

**INFLUENCE OF POLITICAL STRATEGIES USING ETHNIC AND
RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES ON VOTING BEHAVIOR IN 2019 NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN GOMBE STATE, NIGERIA**

By

KWARAH MOHAMMED TAL

**Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, University Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

October 2023

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DEDICATION

To my late parents for their labor and sacrifice

To my family for always standing by me no matter the trial to democracy that it
should thrive and live up to expectations

To the oppressed and excluded people in society that they may find redemption



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment
of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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KWARAH MOHAMMED TAL

October 2023

Chairman : Associate Professor Mohd Mahadee bin Ismail, PhD
Faculty : Human Ecology

ABSTRACT

Under a democratic electoral system, voters have the freedom and equal rights to vote for their leaders. However, since the creation of Gombe state in 1996, desperate politicians have been manipulating ethnic and religious identities to influence voting behavior to their political advantage, thus leading to the intimidation of the voters in the electoral process. This study examined the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior and identified the strategies used by politicians to influence ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior. This study also examined the outcome of government and group efforts in addressing the issue of the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior. Furthermore, the study also investigated the consequences or implications of the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior in the 2019 National Assembly elections in Gombe state. Rational Choice Theory is employed as the theoretical framework. A qualitative design based on a case study approach was adopted. Eighteen (18) informants, comprising partisan grassroots; non-partisan grassroots; community and ethnic identities leaders;

religious leaders; government officials; NGO; and academicians, were selected through purposive and snowballing techniques sampling. In-depth interview was conducted via online Zoom Meeting, WhatsApp and normal phone calls. The data obtained were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The findings reveal that while ethnic and religious identities sentiments were used as instruments of emotional appeal and mobilization, various forms of intimidation were also used as strategies to influence voting behavior. However, the main factors influencing voting behavior were abject poverty, low literacy and low political education or awareness levels. The study further reveals that government and NGO attempts to address the problem yielded less satisfactory results. Finally, the study finds that the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior led to voter intimidation and denial of their rights to freedom of choice. Articulate and well-monitored poverty alleviation and political education programs are recommended. The study significantly contributes to the knowledge of democracy, government, and policymaking. The study concludes that manipulating ethnic and religious identities to influence voting behavior has led to the perversion of democratic rational voting behavior and the entrenchment of a culture of ethnoreligious nationalism, thereby retarding the democratization process in Gombe state, Nigeria.

Keywords: Voting behavior, ethnic and religious identities, rational choice theory, qualitative design, thematic analysis.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PENGARUH STRATEGI POLITIK MENGGUNAKAN IDENTITI ETNIK
DAN AGAMA TERHADAP TINGKAH LAKU MENGUNDI PADA PILIHAN
RAYA DEWAN KEBANGSAAN 2019 DI NEGERI GOMBE, NIGERIA**

Oleh

KWARAH MOHAMMED TAL

Oktober 2023

Pengerusi : Profesor Madya Mohd Mahadee bin Ismail, PhD
Fakulti : Ekologi Manusia

ABSTRAK

Di bawah sistem pilihan raya demokrasi, pengundi mempunyai kebebasan dan hak yang sama untuk mengundi pemimpin mereka. Walau bagaimanapun, sejak penubuhan negeri Gombe pada 1996, ahli politik yang terdesak telah memanipulasi identiti etnik dan agama untuk mempengaruhi tingkah laku mengundi demi kepentingan politik mereka, sekali gus membawa kepada ugutan dan pencabulan hak pengundi terhadap kebebasan memilih. Kajian ini meneliti pengaruh identiti etnik dan agama ke atas tingkah laku pengundian; serta mengenalpasti strategi yang digunakan oleh ahli politik untuk mempengaruhi identiti etnik dan agama ke atas tingkah laku pengundian. Kajian ini juga meneliti hasil daripada usaha kerajaan dan kumpulan dan mengetengahkan isu pengaruh identiti etnik dan agama ke atas tingkah laku pengundian. Seterusnya, kajian ini juga mengkaji kesan atau implikasi pengaruh identiti etnik dan agama ke atas tingkah laku pengundian dalam pilihan raya Dewan Perhimpunan Nasional di negeri Gombe. Teori Pilihan Rasional digunakan sebagai kerangka teori. Reka bentuk kualitatif berdasarkan pendekatan kajian kes telah diguna

pakai. Lapan belas (18) informan, terdiri daripada akar umbi partisan; akar umbi bukan partisan; pemimpin identiti masyarakat dan etnik; pemimpin agama; pegawai kerajaan; NGO; dan ahli akademik dipilih melalui teknik persampelan bertujuan dan bola salji. Temu bual mendalam telah dijalankan melalui Mesyuarat Zoom dalam talian, WhatsApp dan panggilan telefon biasa. Data yang diperolehi dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan analisis tematik. Dapatan kajian mendedahkan bahawa walaupun sentimen identiti etnik dan agama digunakan sebagai instrumen daya tarikan dan mobilisasi emosi, pelbagai bentuk ugutan juga digunakan sebagai strategi untuk mempengaruhi tingkah laku pengundian. Walau bagaimanapun, faktor utama yang mempengaruhi tingkah laku pengundian ialah kemiskinan yang teruk, rendah literasi dan/atau tahap kesedaran politik yang rendah. Kajian ini seterusnya mendedahkan bahawa usaha kerajaan dan NGO untuk menangani masalah tersebut membuahkan hasil yang kurang memuaskan. Akhir sekali, kajian ini mendapati pengaruh identiti etnik dan agama terhadap tingkah laku pengundian telah membawa kepada intimidasi pengundi dan penafian hak mereka untuk kebebasan memilih Program pembasmian kemiskinan dan pendidikan politik yang jelas dan dipantau dengan baik adalah disyorkan. Kajian ini secara signifikan menyumbang kepada ilmu berkaitan demokrasi, kerajaan, dan penggubalan dasar. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa manipulasi berterusan identiti etnik dan agama untuk mempengaruhi tingkah laku pengundian telah membawa kepada penyelewengan tingkah laku pengundian rasional demokratik dan pemupukan budaya nasionalisme etno-agama, sekali gus merencatkan proses pendemokrasian di negeri Gombe, Nigeria.

Kata kunci: Tingkah laku mengundi, identiti etnik dan agama, teori pilihan rasional, reka bentuk kualitatif, analisis tematik.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

Mohd Mahadee bin Ismail, PhD

Associate Professor
Faculty of Human Ecology
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Ku Hasnita binti Ku Shamsu, PhD

Associate Professor
Faculty of Human Ecology
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

Zatul Himmah binti Adnan, PhD

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Human Ecology
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

ZALILAH MOHD SHARIFF, PhD

Professor and Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 11 July 2024

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACM	Academicians
AG	Action Group
CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
CEIL	Community and Ethnic Identities Leaders
CFRN	Constitution of the Federal Republic Nigeria
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EGGS	Executive Governor of Gombe State
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FGN	Federal Government of Nigeria
FPTP	First-Past-The-Post
FRN	Federal Republic of Nigeria
GO	Government Official
GRCT	Grand Rational Choice Voting Behavior
GSG	Gombe State Government
GSME	Gombe State Ministry of Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
IPOB	Indigenous Peoples of Biafra
LGA	Local Government Area
LGAs	Local Government Areas
LGC	Local government Council
LGCS	Local Government Council Secretary
LGPAP	Local Government Poverty Alleviation Program
MBF	Middle Belt Forum

