



Voter Education, Electoral Peace, and Environmental Awareness in South-South Nigeria: Findings from a Descriptive Survey

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Abstract: The study examined public perceptions of voter education, democratic participation, electoral peace, and environmental awareness in South-South Nigeria. Grounded in Human Security Theory, the study employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey design to determine whether respondents perceived that voter education promotes peaceful electoral participation and environmentally responsible electoral conduct within a politically volatile and environmentally vulnerable region. Data were collected from August to December 2025 using a structured electronic questionnaire administered through SurveyMonkey with online convenience sampling. A total of 5,000 valid responses were obtained across the six states of South-South Nigeria. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and the Chi-square (χ^2) test of association. The findings showed that 76% of respondents agreed that voter education contributes to citizens' understanding of electoral processes, while 75% agreed that sustained voter education contributes to peaceful coexistence before, during, and after elections. Regarding environmental awareness, 68% of respondents agreed that integrating environmental messages into voter education helps mitigate harmful electoral practices such as vandalism, pollution, and tyre burning. Inferential analysis further revealed statistically significant associations between perceptions of voter education and democratic participation ($\chi^2 = 842.61$, $p < 0.05$), electoral peace ($\chi^2 = 916.37$, $p < 0.05$), and environmental awareness ($\chi^2 = 684.24$, $p < 0.05$). The study concludes that most respondents in South-South Nigeria view voter education as a vital civic tool that can promote electoral peace, democratic participation, and environmental awareness in a fragile democratic environment. The study recommends sustained voter education campaigns and the incorporation of environmental awareness into civic sensitisation programmes in politically sensitive areas.

Keywords: Democracy, Electoral Violence, Environmental Awareness, Human Security, Voter Education.

1. Introduction

Elections are an integral part of the democratic process and provide citizens with a means of selecting their leaders and holding them accountable. When properly conducted, they can reinforce social cohesion, strengthen institutions, and consolidate democratic governance (Moh'd, 2025; Sanni & Ahmed-Audu, 2025; Mamabolo, 2024). In Nigeria's South-South region, however, elections are too often marred by violence and environmental degradation. Political clashes arising from struggles for political power, voter intimidation, and property destruction have become commonplace. This violence undermines the credibility of elections and citizens' trust in electoral institutions, while also harming both people and ecosystems (Jalloh, 2025; Adewara *et al.*, 2025; International Crisis Group, 2023). Election-related violence affects human lives directly, but it also endangers the environment through the burning of vehicles, houses, tyres, and electoral materials, the use of explosives, and other violent acts that pollute the air, soil, and water systems (Ikeke & Agetue, 2025; Harry & Ogbu, 2022; Mahmud & Ozden, 2024).



Various structural factors, such as intense competition for power, ethnic and partisan rivalry, youth unemployment, and a culture of impunity, are strongly associated with electoral violence in South-South Nigeria (Ayamba et al., 2025; Gbati, 2024; Agidi, 2022). Added to this is the region's particular environmental fragility. For decades, the Niger Delta has experienced extensive oil exploration, oil spills, deforestation, and gas flaring. It is, unarguably, an environmentally vulnerable region. This fragile condition worsens during elections because of heightened ecological damage, livelihood losses, and threats to sustainability (Oladele & Adelekan, 2024; Omokaro, 2024). Therefore, any attempt to strengthen democracy in Nigeria ought to address the social and environmental issues surrounding elections.

Voter education is one of the strategies highlighted in this study as a means of reducing electoral violence and increasing environmental awareness during elections. Well-designed voter education programmes enable citizens to understand their rights, responsibilities, and the procedures for electoral participation. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), with the support of civil society organisations, the media, and community groups, is expected to provide such education (Adeyemi & Adeowu, 2026; Osayi, 2024; Paleowei, 2022; INEC, 2017). Although voter education is widely recognised as important, in Nigeria it has generally focused on voter registration and participation while paying less attention to shaping attitudes and behaviours related to violence and environmental responsibility.

The problem this study seeks to address is twofold. First, electoral violence in South-South Nigeria has continued despite recurrent voter education campaigns. Second, the link between electoral violence and environmental degradation remains neglected, even though it is detrimental to democratic consolidation and sustainable development in the region. This problem has persisted in elections conducted from 1999 through the 2023 general elections. Not only were lives lost because of ballot snatching, killings, arson, and vandalism, but substantial environmental damage also occurred: burning tyres caused air pollution, explosives contaminated soils, and destruction of property worsened deforestation and other ecological harms. However, few studies have explored the potential of voter education to simultaneously foster peace and protect the environment in electoral settings.

This study, therefore, seeks to explore the role of voter education in democratic participation, electoral peace, and environmental consciousness during elections in South-South Nigeria. In line with this objective, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. In what ways is voter education a factor that enhances democratic participation in South-South Nigeria?
2. What is the role of voter education in ensuring electoral peace in South-South Nigeria?
3. How can voter education enhance environmental awareness in South-South Nigeria during elections?

To give empirical guidance to the study, the following null hypotheses are proposed:

Ho1: Voter education has no significant relationship with democratic participation in South-South Nigeria.

Ho2: Voter education has no significant relationship with electoral peace in South-South Nigeria.

Ho3: Voter education has no significant relationship with environmental awareness during elections in South-South Nigeria.

The contribution of this study is threefold. From a theoretical perspective, it broadens research on voter education by introducing democratic resilience and environmental awareness into the discussion. At the empirical level, it offers new evidence from South-South Nigeria, which has remained a flashpoint of election-related disputes since the transition to civilian rule. At the policy level, it offers practical recommendations for integrating environmental issues into voter education campaigns. In this study, environmental awareness refers to respondents' perceptions of environmentally responsible electoral behaviour, including reduced vandalism, arson, waste generation, tyre burning, and other destructive practices associated with electoral violence. By highlighting these issues, the study contributes to ongoing efforts to align Nigeria's electoral processes with the ideals of democracy and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Although there have been studies on voter education in Nigeria, they have largely focused on voter participation and the reduction of electoral violence. Little attention has been given to citizens' perceptions of its connection to environmental awareness in electoral settings, especially in the South-South region, which faces



distinct environmental challenges. This study therefore contributes to the literature by examining public perceptions of voter education as a peacebuilding and environmental-awareness tool, based on evidence from a large-scale descriptive survey across selected South-South Nigerian states.

This study was conducted in South-South Nigeria because the region represents a significant electoral and environmental context in Nigeria's democratic politics. Contextually, it is a high-risk electoral zone and an environmentally vulnerable area in which the relationship among electoral behaviour, political violence, and environmental risk is especially pronounced. Since Nigeria's return to democratic governance in 1999, several states within the South-South region have experienced recurrent incidents of electoral violence, political intimidation, youth militancy, destruction of public infrastructure, and electoral unrest. At the same time, the region remains ecologically vulnerable because of longstanding environmental challenges stemming from oil exploration, gas flaring, pollution, deforestation, and resource-related conflicts in the Niger Delta.

The region is therefore strategically important for exploring public perceptions of whether voter education can simultaneously contribute to democratic participation, electoral peace, and environmental awareness. The study aims to provide context-specific insights into the relationship among civic education, democratic stability, and environmental responsibility in fragile democratic settings by focusing on a politically volatile and environmentally sensitive zone. While the results are not statistically generalisable to all parts of Nigeria, South-South Nigeria offers an analytically important case for understanding perceptions of voter education in an area marked by multiple political and environmental insecurities.

2. Conceptual Framework

This study is based on the assumption that voter education can serve as a strategic civic tool for increasing citizens' political awareness, civic responsibility, and electoral literacy. The proposed relationships are illustrated in Figure 1.

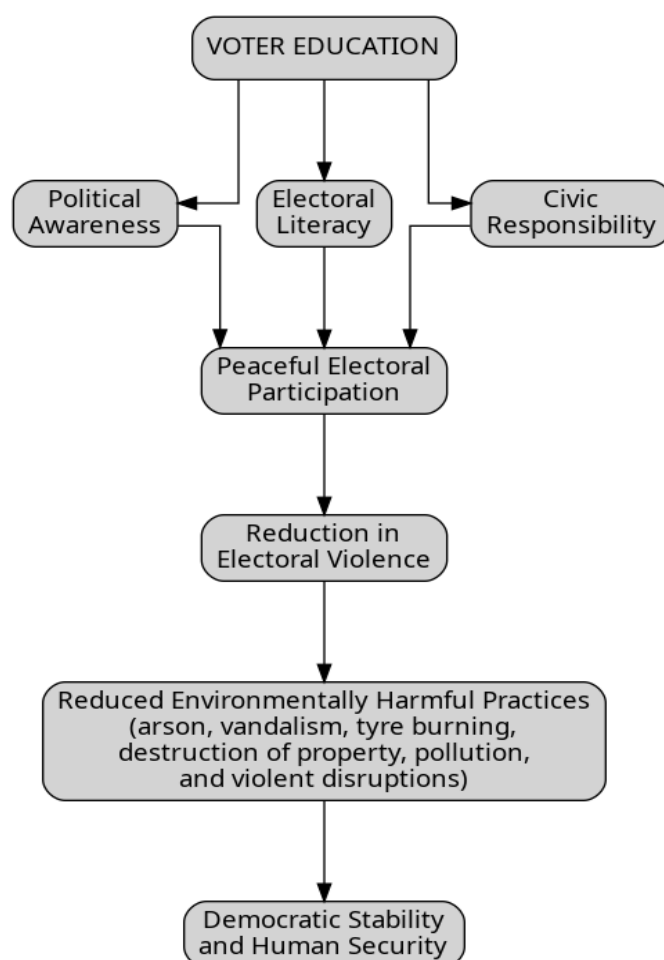


Figure 1. Conceptual pathway linking Voter Education, Electoral Peace, and Environmental Awareness



In environments characterised by electoral tension and mistrust, voter education can discourage violent political conduct and promote responsible civic participation in elections. The framework assumes that, as citizens become more informed and politically conscious, they are less likely to engage in electoral violence or in acts such as political intimidation, arson, vandalism, destruction of public facilities, tyre burning, and other practices regarded as harmful to the environment. Hence, voter education is viewed both as a democratic engagement tool and as a preventive civic mechanism that can contribute to electoral peace, environmental awareness, and other aspects of human security.

This conceptualisation aligns with the assumptions of Human Security Theory, which holds that political stability, personal safety, and environmental protection are three facets of sustainable democratic development. In this regard, the framework explains the proposed relationship among voter education, peaceful electoral participation, the minimisation of electoral violence, and environmental awareness in South-South Nigeria. It shows that voter education is an integral part of democratic behaviour and public attitudes during elections. It promotes greater political consciousness and civic responsibility, thereby strengthening peaceful electoral processes and lowering the incidence of violent electoral practices. As electoral violence is reduced, environmentally harmful activities commonly associated with politically motivated unrest are also expected to decline, thereby supporting regional democratic stability and human security.

From an operational perspective, the framework is used to structure the study variables and the questionnaire. While voter education is the independent variable, the main dimensions of the dependent variable examined through respondents' perceptions are peaceful electoral participation, reduction in electoral violence, and environmental awareness. Thus, the framework serves as an analytical tool through which the study interprets the perceived relationship among voter education, electoral peace, and environmental awareness in South-South Nigeria.

3. Theoretical underpinning: Human Security Theory

By 1994, Human Security Theory had been incorporated into the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report (HDR), marking a departure from traditional security thinking toward a more people-centred approach (United Nations Development Programme, 1994; Martin & Owen, 2010). Human Security Theory is concerned not with territorial defence or state sovereignty, but with safeguarding people and communities against threats to survival, dignity, livelihoods, and well-being. The framework describes several interwoven dimensions of security, including political security, personal security, environmental security, economic security, food security, health security, and community security.

The theory is especially relevant in fragile democratic settings, where electoral volatility, conflict, poor governance, and environmental degradation intersect to threaten human welfare (Emetole, 2024). From this perspective, democracy is meaningful only if it helps protect citizens from physical harm, social exclusion, political intimidation, and environmental degradation. Human security therefore encompasses not only the conduct of elections but also the quality, safety, inclusiveness, and environmental consequences of the electoral process.

Human Security Theory is a valuable framework for studying elections because it helps explain how voter education can promote democratic engagement and environmentally responsible electoral conduct. In this context, voter education not only informs citizens about the electoral process, but also functions as a preventive civic mechanism that can enhance political tolerance, discourage violence, counter misinformation, and foster responsible participation in the democratic system (Omoniyi, 2025; Diepreye & Jacob, 2025; Timreck & Emmons, 2024). Through these functions, voter education can help reduce behaviours that threaten democratic stability and human safety, thereby promoting political and personal security.

The theory is also applicable to understanding the environmental effects of electoral processes. Environmental security, as conceptualised by human security scholars, refers to the protection of ecological systems and natural resources that are crucial to human survival and sustainable development (Belabbes, 2024; Ramsay & O'Sullivan, 2020). The use of violence during elections in South-South Nigeria, a region already burdened by oil pollution, gas flaring, environmental degradation, and resource-based conflict, can further worsen ecological vulnerability through arson, tyre burning, destruction of public facilities, pollution, and other environmentally harmful acts. These activities pose physical and economic risks, as well as threats to livelihoods, health, food security, and



social cohesion. Environmental damage resulting from electoral conflict thus becomes a direct assault on human welfare and sustainable development within the human security framework.

3.1 Operationalisation of Human Security Theory

For analytical relevance, the dimensions of Human Security Theory are operationalised in relation to the key study variables presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Operationalisation of Human Security Theory dimensions in relation to the study variables

Human Security Dimension	Study Variable
Political security	Peaceful election; democratic participation
Personal security	Reduction in electoral violence
Environmental security	Awareness of environmentally harmful electoral practices

The questionnaire items were subsequently structured to elicit respondents' perceptions of the role of voter education across the three aspects of human security. In particular, political security items were linked to democratic participation and peaceful elections; personal security items were linked to electoral violence and intimidation; and environmental security awareness items were linked to environmentally destructive electoral practices.

The theory provides the study's integrating analytical framework by explaining how voter education can function as a preventive civic tool that promotes peaceful participation in elections, reduces the risk of electoral violence, and encourages environmentally responsible behaviour during elections. In this light, Human Security Theory is not only a descriptive framework but also an interpretive lens adopted in this study to examine the perceived relationship among voter education, electoral peace, and environmental awareness in South-South Nigeria.

4. Literature Review

Voter education has attracted increasing scholarly and policy attention as a potent tool for enhancing democracy, strengthening civic engagement, and supporting sustainable development in Nigeria. The following empirical studies examine voter education in relation to democratic participation, the mitigation of electoral violence, and environmental awareness in electoral contexts.

4.1 Voter education and democratic participation

Voter education has increasingly been viewed as vital to democratic engagement, civic knowledge, and trust in the electoral process. In developing democracies, including Nigeria, scholars have argued that informed citizens are more likely to participate in elections, less susceptible to political manipulation, and more involved in democratic governance (Agbor *et al.*, 2025; Ubong, 2024; Nweke & Inyang, 2018; Nwanne & Iweriebor, 2025; Salawudeen, 2025).

Previous research has shown that poor voter education is linked to voter apathy, distrust of electoral institutions, and low levels of civic engagement. Similarly, Abagen and Yusuf (2023) identified voter illiteracy and poverty as key factors contributing to voter apathy in North-East Nigeria, suggesting that continuous voter education would increase political awareness and electoral participation among the electorate. Likewise, Udochukwu *et al.* (2024) noted that low levels of voter education, especially in rural areas, contributed to a lack of confidence in electoral processes following Nigeria's 2023 general elections. Their study found that increased civic knowledge would bolster public trust and strengthen peacebuilding in democratic governance.

Other scholars have also associated voter education with broader democratic consolidation. Ameh-Ogigo (2024) reported that electoral violence, weak institutions, and political marginalisation threaten democratic stability in Nigeria, yet noted that electoral education and public enlightenment can improve understanding of democratic norms and foster citizens' trust in electoral institutions. Similarly, Mbanusi and Osuagwu (2024), in their historical



analysis of elections in Nigeria from 1999 to 2023, argued that voter education is necessary to promote greater appreciation of democratic culture and minimise anti-democratic tendencies.

International experience also demonstrates the value of civic mobilisation and voter education for democratic purposes beyond Nigeria. In a randomized field experiment in British Columbia, [Henderson *et al.* \(2025\)](#) found that targeted voter mobilisation led to higher voter turnout and greater civic engagement among citizens concerned about the environment. Although the study was not conducted in Africa, it strengthens the argument that voter education can foster civic consciousness and spur democratic engagement.

4.2 Voter Education and Electoral Violence Mitigation

One of the major threats to democratic consolidation in Nigeria has been electoral violence. Electoral violence has been conceptualised in diverse forms across electoral settings, ranging from intimidation and coercion to physical attacks and property destruction ([Harish & Risa, 2019](#)). As a result, there has been growing scholarly interest in the potential of voter education to reduce political intolerance, limit electoral violence, and encourage peaceful electoral participation.

Several studies have found that poor voter education contributes to political manipulation, misinformation, intolerance, and violent electoral behaviour. In their study of the 2018 Osun State governorship election, [Omodunbi *et al.* \(2023\)](#) identified political thuggery, voter intimidation, and vote-buying as factors affecting electoral credibility. The study recommended increased voter education before and during elections to minimise manipulation and violence. Likewise, [Igiebor \(2022\)](#) found that electoral violence was positively associated with political alienation during Nigeria's 2019 general elections, indicating that greater civic education and proper law enforcement could improve public participation and reduce political hostility.

Voter education and electoral peace are also closely connected, as shown by research on Nigeria's 2023 general elections. [Yusuf and Saminu \(2023\)](#) reported that voter turnout and confidence in election results were low because of insecurity and election-related violence. The authors suggested that proactive voter sensitisation and protection would help alleviate fear and promote peaceful participation. This concern is further echoed by [Fadeyi and Akintola \(2023\)](#) and [Ifedi *et al.* \(2023\)](#), who highlighted election insecurity and broader security challenges as major obstacles to credible electoral processes in Nigeria.

Other scholars have focused on the broader societal consequences of electoral violence. [Ajoku and Adigwe \(2022\)](#) stated that election-related violence negatively affects health, education, and community security, and that poor education among the electorate deepens civic ignorance. In a comparative study of Gombe State elections, [Nachana'a and Abubakar \(2025\)](#) also noted that voter apathy and political disengagement are major factors contributing to electoral violence, suggesting that civic education is an important factor in mitigating such violence.

[Ayamba *et al.* \(2024\)](#) extended this argument by linking electoral conflict to winner-takes-all politics in Africa. They argued that pre-election and post-election violence are often caused by political exclusion and intense electoral competition, both of which weaken democratic governance and social cohesion.

4.3 Voter Education and Environmental Awareness in Electoral Contexts

Recent academic research has sought to understand the links among voter education, electoral behaviour, and environmental concerns. Electoral violence and politically motivated unrest typically lead to environmental impacts, including arson, destruction of public infrastructure, pollution, waste generation, and vandalism ([Ochieng *et al.*, 2023](#); [Kovacs, 2018](#)). This dimension, however, remains underexplored in Nigerian electoral studies.

Research has shown that civic and voter education can positively influence environmentally responsible attitudes and behaviours, and this pattern is evident in studies from different parts of the world. A systematic mixed-studies review by [Ardoyn *et al.* \(2023\)](#) revealed that civic and environmental education led to significant gains in environmental literacy, awareness, and pro-environmental behaviour. The study suggested that civic engagement programmes incorporating environmental issues reinforce sustainable social attitudes and responsible citizenship.



Likewise, in a multi-country review, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2025) found that raising awareness of environmental issues through voter education programmes reduced public tolerance for environmentally damaging electoral practices. The report also highlighted the importance of promoting positive attitudes toward environmental responsibility through civic education programmes tailored to local contexts and sustained throughout the electoral process.

In Nigeria, Olumba (2024) studied the ecological impacts of electoral violence in conflict-prone areas. The study revealed that fires, pollution, property destruction, deforestation, and election-related violence occurred in several communities. It also implied that civic education programmes incorporating environmental awareness were associated with lower acceptance of environmentally harmful electoral practices and more responsible conduct during elections.

These findings point to the value of extending voter education beyond democratic participation and violence reduction to include environmental consciousness in electoral activities. However, there is still a lack of conceptual coherence in the literature. Numerous studies on electoral violence have not taken environmental dimensions into account, while studies on environmental governance have not sufficiently explored how electoral behaviour can drive environmental damage.

4.4 Identified Research Gap

Previous studies have thoroughly explored voter education and its relationship with democratic participation, voter turnout, and electoral violence in Nigeria. Emerging global studies also note a connection between voter education and environmental awareness. Little empirical research, however, has focused on the interlinked relationships among voter education, electoral peace, and environmental awareness in environmentally sensitive and politically volatile areas such as South-South Nigeria. Hence, this study is significant because it brings to the fore public perceptions of the role of voter education in fostering democratic participation, peaceful electoral conduct, and environmental awareness, drawing on descriptive survey findings from selected states in South-South Nigeria.

5. Methodology

A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was used in this study to assess public perceptions of the relationships among voter education, electoral peace, democratic participation, and environmental awareness in South-South Nigeria. The design was appropriate because it enabled the collection of quantitative data from a large population across a geographically dispersed area within a relatively short period. It was also useful for analysing respondents' perceptions of the role of voter education in fostering peaceful and environmentally responsible electoral behaviour, given the perception-based nature of the study. The study population consisted of residents of the six states of South-South Nigeria, namely Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers, with an estimated combined population of 28,153,979 as of December 2023 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). The accessible sampling frame comprised adult residents of the six states who had internet access, basic digital literacy, and were willing to respond to the online survey during the data-collection period. The target population consisted of registered voters, politically conscious citizens, students, civil servants, traders, and other citizens aged 18 or older with prior experience in electoral processes or voter education campaigns. Online convenience sampling was used across the six states to collect responses through SurveyMonkey. This approach made it possible to reach literate and digitally connected respondents across multiple locations while ensuring timely and anonymous participation. A total of 5,000 valid responses were obtained for the study. Approximately 6,420 individuals across the six states were reached through social media, community forums, civic organisations, educational networks, online invitations, and survey links. Of these, 5,214 responses were initially returned, representing a response rate of 77.9%, and 5,000 were valid and sufficiently complete for analysis. Questionnaires with missing responses were excluded during data cleaning. As a result, no missing values were retained in the final dataset, and all item-level analyses were based on complete responses.

Although the large sample size broadened participation, the study acknowledges certain limitations of online convenience sampling. In particular, the design was susceptible to digital access bias, especially among those without internet access or sufficient digital literacy to participate. This implies that the findings may not represent the views



of the entire population of South-South Nigeria, but rather the views of those who could be reached through the online survey platform.

5.1 Instrumentation

A structured questionnaire titled "Voter Education, Electoral Peace and Environmental Awareness Questionnaire (VEEPEAQ)" was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire items were adapted from previous research on voter education, democratic participation, electoral violence, civic engagement, and environmental awareness (e.g., Mezieobi & Ibekwe, 2018; Ajoku & Adigwe, 2022; Ardoin *et al.*, 2023; