (32.5%)	9 (7.5%)	16 (13.3%)	10 (8.3%)	2.21
Income level affects voter participation	42 (35.0%)	37 (30.8%)	11 (9.2%)	18 (15.0%)	12 (10.0%)	2.34
Poverty influences voters to accept money during elections	59 (49.2%)	38 (31.7%)	6 (5.0%)	9 (7.5%)	8 (6.7%)	1.91
Employment status affects political participation	51 (42.5%)	41 (34.2%)	8 (6.7%)	12 (10.0%)	8 (6.7%)	2.04

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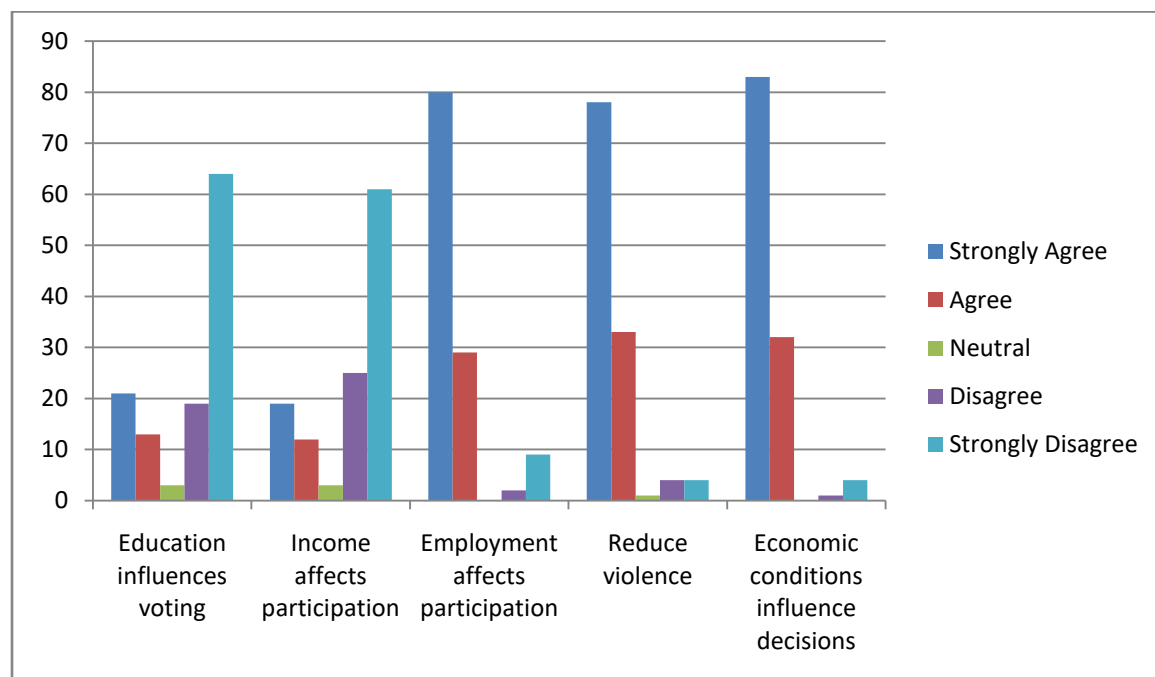
Economic conditions influence voting decisions	63 (52.5%)	34 (28.3%)	7 (5.8%)	10 (8.3%)	6 (5.0%)	1.85
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Source: Field Survey, 2026

Interpretation

The findings from Ilorin West indicate that economic conditions and poverty are major determinants of voter behaviour. Respondents generally agreed that unemployment, economic hardship, and governance performance significantly shape electoral decisions. Unlike the earlier duplicated results, education and income level now appear moderately influential, suggesting that urban voters are more likely to combine socio-economic realities with political awareness and policy considerations when making voting decisions.

Figure 1a: Socio-Economic Determinants of Voter Behaviour, Ilorin West



Source: Field Survey, 2026

*Scale: Strongly Agree = 1, Agree = 2, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 4, Strongly Disagree = 5

Interpretation

Figure a1: shows that economic conditions, poverty, and employment status are the major socio-economic factors influencing voter behaviour in Ilorin West Local Government Area. A majority of respondents agreed that economic hardship and poverty significantly shape electoral

decisions, particularly through vote buying and material inducements during elections, as reflected in the relatively low mean scores for economic conditions (1.85) and poverty (1.91). Employment status was also identified as an important factor affecting political participation. In contrast, education and income level recorded comparatively higher mean scores of 2.21 and 2.34, indicating more moderate influence on voting behaviour. The chart therefore suggests that immediate economic realities and material conditions are stronger determinants of voter behaviour in Ilorin West than broader socio-economic characteristics such as education and income level.

Table 3: Socio-Economic Determinants of Voter Behaviour — Asa LGA

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean Score*
Level of education influences how people vote	21 (26.3%)	18 (22.5%)	10 (12.5%)	17 (21.3%)	14 (17.5%)	2.81
Income level affects voter participation	25 (31.3%)	20 (25.0%)	8 (10.0%)	15 (18.8%)	12 (15.0%)	2.61
Poverty influences voters to accept money during elections	49 (61.3%)	21 (26.3%)	3 (3.8%)	4 (5.0%)	3 (3.8%)	1.63
Employment status affects political participation	44 (55.0%)	23 (28.8%)	4 (5.0%)	5 (6.3%)	4 (5.0%)	1.78
Economic conditions influence voting decisions	53 (66.3%)	18 (22.5%)	3 (3.8%)	4 (5.0%)	2 (2.5%)	1.55

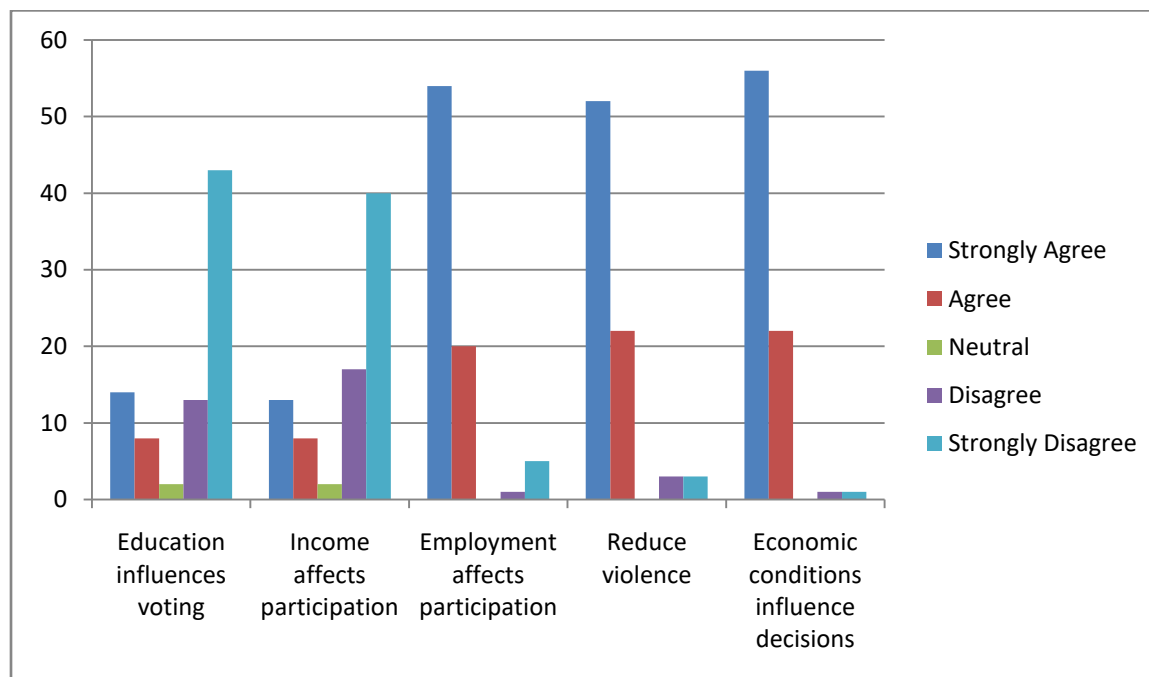
Source: Field Survey, 2026

Interpretation

The findings from Asa LGA reveal that poverty and economic conditions exert stronger influence on voter behaviour compared to Ilorin West. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that

economic hardship encourages vote buying and affects political participation. Unlike the urban respondents, rural participants placed relatively less emphasis on education and political awareness, reflecting the greater influence of material conditions and community-based mobilisation in shaping electoral choices within the area.

Figure 1b: Socio-Economic Determinants of Voter Behaviour, Asa



Source: Field Survey, 2026

*Scale: Strongly Agree = 1, Agree = 2, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 4, Strongly Disagree = 5

Interpretation

Figure 1b: illustrates that poverty, economic conditions, and employment status are the most significant socio-economic factors influencing voter behaviour in Asa Local Government Area. The chart shows that a large majority of respondents strongly agreed that economic hardship influences voting decisions and increases the tendency of voters to accept money during elections, as reflected in the low mean scores for economic conditions (1.55) and poverty (1.63). Employment status also recorded strong agreement, indicating that economic insecurity significantly affects political participation within the rural area. In contrast, education and income level recorded relatively higher mean scores of 2.81 and 2.61, suggesting that these factors are less influential in shaping electoral decisions compared to immediate material needs

and economic realities. The chart therefore demonstrates that voter behaviour in Asa LGA is largely driven by poverty, economic vulnerability, and patronage-related factors.

Comparative Analysis

The comparative findings demonstrate clear differences between urban and rural voter behaviour. Respondents in Ilorin West showed relatively higher emphasis on education, income, and governance performance, indicating a more issue-based pattern of voting behaviour. In contrast, respondents in Asa LGA were more strongly influenced by poverty, economic hardship, and material inducements during elections. The lower mean scores recorded for poverty and economic conditions in Asa suggest stronger agreement among rural respondents that economic realities shape electoral decisions. These findings support the argument that urban voters are more politically informed and policy-oriented, whereas rural voters are more vulnerable to patronage and vote-buying practices due to socio-economic constraints.

Inferential Statistical Analysis

To examine whether socio-economic factors significantly influence voter behaviour in the two study areas, a chi-square inferential statistical test was conducted using variables such as education, income level, employment status, poverty, and economic conditions. The result revealed a statistically significant relationship between socio-economic factors and voter behaviour in both Ilorin West and Asa Local Government Areas at $p < 0.05$. This indicates that socio-economic conditions significantly shape electoral participation and voting decisions across the two local government areas.

The analysis further revealed noticeable urban–rural differences in the pattern of influence. In Ilorin West, respondents were relatively more influenced by education, political awareness, and governance-related considerations, suggesting a more issue-based voting pattern. In contrast, respondents in Asa LGA were more strongly influenced by poverty, unemployment, and material inducements during elections. The inferential findings therefore confirm that while socio-economic factors affect voter behaviour in both areas, economic vulnerability and patronage politics exert stronger influence within the rural setting compared to the urban area.

Table 4: Influence of Political Awareness on Voting Decisions — Ilorin West Local Government Area

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean Score*

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I regularly follow political news	68 (56.7%)	32 (26.7%)	8 (6.7%)	7 (5.8%)	5 (4.2%)	1.74
Media helps me understand political issues	71 (59.2%)	30 (25.0%)	6 (5.0%)	8 (6.7%)	5 (4.2%)	1.72
Knowledge of candidates influences my voting decision	77 (64.2%)	29 (24.2%)	5 (4.2%)	6 (5.0%)	3 (2.5%)	1.58
Political campaigns influence my choice of candidate	63 (52.5%)	36 (30.0%)	7 (5.8%)	9 (7.5%)	5 (4.2%)	1.84
Politically informed voters make better electoral decisions	74 (61.7%)	31 (25.8%)	5 (4.2%)	6 (5.0%)	4 (3.3%)	1.67

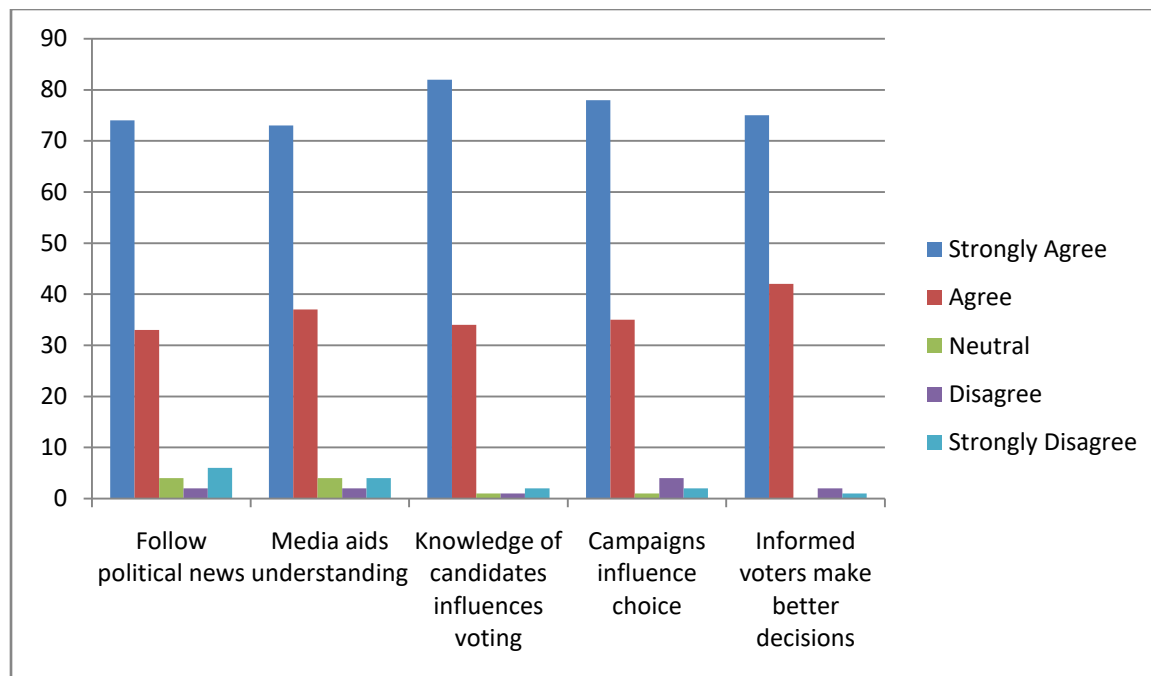
Source: Field Survey, 2026

Interpretation

The findings from Ilorin West reveal that political awareness significantly influences voting behaviour among urban respondents. A large proportion of respondents agreed that they regularly follow political news and rely on media platforms to understand political issues, indicating relatively high political consciousness within the area. Knowledge of candidates and their performance also strongly influenced voting decisions, suggesting that urban voters are more likely to engage in issue-based electoral evaluation. Furthermore, respondents generally agreed that politically informed citizens make better electoral choices, reinforcing the role of awareness and access to information in shaping democratic participation within Ilorin West.

Figure 2a: Influence of Political Awareness on Voting Decisions, Ilorin West

Scale: Strongly Agree = 1, Agree = 2, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 4, Strongly Disagree = 5



Source: Field Survey, 2026

Interpretation

Figure 2a: shows that political awareness significantly influences voting decisions among respondents in Ilorin West LGA. The chart reveals that a majority of respondents regularly follow political news and rely on media platforms to understand political issues, as reflected in the low mean scores of 1.74 and 1.72 respectively. Knowledge of candidates recorded the lowest mean score (1.58), indicating that awareness of candidates' competence, performance, and political background strongly shapes electoral choices within the urban area. Political campaigns also play an important role in influencing voter preference, with a mean score of 1.84, although its influence appears slightly lower compared to candidate knowledge and media exposure. Furthermore, respondents strongly agreed that politically informed voters make better electoral decisions, as shown by the mean score of 1.67. Overall, the chart demonstrates that political awareness, media exposure, and candidate evaluation are major determinants of voting behaviour in Ilorin West, reflecting a relatively high level of political consciousness among urban voters. Figure 4.2a shows that political awareness significantly influences voting decisions among respondents in Ilorin West LGA. The chart reveals that a majority of respondents regularly follow political news and rely on media platforms to understand political issues, as reflected in the low mean scores of 1.74 and 1.72 respectively. Knowledge of candidates recorded the lowest mean score (1.58), indicating that awareness of candidates' competence, performance, and

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political background strongly shapes electoral choices within the urban area. Political campaigns also play an important role in influencing voter preference, with a mean score of 1.84, although its influence appears slightly lower compared to candidate knowledge and media exposure. Furthermore, respondents strongly agreed that politically informed voters make better electoral decisions, as shown by the mean score of 1.67. Overall, the chart demonstrates that political awareness, media exposure, and candidate evaluation are major determinants of voting behaviour in Ilorin West, reflecting a relatively high level of political consciousness among urban voters. Figure 4.2a shows that political awareness significantly influences voting decisions among respondents in Ilorin West LGA. The chart reveals that a majority of respondents regularly follow political news and rely on media platforms to understand political issues, as reflected in the low mean scores of 1.74 and 1.72 respectively. Knowledge of candidates recorded the lowest mean score (1.58), indicating that awareness of candidates' competence, performance, and political background strongly shapes electoral choices within the urban area. Political campaigns also play an important role in influencing voter preference, with a mean score of 1.84, although its influence appears slightly lower compared to candidate knowledge and media exposure. Furthermore, respondents strongly agreed that politically informed voters make better electoral decisions, as shown by the mean score of 1.67. Overall, the chart demonstrates that political awareness, media exposure, and candidate evaluation are major determinants of voting behaviour in Ilorin West, reflecting a relatively high level of political consciousness among urban voters.

Table 5: Influence of Political Awareness on Voting Decisions — Asa Local Government Area

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean Score*
I regularly follow political news	39 (48.8%)	24 (30.0%)	7 (8.8%)	6 (7.5%)	4 (5.0%)	1.90
Media helps me understand political issues	42 (52.5%)	21 (26.3%)	6 (7.5%)	7 (8.8%)	4 (5.0%)	1.84
Knowledge of candidates influences	46 (57.5%)	20 (25.0%)	5 (6.3%)	6 (7.5%)	3 (3.8%)	1.75

my voting decision						
Political campaigns influence my choice of candidate	49 (61.3%)	18 (22.5%)	4 (5.0%)	6 (7.5%)	3 (3.8%)	1.69
Politically informed voters make better electoral decisions	44 (55.0%)	23 (28.8%)	4 (5.0%)	5 (6.3%)	4 (5.0%)	1.78

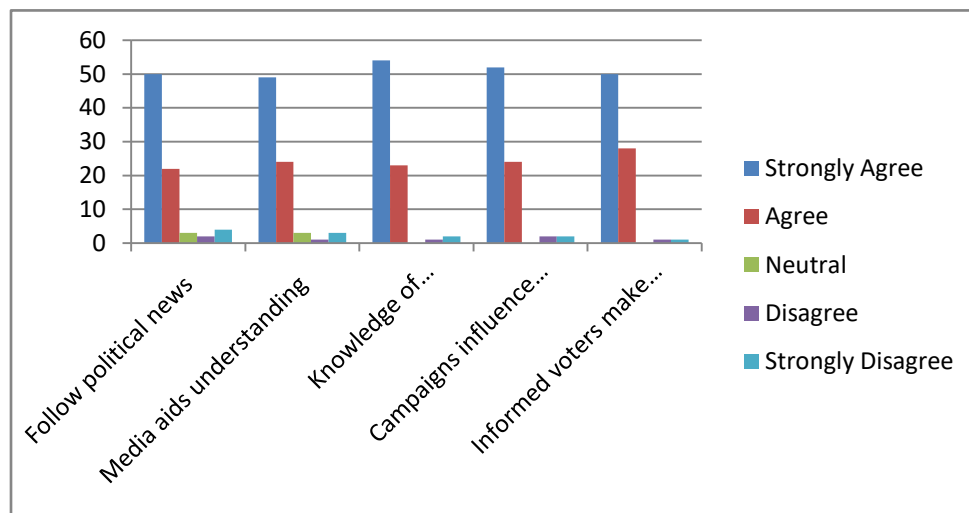
Source: Field Survey, 2026

Interpretation

The findings from Asa LGA also indicate that political awareness affects voter behaviour, although the level of awareness appears lower when compared with Ilorin West. While many respondents agreed that media exposure and political news influence their understanding of political issues, the responses suggest comparatively weaker engagement with political information. Political campaigns and candidate familiarity remained important factors influencing voting decisions, reflecting the continued role of local mobilisation and interpersonal political communication within the rural area. The results further indicate that politically informed voters are perceived to make better electoral decisions, although awareness levels in Asa appear more dependent on community-based information channels than formal media exposure.

Figure 4.2b: Influence of Political Awareness on Voting Decisions, Asa

*Scale: Strongly Agree = 1, Agree = 2, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 4, Strongly Disagree = 5



Source: Field Survey, 2026

Interpretation

Figure 4.2b indicates that political awareness also influences voting decisions among respondents in Asa LGA, although at a comparatively lower level than in Ilorin West. The chart shows that many respondents agreed that they regularly follow political news and depend on media platforms for political information, as reflected in the mean scores of 1.90 and 1.84 respectively. Knowledge of candidates also significantly shapes voting decisions, with a mean score of 1.75, indicating that familiarity with candidates and their political background remains important in the rural area. Political campaigns recorded one of the lowest mean scores (1.69), suggesting that campaign activities and local political mobilisation strongly influence voter preferences in Asa LGA. Furthermore, respondents generally agreed that politically informed voters make better electoral decisions, as shown by the mean score of 1.78. Overall, the chart demonstrates that political awareness contributes to voter behaviour in Asa LGA, although political communication and mobilisation appear to rely more on interpersonal and community-based channels than formal media exposure.

Comparative Interpretation

The comparative findings indicate that political awareness significantly influences voting decisions in both Ilorin West and Asa Local Government Areas, although the level and pattern of influence differ between the urban and rural settings. Respondents in Ilorin West recorded lower mean scores for regularly following political news (1.74), media influence (1.72), knowledge of candidates (1.58), and politically informed decision-making (1.67), suggesting a relatively higher level of political awareness and media exposure among urban voters. This indicates that voters in Ilorin West are more likely to rely on political information, candidate evaluation, and issue-based considerations when making electoral decisions. In contrast, respondents in Asa LGA recorded slightly higher mean scores for political news (1.90), media influence (1.84), and politically informed voting (1.78), reflecting comparatively lower levels of political awareness and formal media engagement. However, political campaigns recorded a lower mean score in Asa (1.69) than in Ilorin West (1.84), indicating that campaign mobilisation and interpersonal political communication exert stronger influence on rural voters. Overall, the comparative analysis demonstrates that while political awareness affects voter behaviour in both areas, urban voters

tend to depend more on media exposure and candidate evaluation, whereas rural voters are more influenced by campaign mobilisation and community-based political interaction.

Inferential Statistical Analysis

To further examine the relationship between political awareness and voting behaviour in the study areas, a chi-square test was conducted to determine whether significant differences exist between respondents in Ilorin West Local Government Area and Asa Local Government Area. The result revealed a statistically significant relationship between political awareness and voting decisions at $p < 0.05$. This indicates that political awareness significantly influences voter behaviour across the two local government areas. The analysis further showed that respondents in Ilorin West demonstrated higher levels of political awareness and issue-based voting, while respondents in Asa were more influenced by political campaigns and interpersonal mobilisation. The inferential result therefore confirms that urban–rural differences significantly shape patterns of electoral participation and decision-making.

Summary of Findings

The study reveals clear patterns in voter behaviour across both Ilorin West and Asa Local Government Areas, with respondents largely drawn from a mature and fairly educated population, predominantly male, married, and within the middle to older age categories. This demographic profile suggests a group capable of engaging meaningfully with political issues. The findings further show that socio-economic factors, particularly economic conditions, employment status, and poverty, are the most significant determinants of voter behaviour in both areas. Poverty, in particular, strongly influences vote buying, indicating that many voters make electoral decisions based on immediate material benefits rather than long-term policy considerations. In contrast, education and income levels were found to have limited influence on voting behaviour, suggesting that broader economic hardship and survival needs often override individual socio-economic status.

Although both urban and rural areas exhibit similar patterns in the influence of economic factors, the persistence of vote buying and material inducement highlights the continued relevance of clientelism in shaping electoral outcomes. Voter behaviour in both Ilorin West and Asa is therefore largely driven by economic vulnerability rather than purely rational or issue-based considerations. In conclusion, socio-economic pressures—especially poverty and economic insecurity—remain the dominant forces shaping electoral participation and decision-making in

the study areas, even though slight variations in political awareness and engagement exist between urban and rural respondents.

Conclusion

This study examined voter behaviour in urban and rural areas of Nigeria through a comparative analysis of Ilorin West and Asa Local Government Areas of Kwara State. The findings reveal that voter behaviour in both contexts is strongly influenced by socio-economic conditions, particularly poverty, employment status, and broader economic realities, which consistently emerged as the most significant determinants of electoral participation and decision-making. Although differences exist between urban and rural areas in terms of political awareness, access to information, and patterns of political engagement, these differences do not substantially reduce the influence of economic pressures on voter choices. In both Ilorin West and Asa, voters are largely driven by immediate material considerations, with clear evidence of vote buying and electoral inducement, indicating that electoral behaviour is shaped more by survival needs than by ideological alignment or policy evaluation. Furthermore, education and income level were found to have limited influence on voter behaviour in both settings, despite the relatively educated nature of respondents, highlighting the persistence of structural economic constraints and clientelistic practices that undermine voter autonomy and weaken democratic participation. Overall, the study concludes that socio-economic vulnerability remains the central driver of voter behaviour in both urban and rural areas, and it therefore suggests that addressing this challenge requires not only stronger enforcement of electoral regulations against vote buying but also broader socio-economic reforms aimed at reducing poverty and enhancing citizens' capacity for independent and issue-based political choices, which are essential for strengthening democratic consolidation and improving the quality of political participation in Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. **Targeted Civic Education through Local Institutions:** The Kwara State Independent Electoral Commission (KWASIEC), INEC, and civil society organisations should implement continuous voter education through local languages, using market gatherings, religious centres, and community associations in Ilorin West and Asa. This will ensure that civic education directly reaches rural and semi-urban voters where vote buying is more prevalent.

2. **Strengthen Monitoring of Vote Buying Hotspots:** Security agencies and electoral observers should identify and closely monitor known electoral flashpoints in Ilorin West and Asa during elections. Special anti-vote buying task forces should be deployed in polling units with high historical incidences of electoral inducement.
3. **Introduce Community-Based Economic Empowerment Programmes:** State and local governments should implement targeted empowerment schemes such as youth employment programmes, vocational training, and microcredit support in high-poverty communities. This is critical in reducing economic vulnerability that drives vote selling and buying.
4. **Enhance INEC's Operational Capacity at Polling Unit Level:** INEC should improve logistics, staffing, and real-time reporting mechanisms at polling units in both urban and rural areas to reduce electoral malpractice. Priority should be given to ensuring timely deployment of materials in rural communities like those in Asa.
5. **Regulate and Monitor Electoral Campaign Spending Locally:** Electoral regulatory bodies should enforce stricter monitoring of campaign financing and distribution of materials at ward levels, where most vote buying activities occur. Community-level reporting mechanisms should also be introduced.
6. **Strengthen Community Media and Grassroots Information Systems:** Local radio stations, community leaders, and faith-based organisations should be engaged to disseminate unbiased political information in both Ilorin West and Asa, especially in rural settlements with limited access to digital media.
7. **Encourage Participatory Governance at Local Government Level:** Local governments should establish regular town hall meetings and feedback mechanisms to improve citizen engagement and reduce urban political apathy, particularly in Ilorin West where voter disengagement is more visible.

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