MP	Member of Parliament
NASS	National Assembly
NBC	National Bureau of Statistics
NCNC	National Council of Nigerian Citizens
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIREC	Nigeria Inter-Religious Council
NOA	National Orientation Agency
NPC	Northern people's Congress
NPGR	Non-Partisan Grassroots
NSCIA	National Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs
NYSC	National Youth Service Corp
OPC	Oodua People's Congress
PA	Personal Assistant
PAO	Poverty Alleviation Officer
PGR	Partisan Grassroots
PLAC	Policy and Legal Advocacy Center
PVC	Personal Voter's Card
RCT	Rational Choice Theory
RL	Religious Leaders
SA	Special Assistant
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children Educational Fund
UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia
USD	United States Dollar

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Democracy is an important political system that guarantees the full and equal participation of the citizens in a free and fair periodic election through political parties or candidates' competition. It ensures the will of the people in the electoral process is the basis of legitimate power or government (Dahl, 2015; Aloko & Abdullahi, 2014). For the will of the citizens to have its way, politicians, parties, and other stakeholders should ensure the voters exercise their full rights to vote and be voted for, without any form of restriction, intimidation, or undue influences, such as the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior. This is because voting and the protection of the right of the voters to freedom of choice or the exercise of universal suffrage in electing their leaders is fundamental to the survival of democracy and its institutions.

The main objective of political parties or candidates in a multi-party democratic election is to acquire, maintain, or sustain political power. The struggle for political power revolves around the adoption of a variety of political strategies by competing political parties and candidates with the goal of outmaneuvering to frustrate opponents and capture power during elections (Azu, 2013). Also, Paquette (2002) and Spacey (2019), maintain that political strategy is an organized effort or plan of action by politicians or parties aimed at outsmarting rival contenders for public offices with the main goal of winning election and acquiring formal political power. The scholars

further added that political strategy encompasses activities such as election campaigns, policy advocacy, or inter-party coalition building.

Political strategy can be categorized into various forms. Spacey (2019) highlights that, among others, political strategy includes *Divide and Conquer*, where unpopular or weak but desperate politicians exploit and amplify minor differences such as ethnic, religious, gender, or regional differences among the people or the electorates to win elections; *Us versus Them*, where the political elites create unnecessary story of an impending foreign domination or attack or conflict among the various groups within the society, giving the impression that on their candidates or parties can avert the problems; and *Coercive Power*, where politicians use the ethnic, religious, or regional militias or the state security agencies such as the police and the army to generate fear or unleash terror against those perceived to be non-compliant with their ambition of gaining or maintaining their grip on power. Civilian dictators often use this strategy.

Literature review and the views expressed by informants during the in-depth interviews for this study shows the *Us versus Them* and the *Coercive Power* forms political strategies were mostly used by the politicians in the 2019 National Assembly elections in Gombe state thereby leading to the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior. This was possible due to ethnic and religious diversities and low level of political education among most of the populace or the electorates.

Apart from other factors, political scientists are also concerned with the broad springboard (motivation) of voting categories, which consists of retrospective and prospective perspectives (Fiorina, 1976). The retrospective perspective assesses or

evaluates the previous record of performance of a party or candidate while in power. In this case, the voters plot the graph of the party performance vis-à-vis the campaign promises, achievements, and failures, before taking a final decision on whether to vote for the party or candidate again or not.

On the other hand, prospective voting concerns a party or candidate who has never held public office. In this case, Fiorina (1976) further explains that the vote's decision to vote for the party or against it is predicated on the voter's perception or assessment of the ability or inability of the party or the candidate to perform or deliver if voted, which is as good as a game of chance or probability. However, these types of evaluative disposition to the voting decision are analogous to the instrumental rational choice theory of consumer preference in macroeconomics or vote choice in political behavior. The rational choice theory was fundamentally a theory for the analysis and understanding of individual self-interest or consumer behavior in microeconomics based on cost and benefit analysis of the available alternatives or courses of action.

From the foregoing, it can be understood that the voter and the voting exercise in elections constitute part of the major pillars of democracy. For example, according to Douglas (2013), voting is a form of grassroots decision-making and one of the fundamental democratic rights of the electorates, through which the notion of the supremacy or sovereign will of the people is affirmed. This means voting is a way through which individual voters aggregate their choices or preferences into a collective decision in the electoral process. In other words, voting is the act of formal or legitimate indication of the voter's choice of candidate or political party at an election (Kalin & Sambanis, 2018).

Voting behavior reflects the factors that influence how individuals or identity groups vote for a particular political party or candidate in an election (Babalola, 2020; Andersen & Heath, 2000). Democracy stresses much emphasis on voting behaviour because if the voting behaviour of the citizens or the eligible voters is not guided by the principles of credible democratic elections, there is the possibility that some of the voters may be influenced by undemocratic forces and conducts, such as the use of thugs, money, ethnicity, or religion to influence voting behaviour. Therefore, there should be an effective guarantee of the protection of the rights of the voters against arbitrary electoral laws and undemocratic influences.

Voters have certain rights and liberties, such as the right to freedom of choice in electing their leaders (UN Charter, 1948; CFRN 1999). These rights and freedoms should be free from any form of intimidation, coercion, manipulation, or undue influence of political, ethnic, or religious identities. These key features have made democracy attractive worldwide. Voters should rationally exercise the franchise to choose or elect the candidate or party of their choice without any form of harassment, intimidation, threat, or undue sentiment.

As rightly noted by Bates (1983) and Young (1979), individuals or voters possess numerous identities, such as religious, ethnic, gender, national, regional, or racial, that may be of advantage, or manipulated toward some political interests. Heterogeneity in the areas of ethnic, religious, regional, political, and social class orientations has an overbearing significance on voting behavior and may eventually be used by politicians to influence voting behavior to their advantage.

According to Gutmann (2003), when an identity group induces its members to vote against politically harmful tendencies like gender inequality, political violence or an incompetent candidate, identity groups are perceived as promoting justifiable democratic tradition. On the other hand, when an identity group urges its members to vote based on undue ethnic or religious considerations, identities are seen as influencing voting behavior in the direction of undue sentiment rather than on rational issues. Gutmann's position suggests that ethnic or religious identity could be used or manipulated to influence voting behavior in favor or against democratic ideals.

However, McCauley (2004) argue that the level of the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior varies from country to country, as it has to with the relevance of identities in mobilizing and influencing voting behavior.

Rabushka and Shepsle, (2009) explain that either in the advanced or the developing democracies like Nigeria, political groups such as ethnic and religious identities are increasingly becoming standard features in the politics of many heterogeneous societies and have been exerting considerably, emotionally driven inducement on voting behavior in the electoral process.

It has been observed by scholars that in many countries across the globe, politicians who are hell-bent on winning elections or who are poised to monopolize and sustain their grip on political power, manipulate racial, ethnic or religious identities divisions to influence voting behavior by fomenting inter-ethnic, inter-religious, inter-racial, inter-party, or inter-community crises, thus leading to conflict or violence among the people (Human Rights Watch report, 2011; Carothers & O'Donohue, 2020).

Malaysia is structurally and mainly a country of racial/ethnic (Malay, Chinese, and Indian) and religious (Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism) configuration. These factors have continued to influence voting behavior since the country's independence in 1957 (Welsh, 2020). The manifestation of these structural realities and manipulation by the various cliques of the political elites has led to racial/ethnic and religious conflicts and subsequent polarization of the country along those fault lines of racial/ethnic and religious divides (Welsh, 2014 & 2020). In other words, as it is in several other societies, the political elites have continued to make huge political capital by making appeal to racial, ethnic, and religious sentiments in their uncouth and sometimes unsought ambition to win election and control the reins of power.

Also, in other Asian countries with diverse ethno-religious backgrounds such as Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, the undemocratic ethos or culture of racial, ethnic, and religious manipulation by the political elites to influence voting behavior has become the new 'scientific' method of easily winning elections, ascending to political power, and consolidating power bases. Like in many divided societies, the political elites in many Asian countries deliberately generate and aggravate ethnic and religious prejudices, divisions, and conflicts among the electorates as a form of divide and conquer to build a cult of political support and power base (Arayawuth, et. al., 2021, & Gratias, 2021).

The situation is the same in many Latin American countries. For example, in Trinidad and Tobago, racial/ethnic and religious identities differences among the Indians, the Africans, and the minority Whites are manipulated by the politicians to influence voting behavior to their advantage, thus leading to conflict and violence which sometimes threatens the corporate existence of the country (Premdas, 1996).

According to scholars, in Africa and Nigeria in particular, the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior has always created a lot of tension and conflict, which sometimes led to loss of lives and property. Scholars opine that many unpopular and inordinately ambitious rival politicians or candidates rig elections, while some lack the spirit of sportsmanship and are not ready to accept defeat at the polls even when they know they clearly lost the elections (Beji & Elias, 2017, and Adetoye & Omilusi, 2015). Scholars also submit that through such political intolerance, undemocratic ideals, or postures, rival political parties and candidates, through misinformation or disinformation or propaganda, mobilize and recruit ethnic and religious militias or thugs who unleash violence against their perceived opponents (Human Rights Watch Report, 2011, and Alhaji, et. al., 2018).

For example, after the announcement of the 2011 presidential election result in which the opposition candidate, Muhammadu Buhari (a Northern Muslim) lost to the incumbent president Goodluck Jonathan (a Southern Christian), ethno-religious riots/violence broke out in many Northern and Southern states of Nigeria in rejection or in support of the election result. This led to the loss of 800 lives and destruction of property (Human Rights Watch Report, 2011, and Alhaji, et. al., 2018). Such nasty developments occurred because many Nigerians pay allegiance first to their parochial ethnic and religious identities interest before their national identity interest. Also, low level of democratic culture has been at the background of such undesirable political developments. Therefore, the current study explores the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior as a political strategy in the 2019 National Assembly elections in Gombe state.

1.2 Background of the Study

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious federal republic consisting of six (6) geo-political zones, thirty-six (36) states, a Federal Capital Territory, (FCT), Abuja, and seven hundred and seventy-four (774) Local Government Areas (LGAs). The country is further divided into three tiers of government, which are, the Federal, State, and Local Governments (1999 CFRN). There is no doubt that Nigeria is a heterogeneous society of ethnic, religious, regional, state, or political identities. It is also predominantly a Muslim and Christian country with few traditional religious practitioners (Meek, 1943; Ibrahim, 1991).

The six geo-political zones are 1. North-West: Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara states. 2. Northeast: Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe States. 3. North-Central: Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nassarawa, Niger and Plateau states. 4. South-West: Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo. 5. South-South: Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, Delta, Edo and Rivers states, while the Southeast, consists of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states (Yahaya, 2019). The essence of the establishment of the geopolitical zones is to create ethnic and religious identities integration and harmony to allow for fair political representation. Despite this effort, ethnic and religious intolerance and influence on voting behavior remain one of the factors affecting voting behavior in Gombe state and Nigeria in general. However, this study was conducted in the Northeast geo-political zone of Nigeria, with reference to Gombe state.

Human society is a combination of individual and group identities. But, unlike political parties, many identity groups do not primarily exist to pursue political ends (Campbell et al. 1976). However, Oboh (2017); Sule (2019), argue that as a multi- ethnic and multi-religious society, Nigeria is a country where ethnic and religious identities have primarily influenced voting behaviour even before political independence in 1960. The scholar further opined that in contemporary heterogeneous societies like Gombe state, ethnic and religious affiliations give each member of the society an ethnic and religious identity. However, it should be noted that social or cultural groups become political cleavages when it is politicized, as when ethnicity and religion are politicized and used to influence voting behaviour in the electoral process (Kriesi, et al., 1995).

Scholars such as Agbor (2019); Egobueze and Ojirika (2017), argue that ethnic and religious identities play significant roles in influencing voting behavior during elections, i.e., some voters vote according to the religious or ethnic affiliation or inclination of the candidates. Furthermore, Adetoye and Omilusi (2015) argue that apart from manipulating ethnic and religious identities to mobilize the electorates in support of the political party or candidate of their choice, these same variables are desperately and extensively used by the political class in collaboration with the religious elites, as tools of negotiation for patronage in the sharing of the 'national cake'. In their submission, Tar & Shetima (2010), explain that since the sole objective of a political contest is to win an election and capture political power, the political elites use affiliations such as ethnic and religious identities to shape voting behavior to unseat, outsmart or outdo their opponents and win elections.

All these have negative consequences on voting behaviour and the democratization process in Nigeria. Therefore, the issue of ethnic and religious manipulation by politicians to influence voting behavior has remained one of the major challenges to credible elections and democracy in Nigeria.

Gombe State was created out of the defunct Bauchi state by the military government of the late Head of State, General Sani Abacha on October 1, 1996, Azubuike (2021). Gombe is known as the 'Jewel in the Savannah'. According to the Nigeria Data portal (2006) population census, Gombe state is inhabited by two million, three hundred sixty-five thousand and forty people (2, 365, 040), with an annual growth projection rate of 2.5%. In terms of demography, the Hausa/Fulani constitutes the majority ethnic group in Gombe state (NPC, 2006). With a total land area of 20,265sq. Km., Gombe state shares a common border with Taraba and Adamawa states to the south; Bauchi State to the West; Yobe state to the North; and Borno state to the East (Gombe State Government, 2016-2017).

The ethnic composition consists of the Fulani, Tangale, Hausa, Waja, Tula, Jukun, Bolewa, Dadiya, Tera, Jara, Lunguda, Wurkun/Pero, Kamo, Cham, Awak, Burak, Bangunji, Loh, Kare-kare, Kanuri, Yoruba, and Igbo (History- Gombe State, 2017). Gombe state is largely dominated by the Islamic religion, followed by Christianity, and a few traditional religious adherents (The Economic Times, 2019). Gombe state has eleven (11) Local Government Areas (LGAs) (CFRN, 1999; Higazi & Lar, 2015), which comprise– Akko, Balanga, Billiri, Dukku, Funakaye, Gombe, Kaltungo, Kwami, Nafada, Shongom, and Yamaltu-Deba. It also comprises three (03) geopolitical zones, three (03) Senatorial Districts drawn from each of the three

geopolitical zones, and six Federal House of Representatives constituencies, with each of the three geopolitical zones having two (02) member constituencies (CFRN, 1999; Manpower, 2016).



Figure 1.1: Map of Gombe state showing the eleven (11) Local Government Areas
[Adopted from Google Map 2019]

1.3 The National Assembly (NASS)

Nigeria operates a presidential system of government based on a bi-cameral (two legislative chambers) legislative arm of government, commonly known in Nigeria as the ‘National Assembly’ (NASS), which comprises the Senate (the upper chamber) and the Federal House of Representatives (the lower chamber) (CFRN, 1999 (See Chapter V, Part 1.; Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre [PLAC], 2015). Section 4 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides for the legal establishment of the NASS and its legislative powers or functions. One of the key functions of the legislature is law-making and the upholding of the principles of checks-and-balances within the three arms of government, the purpose of which is to

checkmate the abuse of power that may lead to tyranny or totalitarianism, especially within the executive arm of government.

The number of senate constituency is evenly distributed among the thirty-six (36) states of the federation of Nigeria; hence, each of the thirty-six (36) states in the country has three (03) Senatorial Districts (i.e., each state is represented by three senators at the NASS), plus one (1) Senatorial District or senator from the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Abuja. Therefore, the Senate is made up of a total number of one hundred and nine (109) senators (CFRN [as amended] 1999).

Unlike the senate, the distribution of the Federal House of Representatives is based on population density, with some states like Gombe, Kano, Enugu, and Lagos, having six (06), twenty-four (24), eight (08), and twenty-four (24) Federal Constituencies, respectively. The Federal House of Representatives is made up of a total number of three hundred and sixty (360) members. Therefore, the total number of members of Nigeria's NASS stands at four hundred and sixty-nine (469). Membership of the NASS is by direct democratic election. Members are elected through First Past the Post (FPTP) majoritarian electoral system, where a candidate who gets the most votes or simple majority of the lawful votes cast, is declared as the winner by the electoral umpire (CFRN [as amended] 1999, See Chapter V, Part 1 [D]). This study covered the two chambers of the National Assembly, with special reference to the members representing Gombe state. The detailed breakdown of the Senatorial Districts and the Federal House of Representatives constituencies are provided in Tables 1.1 and Table 1.2 below.

Table 1.1: Senatorial Districts in Gombe state

S/No	Senatorial District	LGAs	Ethnic Identities	Religious Identities	Remark
1	Gombe North	Gombe, Kwami, Dukku, Funakaye, and Nafada.	Hausa/Fulani, Bolewa, Kanuri, and Kare-kare.	Islam and Christianity.	Dominant ethnic identities are Hausa/Fulani and Bolewa. The dominant religious identity is Islam. An insignificant number of Christians exist here.
2	Gombe Central	Akko and Yamaltu- Deba	Hausa/Fulani, Tera, Tangale, and Kanuri.	Jukun, Islam and Christianity.	Dominant ethnic identities are Hausa/Fulani and Tera. A significant number of Christians are found but Islam is the dominant religious identity.
3	Gombe South	Balanga, Billiri, Kaltungo, and Shongom.	Tangale, Waja, Tula, Cham, Wurkun, Burak, Awak	Islam and Christianity	Dominant Ethnic identity is the Tangale. Christianity is the dominant religious identity. Islam is not pronounced.

[Source: Generated by the researcher (2021)]

Table 1.2: Federal House of Representatives Constituencies in Gombe state

S/N	Federal Constituency	LGA	Ethnic Identities	Religious Identities	Remark
1	Akko	Akko	Hausa/Fulani, Tera, Jukun, Tangale, and Kanuri.	Islam and Christianity.	Islam is the dominant religious identity while the Hausa/Fulani is the dominant ethnic identity.
2	Balanga- Billiri	Balanga and Billiri.	Tangale, Waja, Tula, Wurkun, Burak, Cham, Kanuri, Kamo/Awak, and Lunguda.	Islam and Christianity.	Christianity is the dominant religious identity while the Tangale is the dominant ethnic identity.
3	Dukku- Nafada	Dukku and Nafada.	Hausa/Fulani and Kare- kare.	Islam and Christianity.	Islam is the dominant religious identity while Hausa/Fulani is the dominant ethnic identity.
4	Gombe, Kwami, and Funakaye.	Gombe, Kwami, and Funakaye	Hausa/Fulani, Bolewa, Tera, and Kanuri	Islam and Christianity.	Hausa/Fulani is the dominant ethnic identity.
5	Kaltungo- Shongom	Kaltungo and Shongom.	Tangale, Tula, Wurkun, and Burak.	Islam and Christianity.	Islam is the dominant religious identity while Hausa/Fulani is the dominant ethnic identity.
6	Yamaltu- Deba	Yamaltu- Deba	Tera and Hausa/Fulan i.	Islam and Christianity.	Christianity is the dominant religious identity while Tangale is the dominant ethnic identity. Islam is the dominant religious identity while Tera is the dominant ethnic identity.

[Source: Generated by the researcher (2021)]

The above table shows that Gombe Central and Gombe North zones or Senatorial Districts are predominantly Muslims because of their early contact with the Islamic religion through Arab traders via the Trans-Saharan trade. This is also true of Gombe South Senatorial District which is predominantly Christians because of their early contact with Christian missionary activities in the area (The Economic Times, 2019). It is also in Gombe South that a substantial chunk of the population of minority groups live. Few Christian missionary activities existed in Gombe Central too, but the whole of Gombe North and the broader stretch of Gombe Central are predominantly Muslims (The Economic Times, 2019).

Since the return of democratic rule in 1999, there have been five democratic elections, where different social identities, such as the ethnic and the religious, played key roles in influencing voting behaviour in the different elections conducted (Sule, 2019; Higazi, 2015). Ethnic and religious identities have always generated tensions and anxiety with dire consequences of political violence during election and post-election periods. However, the use of religious identities in this study is limited to the Islamic and Christian religions because the believers in traditional religions are too small or insignificant and inconsequential to be considered in the study.

From the above explanation, it's generally shown that ethnic and religious identities influence voting behaviour in Gombe state, but it's not specifically known whether ethnic and religious identities influenced the 2019 National Assembly elections in Gombe state. Therefore, Gombe state was chosen as the study location because it is one of the states in Nigeria with diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, where politicians manipulate ethnic and religious identities to influence voting behavior for

their selfish political ends (Sule 2019 and Higazi & Lar 2015). Also, Gombe state was chosen as the study location because, so far, little is known about the subject matter because scholars have not done much to systematically address the issues. Therefore, this study explored the influence of political strategies using ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior in 2019 National Assembly elections in Gombe state thereby filling the gap and contributing to knowledge.

1.4 Statement of Problem

Several scholars such as Steinmetz (2021), Muller-Rommel & Geibel (2020), Toros & Birch (2019), Dalton, Shin, & Jou (2007), Dahl, Shapiro, & Cheibub (2003), posit that democracy provides for a free, fair, credible and peaceful electoral exercise that guarantees the voters the rights to freedom of choice in the electoral process; manifest inclusive grassroots political participation and decision making; satisfactory and legitimate election outcome; democratic stability; and majority rule; all of which constitute the crux and bedrock of democracy. However, contrary to the above scenario, scholars such as Sule (2019), and Higazi & Lar (2015), argue that since the creation of Gombe state in 1996, voters have been subjected to intimidation through the manipulation of ethnic and religious identities by the politicians to influence voting behavior to achieve their political goals.

Consequently, the voters have not been voting based on their free will and as such, they lose their right to freedom of choice in the electoral process. Such development constitutes an aberration that translates into a serious case of disenfranchisement of the voters and disabling of democracy, which is contrary to the principles of universal

suffrage, the right to a free and fair election, and freedom of choice, as enshrined in the liberal democratic system (UN Charter, 1948; CFRN, Chapter 4; INEC, 2019; Steinz, 2021). In other words, the encroachment on the rights of the voters in the electoral process contravenes democratic norms and gradually whittles down the enthusiasm or interest of the voters in the electoral process and by extension, the democratic institutions or system (Emeaku, 2019; Christiane, 2017; Houle, 2018).

It has been further observed by some scholars that voter in Gombe state and Nigeria, in general, have been denied their full rights and freedom to exercise their franchise due to the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior, which has led to the intimidation of the voters (Oboh, 2017; Sule, 2019). The intimidation of voters poses a serious threat to democracy, which, if not properly checkmated could affect the democratization process in Gombe state or Nigeria in general (Sule, 2019 & Toros & Birch, 2019). However, efforts were made by the government and non-governmental organizations to tackle the problem of the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior through political education. Despite the efforts, the problem continues and remains one of the most challenging factors in Gombe state democracy since the creation of the state in 1996.

The sustained influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior with its attendant problem of voter intimidation and the pervasion of the democratization process has become a serious issue of concern in Gombe state and indeed Nigeria (Sule, 2019; Egobueze, & Ojirika, 2017). But what is voter intimidation? Voter intimidation is a deliberate unlawful act involving the use of threat, coercion or force by an individual or group of people with the intent of preventing a voter from voting

or forcing the voter to vote against his free will (Idisi, 2017; Project Vote, 2010); thereby subverting the voter's right to freedom of choice and undermining the institution of democracy.

For instance, Onapajo (2012); Agbor (2019), explains that in some places of worship such as churches, religious leaders openly direct their followers to vote for a particular political party, co-ethnics or co-religionist candidate, threatening to curse any of their followers who may refuse to obey their orders. The scholars further argue that voting along ethnic and religious lines may further polarize the voters into hostile ethnic and religious camps, especially between the majority and minority ethnic and religious identities.

Toros and Birch (2019), explain that the act of intimidation may scare or compel the voters to vote against their rational choice, thereby losing their freedom of choice. The voter's loss of freedom of choice may suggest the voter is just a strategic instrument of divide-and-rule in the hands of the political elites as they compete for political power. Therefore, some scholars argue that voting behavior could be subverted, undermined or depressed when voting decisions are driven by the activation of ethnic and religious identities as instruments of votes mobilization for political interest articulation by parties or candidates (Houle, 2018; Simpser. 2012; Hirschl et al., 2009).

Suhay, (2014); Toros and Birch, (2019), argue that any form of undue external pressure, passive or active intimidation or coercive practice that may prevent the voter from freely casting his vote is likely to undermine the voter's freedom to express his choice of party or candidate and this polarizes the voters along ethnic and religious

divides. The scholars further submit that as the society splits into hostile ethnic and religious camps, voters are likely to be intimidated, which may portend great danger of instability not only to the electoral system but also to the democratic political institution.

Scholars submit that in Gombe state and Nigeria, ethnic and religious identities have been playing a significant role in shaping voting behavior since 1923 due to the elites' political interest (Sule, 2019; Oboh 2017). They further opine that weak or threatened political elites could manipulate ethnicity and religion to influence voting behaviour to their political advantage, thereby intimidating and denying the voters the right to freely choose their leaders.

Perhaps it is because of such voter intimidation that Gutmann (2003) argues that when voting behavior is increasingly shaped by ethnic and religious identities, it intimidates and constrains the voter from exercising his/her freedom of choice in favor of voter conformity and allegiance to selfish elites or identity group interest. Thus, Coleman (2004) submits that when voters vote in conformity with the norms of their ethnic or religious identities, the result of the election may not genuinely reflect or represent the choices or opinions of the voters. Therefore, the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior in Gombe state, and Nigeria may worsen the increasing perception of the intimidation of voters during elections.

Kelly, (2016) further emphasized that in divided societies aspirants to public elective positions are perceived as mere representatives or chieftains of ethnic and religious identities, in which case "elections becomes mere ethnic headcounts." All these

tendencies are likely to lead to voter intimidation and the consequent furtherance of the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior in Gombe state.

The scholars further argue that the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behaviour could also intensify the fear of ineffectual, futile or hopeless voting exercise among minority identities, and may encourage the syndrome of "permanent" majorities or "permanent" minorities, especially among minority ethnic and religious identities (Obboh, 2017; Coleman, 2004). Consequently, the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior may further lead to the electoral culture of winner-takes-all, also known as the zero-sum character of elections (Mbah, Nwangwu, and Ugwu, 2019).

Sule (2018) maintains that the syndrome of winner-takes-all may virtually affect voting behavior, which sometimes leads to low voter turnout during an election. Sule (2015; 2019), submits that previous studies have shown that voters voted on an ethnic and religious identities basis in the 2011, 2015 and 2019 general elections in Gombe state, signifying the increasing or continuous problem of the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behaviour during elections, which the current study seeks to explore further. Many scholars believe that the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior intimidates, polarizes and undermines voter freedom of choice and "depresses" democracy by hampering efforts towards democratic "change of government" (Simpser, 2012; Hillman et al. 2015, p.1; Rabushka and Shepsles, 1972). Such depression may further accentuate or deepen the issue of the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior in Gombe state.

Given the sensitive nature of the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior, the federal government-initiated a sensitization policy with the view to discouraging unhealthy ethnic and religious politics, mainly during elections (Nwankwo, Ocheni, & Atakpa, 2012). The National Orientation Agency (NOA) was established by Decree 100 of 1993, now an Act of the National Assembly, Caps 64, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria (Ogun 2019), as the key government agency for orientation and re-orientating of Nigerian citizens on the promotion of good conducts, such as ethnic democracy, ethnic and religious tolerance, economic, political, and social justice (Nwankwo, Ocheni, & Atakpa, 2012). However, the agency (NOA) has failed to achieve its core mandate due to several factors such as under-funding, undermining, or corruption.

In complementing government efforts to address the issues of ethnic and religious intolerance, and other forms of moral decay, Christian and Muslim faith adherents formed a Non-Governmental Organization, what came to be known as the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) in 1999 (Egwu 2019). The main objective of the organization is to discourage hostile ethnic and religious divisions, and political conflict among Nigerians and promote democratic values that guarantee voters' right to freedom of choice, thereby creating a healthy ethnic and religious identities relationship, especially in the political arena.

NIREC could not succeed in delivering its main objective due to some factors which include lack of funds which hindered it from reaching out to the target population throughout the country. For example, studies conducted by scholars such as Sule (2019) and Mbah, Nwangwu, & Ugwu, (2019), reveal that despite several campaigns

and appeals by the government and NIREC for peace, ethnic and religious tolerance, voter freedom of choice, the problem of voter intimidation continued even during the last 2019 general elections in Gombe state and Nigeria in general.

However, despite a plethora of evidence that suggests the prevalence of the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behaviour in Gombe state, there is hardly any systematic study that has been conducted in the area. Studies such as Abubakar, Bin Othman, & Bin Mustaffa, (2017); Achimugu, et al. (2013); Adeforiti (2016); Adegbami & Uche (2015); Adetoye & Omilusi (2015); Adetoye & Omilusi (2016); Agbibo (2012); Agbor (2019); Alhaji, Ahmed, & Wali (2018); Bashir (2013); Ukiwo (2003); Agbu (2004); Onapajo, (2012); Sule et al. (2017; 2018); and Sule, (2019), focused on political behavior themes and voting patterns in Nigeria during the Fourth Republic (1999-2020).

Nevertheless, the above scholars dwelt on issues such as ethnic and religious conflicts, money politics, regional politics, political thuggery and electoral violence, and other factors that shape voting behavior in Nigeria but none of them specifically and systematically addressed the issue of the “Influence of Ethnic and Religious Identities on Voting Behavior in the 2019 National Assembly Elections in Gombe state”, which this study has addressed.

The exception is Sule, (2019), who examined the 2019 general election in Gombe state, which is the area of study, except for the scope. However, he did not specifically address the issue of the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior during the 2019 National Assembly elections in Gombe state; his focus was the general elections in Gombe state which included the presidential, gubernatorial, National

Assembly, and State House of Assembly elections in Gombe state. Furthermore, he did not go in-depth but generally highlighted isolated issues that shape the pattern of voting behavior, such as religion, money politics, clientele or patronage politics, regional factors, ethnicity, and violence (Sule 2019). The study is weak because it focused on the analysis of the electoral results instead of the critical analysis of voting behavior. The study also used only content analysis as means of data collection while this study used both content analysis and in-depth semi-structured interviews as methods of rich data collection for the study.

Theoretically, Sule (2019) used only the instrumental approach to rational choice theory, which of course, could not allow him to explain how the expressive behavior elements contributed to explaining the pattern of voting behavior in the 2019 general elections in Gombe state which his study devoted much attention. However, this study applied both the instrumental and the expressive approaches to rational choice theory in the data analysis and discussion. Because of the above factors, the study has fallen short of a systematic study of voting behavior borne out of the perspective of the influence of ethnic and religious identities in the 2019 National Assembly elections in Gombe state.

Furthermore, the attempts by the government and organization to address the problem appears inadequate. This submission is corroborated by Sule (2019: 63), when he asserted, "It has been observed by the researcher that studies that are concerned with election and democratic issues in Gombe State are not only inadequate but are practically non-existent." Nevertheless, current literature has not explored the specific problem of the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior. This

means that the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior in Gombe state and Nigeria, in general, may worsen the issue of voter intimidation if not addressed.

Kelly, (2016) maintains that studies on voting behavior have shown a substantial gap and the central questions reflecting on ethnic and religious voting in many democratizing societies which may include Gombe state and Nigeria, remained unanswered. However, the questions bordering on the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior in the 2019 National Assembly elections in Gombe state which hitherto remained unanswered have been answered through this research. Hence, the study has succeeded in filling the gap and contributing to knowledge.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the strategies used by the politicians to influence ethnic and religious identities voting behavior in the 2019 National Assembly in Gombe state?
2. How did the influence of ethnic and religious identities on the voters affect voting behavior in the 2019 National Assembly elections in Gombe state?
3. Why did ethnic and religious identities influence voting behavior in the 2019 National Assembly elections in Gombe state?
4. What is the outcome of government and group efforts in addressing the issue of the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior in the 2019 National Assembly elections in Gombe state?

1.6 Research Objectives

The aim or general objective of this study is to explore the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society like

Nigeria, specifically during the 2019 National Assembly elections in Gombe state. The following are the specific objectives of the study.

1. To identify the strategies used by the politicians in manipulating ethnic and religious identities to influence voting behavior in the 2019 National Assembly elections in Gombe state.
2. To investigate how the influence of ethnic and religious identities on the voters affected voting behaviour in the 2019 National Assembly elections in Gombe state.
3. To examine the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior in the 2019 National Assembly elections in Gombe state.
4. To examine the outcome of government and group efforts in addressing the issue of the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior in Gombe state.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The 2019 National Assembly election is adopted in this study because it is the latest democratic election conducted in Gombe state and Nigeria as a whole. The study examined the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior in the 2019 National Assembly elections in Gombe state. The motivation for conducting the study in Gombe state is because it is one of the states in Nigeria with diverse ethnic and religious identities and where previous studies have shown that since its creation in 1996, the politicians have been manipulating ethnic and religious identities to influence voting behavior to their advantage, which negates the principles of liberal democracy. Therefore, the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior has been denying the voters of their rights to freedom of choice; preventing the emergence of competent candidates; creating conflict among the various ethnic and religious identities; creating voter apathy and low turnout among the voters; stultifying

and weakening the democratization process in Gombe state and Nigeria in general, among others.

Furthermore, this study is highly interested in the National Assembly elections because the National Assembly is one of the three key arms of the government and the significant role the legislature plays in law-making, checks and balances, oversight functions, and contributing to the enhancement of accountability and good governance. The lives and affairs or activities of humankind in society are governed by laws; not just any law, but laws that are good enough for the purposes they are enacted. For example, a bad electoral law made by incompetent members of the National Assembly may create electoral or political problems for the voters, weaken the tenets of democracy and affect the country.

This means that if members of the National Assembly are not elected based on merit but rather based on undue sentiments, such as ethnicity and religion, Gombe state may likely be represented by ethnically and religiously biased and incompetent senators and members of the federal house of representatives who may end up making bad laws and undermining good governance in the country. On the other hand, as it is the wish of this study, if members of the National Assembly are elected based on integrity, merit and competence, democracy and good governance will continue to receive a boost and Gombe state citizens and indeed Nigerians will stand to benefit from its lofty dividends. Therefore, this study is significant as it is geared towards voter freedom of choice and finding ways of stamping out sentiments and promoting the credible election of members of the NASS.

The study is further significant in the area of practical contribution to policymakers. For example, government policymakers could use the study findings to make policies on improving political awareness or education on the rights and freedom of choice in the electoral process among the political class and the voters alike. Or create awareness against the use of threats or intimidation by the political class and their collaborators to manipulate ethnic and religious identities to influence voting behavior.

Furthermore, the study findings and recommendations could be used for policy-making on poverty alleviation since poverty is identified by this study as one of the major factors the politicians manipulate to influence voting behavior as evidenced in some of the study's findings about vote-selling, vote-buying and recruitment of poor and unemployed youths as political thugs. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) could also use the study findings for policymaking too. All these will go a long way in sanitizing voting behavior by making it issue-oriented, thereby deepening the democratization process in Gombe state and Nigeria as a whole.

The study is also methodologically significant because by adopting the use of online Zoom meetings, WhatsApp and regular phone calls through which the in-depth interview was conducted to obtain primary data, a lot of rich data were collected from the informants who were not under any tension of a face-to-face interview. Contributions on the study area in Gombe state by previous scholars such as Sule (2019) and Higazi (2015), never used primary data nor applied online zoom meetings, WhatsApp or regular phone calls for their data collection, but rather used secondary data via the content analysis of journal articles, books, or government documents.

Another practical significance of the study is that in Gombe state and Nigeria in general, the study area or focus (influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior) is one of the most challenging areas that affects Nigerian democracy but has not been systematically explored as it has been done by this study.

Therefore, voters, pro-democracy politicians, and other pro-democracy groups will be interested in the study because the study has addressed one of the major problem areas (identity politics and voter intimidation) of Nigerian political behavior and the democratization process. In other words, some groups that are genuinely interested in ending the issue of the coercion or manipulation of ethnic and religious identities to influence voting behavior in the electoral process will find the study useful in tackling the influence of primordial sentiments such as ethnic and religious identities to influence voting behavior in Gombe state and Nigeria as a whole.

Furthermore, the study will be of great value or significance to election management bodies such as Nigeria's INEC, and local and international election monitoring groups, within the orbit of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) or Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), with the view to encouraging and enhancing healthy political participation, credible and peaceful elections that will enjoy the legitimacy of stakeholders and accelerate the democratization process in Gombe state or Nigeria as a whole.

Despite the serious threats or the disenfranchisement of the voters and the subordination of democratic values on the altar of selfish and parochial political expediency by the politicians, very little has been done by scholars to systematically

address the ever-increasing problem of the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior in Gombe state. The processes and methods of data collection and analysis used in this study would be a source of reference to other researchers who may be interested in conducting research using a qualitative approach. Therefore, this study has successfully filled the hitherto existing void or research gap and contributed to knowledge to the benefit of the political class, the voters, voting behavior, the academics, and the academic field of political behavior and electoral democracy.

1.8 Scope of the Study

The location of this study is Gombe state, which is one of the thirty-six states in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The 2019 National Assembly election is adopted in this study because it is the latest democratic election conducted in Gombe state and Nigeria as a whole. Given the scope of the study, the primary and secondary data collected are within the scope and geographical boundary of Gombe state and the 2019 National Assembly elections, i.e., the study is limited to the period of the 2019 general elections in the state and is concerned only with the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior in the National Assembly elections in Gombe state.

Ethnic and religious sentiments have been at the forefront of influencing voting behavior in Gombe state and Nigeria as a whole, thus making a mockery of democratic elections and assaulting the basic principles of liberal democracy. Therefore, the study is restricted to the examination of the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior in the 2019 NASS elections in Gombe state.

The literature review amply revealed that since the creation of Gombe state in 1996, politicians have been manipulating ethnic and religious identities to influence voting behavior to achieve their political interests to the detriment of the rights of the voters to freedom of choice and democracy. Furthermore, as significant as the legislature is to a country's law-making, checks and balancing of powers among the three arms of government, good governance, and the democratization process, the literature review has so far shown little or no systematic research commitment to the study of the influence of ethnic and religious identities in the elections of the members of the National Assembly since the creation of Gombe state. In other words, despite this undemocratic behavior, scholars have given little attention to subjecting the problem to systematic research to address the problem. Therefore, it is significant that this study addressed and filled the hitherto existing gap and contributed to knowledge.

By way of summary, the focus and scope of this study are on the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior in the 2019 National Assembly elections in Gombe state. The study is a case study of Gombe state, of the 2019 general elections, and of the National Assembly positions. In other words, the study was restricted to the following: a) the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior, 2) the National Assembly, 3) the 2019 general elections, and 4) Gombe state of Nigeria.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

Limitations of the research are the weaknesses or shortcomings inherent in a study that a researcher encounters, and which are beyond the researcher's control (Akanle, et. al., 2020). No matter the level of its excellence or how well it has been conducted, no

research is flawless: some limitations are simply unavoidable and unsurmountable in any research exercise. In other words, even the clearest piece of farmland has its share of weeds. Therefore, like any other study, this study is not an exception.

As a case study of Gombe state and the 2019 National Assembly elections, this study is limited to the geographical area of Gombe state, limited to the boundary of the National Assembly elections and time-bound to the year or period of 2019. Therefore, the findings cannot be used to generalize the phenomenon of the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior in the remaining thirty-five states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FGN); other elections, such as the Presidential or Gubernatorial elections; or the periods before 2019. This is because the situation in other states of the federation may not be the same as what was obtained in Gombe state.

Limitations also manifested during the data collection, where some key informants vehemently objected to the taking of their pictures or photos during the online Zoom Meeting interview despite the assurances of confidentiality. Given this development, the researcher had no option but to allow the informant to opt-out. The researcher had to consult further before getting those that complied. Also, some grassroots informants such as community leaders (who are gate keepers of their communities) refused to participate in the interview because of the fear that if they give sensitive information the ruling party in the state could dethrone them.

Furthermore, because the researcher is a Muslim by faith, some Christian leaders outrightly refused to participate in the interview because they didn't trust the

researcher whom they felt could a spy. However, since the willingness to participate in the interview is one of the eligibility criteria for informants' selection, the researcher had to dispense of such community leaders and sought those who obliged and fully participated by providing useful information that enabled the researcher to answer the research questions.

This study is about democracy, specifically political behavior, but it's especially concerned with the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior. Therefore, the study could not cover all aspects of democracy or voting behavior. Therefore, the study cannot be used to answer all questions about political behavior or democracy in general, it's limited by the contexts within which it was carried out. However, despite the limitations of the study, all eighteen informants cooperated and were able to provide valuable information that facilitated the extraction of the relevant information or data needed for the study.

1.10 Definition of Terms

Definition or clarification of terms is an essential tradition in research where scholars define or explain key terms derived from the title of the research work. Operational clarification is essential because some concepts may have multiple meanings. In this case, the researcher must reach out for definitions, and finally align himself with those relevant to his research work, thereby saving the reader from the confusion that may arise from the ambiguity of some concepts. In this study, the key terms/concepts are political strategy, identities, ethnic identity, religious identity, and voting behavior.

1.10.1 Political strategy

The struggle for political power revolves around the adoption of a variety of political strategies by competing political parties and candidates with the goal of outmaneuvering to frustrate opponents and capture power during elections (Azu, 2013). Also, Paquette (2002) and Spacey (2019), maintain that political strategy is an organized effort or plan of action by politicians or parties aimed at outsmarting rival contenders for public offices with the main goal of winning election and acquiring formal political power. The scholars further added that political strategy encompasses activities such as election campaigns, policy advocacy, or inter-party coalition building.

Political strategy can be categorized into various forms. Spacey (2019) highlights that, among others, political strategy includes Divide and Conquer, where unpopular or weak but desperate politicians exploit and amplify minor differences such as ethnic, religious, gender, or regional differences among the people or the electorates to win elections; Us versus Them, where the political elites create unnecessary story of an impending foreign domination or attack or conflict among the various groups within the society, giving the impression that on their candidates or parties can avert the problems; and Coercive Power, where politicians use the ethnic, religious, or regional militias or the state security agencies such as the police and the army to generate fear or unleash terror against those perceived to be non-compliant with their ambition of gaining or maintaining their grip on power. Civilian dictators often use this strategy.

1.10.2 Identities

Mol (1978), maintains that the social sciences provide two different perspectives on the use of identity. The first way to conceptualize identity is the notion of immutability (e.g., ethnic group), or at least the slowly changing center of human personality that expresses itself in all facets of the undertakings of an individual (e.g., young to old, adolescent to adult), notwithstanding the influences of various role models. The second method relates to the transitory and adaptable self as individuals mutate or transit from one social background to another social background (e.g., from lower to upper class, or vice versa), theoretically offering a somewhat different identity as it were on each occasion.

To emphasize his argument, he points out that the first conceptualization raises the question of the involuntary aspect of identity, while the second raises the issue of the adaptability of identity. The former is reinforced in primary groups, likely in early life; while the latter persists, given that a significant amount of life is lived outside primary groups in environments. There are several observations to be noted in the light of the two conceptualizations of identity: both conceptualizations seem acceptable and therefore relevant; some institutional spheres, in the first sense, it is, of course, important, especially in terms of the family; while in the second sense, other institutional domains, such as the workplace, are relevant.

Sources of the second conceptualization of culture are other social contexts such as religion and ethnicity (Hammond, 1988). This means that primary and secondary groups play an essential role in forming the identity of individuals or groups at a given point in time. Mostly, in the creation of identity, family, and secondary settings such as schools or workplaces seem necessary (Oppong, 2013).

1.10.3 Ethnic Identity

As explained earlier, Gombe state is home to some ethnic identities, which play an essential role in influencing voter behavior during elections. It is, therefore, vital to explore what constitutes ethnic identity. The noun, 'identity', refers to the actual state of being who or what a person or thing is. In other words, for human beings, identity simply means any social category, (such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, class, ideology, political party, or profession) in which an individual is eligible to be a member (Fearon, 1999). In the opinion of some scholars, ethnic identity is a natural occurrence because we did not choose identities; instead, we are born into specific ethnic groups (Adeforit, 2018). Therefore, an ethnic group's consciousness is not something abnormal (Adeforit, 2018), which was earlier suggested by Chandra (2006), who maintained those ethnic identities are subsets of identity categories in which associative attributes with ancestral descent determine membership eligibility.

Scholars like Gahnstrom (2012), Adeforit (2018), argued that ethnic identity might be divided into three separate categories: social, political and cultural ethnicities. Ethnicity is defined as the use of ethnic identity in the pursuit of public resources and is divided into two other subgroups: political tribalism and politics of origin. The former (political tribalism) refers to suggestions/evocations of the particular ethnic group identities, and that is alluded to, in political competition with other ethnic groups or identities. The latter (politics of origin) then connotes political references to identities of origin that are not reducible to political tribalism. These distinctions are essential to make to assess the nature and consequences of any case of ethnic politics.

In social psychological parlance, ethnic identity is a dynamic, multidimensional construct that refers to one's identity, or sense of self, as a member of an ethnic group. Ethnic identity changes over time in response to the context of its development. Feelings of insecurity or perceived threats regarding one's ethnic identity can lead to ethnic violence, and if one may add, it may also lead to ethnic 'defense' in different spheres of life, including the electoral process. The optimal outcome of the ethnic identity formation process is the achievement of a secure and confident sense of one's ethnicity (Phinney, 2001).

1.10.4 Religious Identity

Whether national or transnational, religious identities are social constructions. In other words, just like other personal and collective identities, they are not natural like gender identity, although the advocates of some religious identities often make such claims

(Bell, 2010). Religious identity is primarily the self-identification with a particular religion and religious group. It is an identity that endures beyond our physical world, i.e., it reaches out to the realm of the divine world. Werbner (2009) argues that when we speak of religious identity, we imply or refer to a particular way of approaching 'difference', in this case, religious difference.

Religious identity is, above all, a discourse of boundaries (between a particular religion and others), relatedness (e.g., religious sects or denominations as it is in Christianity) and otherness, on the one hand, and inclusiveness, on the other – and of the powerful forces that are perceived to challenge, contest and preserve these distinctions and

unities. In this sense, the conjunction of religion and identity is both more, and less, than religion, seen broadly as a world-encompassing way of life relating to the sacred, and identity, as the locus of self and subjectivity.

Religious identity may be appealed to or tapped to mobilize support or secure a vote in an electoral contest. It could also be used to explain or legitimize conflicts between and within religious groups. Such happens whenever groups are torn apart by factional or sectarian divisions, or engage among themselves in arguments of identity, often passionate and sometimes violent, even where doctrinal differences appear to be minimal. Religious identity often occurs discursively in the public domain when encounters with opposing or attacking communities question established religions.

This is typically when religion is politicized; for example, when a religious group that asserts itself seeks to infiltrate or control the state, reform the way of living and thinking of subjects, or alter civil society in the name of inspirational or transcendental moral teachings or precepts. Religious identity becomes essential for public discourse on such occasions and a source of unexplained desire or passion.

For believers, religious identity marks, above all, the division between human and sacred worlds, person or God, sacred and profane (Werbner, 2009). This study will adopt the definition and explanation provided by Werbner (2009) as the operational definition.

1.10.5 Voting Behavior

Also known as electoral behavior, voting behavior relates to the understanding of what motivates people to vote the way they do during an election. In other words, what factors influence the choice of certain parties or candidates? Why do voters for candidate X but against candidate Y? Understanding the voting behavior of a people should reflect the political context of political culture and socialization. The study and analysis of voting behavior incorporate the psychological state of mind and the political socialization of the voters, and also the institutional orientations of the society or polity (Antunes, 2010, Akhter & Sheikh, 2014). Voting behavior consists of instrumental and expressive approaches.

1.11 Research Framework

The research framework is the structure that explains the direction of the research process as illustrated in the diagram below.

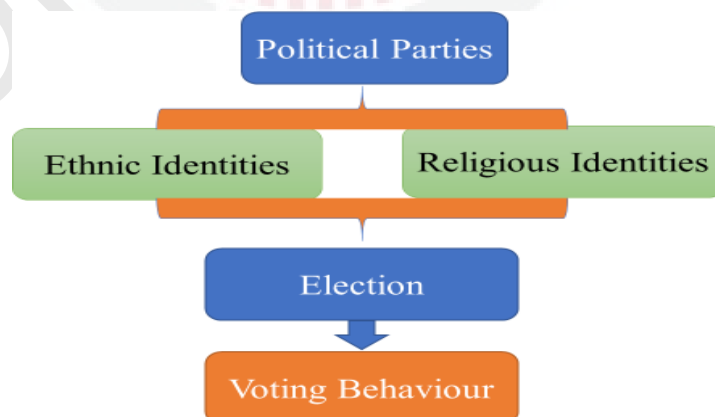


Figure 1.2: Diagram of the Research Framework
[Source: Constructed by the researcher (2022)]

The above diagram of the research framework illustrates that the politicians who belong to the various political parties, manipulate the various ethnic and religious identities during elections to influence voting behavior and achieve their political ambitions. Having been indoctrinated and manipulated along ethnic or religious lines, most of the voters go to the polling centers with pre-indoctrinated mindsets and cast their votes. At the end of the voting exercise or election, winners will be declared and returned as duly elected by the electoral umpire (INEC). At this juncture, the results of the elections will reveal the voting behavior pattern, i.e., the factors that influenced the voting behavior of the voters.

1.12 Organization of the Chapters

Chapter one (1) consists of the introduction to the study, the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the research questions, the research objectives, the significance of the study, the scope and limitation of the study, the definition of terms, and the conceptual framework. Chapter two (2) presents the review of relevant literature and the theoretical framework. Chapter three (3) deals with the research methodology. Chapter four (4) presents the research findings and discussion. Chapter five (5) consists of the study summary, conclusion, and recommendation.

1.13 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter sets the foundation for the entire research work. It consists of the background of the study, where the influence of identities such as ethnicity and religion, on voting behavior in a democratic election and the study area of political

behavior (voting behavior) are highlighted. This chapter equips the reader with an understanding of the instrumental and expressive approaches to understanding the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior. Highlight the right of the voter to freedom of choice and its obstruction or denial in the electoral process, and the Rational Choice Theory adopted in this study is made.

The background of the study location or area of Gombe state; the multi-ethnic and religious composition of the state, and how they have been playing significant roles in influencing voting behavior since the creation of the state in 1996; how it affects the voters and the democratization process in Gombe state and Nigeria as a whole, are discussed. Since the study examined the influence of ethnic and religious identities on voting behavior in the 2019 National Assembly elections in Gombe state, a detailed explanation of what constitutes Nigeria's National Assembly, its functions, and significance in law-making, checks-and-balances within the three arms of government, oversight functions, and role in ensuring good governance, are made explicit. Given this, the frequent manipulation of ethnic and religious identities by some unpopular and unscrupulous politicians to influence the election of members of the National Assembly, and the little research attention given by scholars in this regard, has been identified as the research gap that this study filled.

This chapter also explains or captures the problem statement of the study, which is the explicit explanation of the existing problem of voter intimidation and the research gap which inspired the need for this research. This is followed by the research questions and the research objectives. The scope and limitation of the study, which is the clear explanation of the boundary of this study and the difficulties the study experienced;

the significance of the study, i.e., the importance of the study, or why the researcher thinks the study is worth embarking upon; the research framework and the theoretical framework. Definition of the key terms in the study, which provides the definition and how the terms should be understood in the context of this study. Finally, the organization of the chapters of the study are provided.



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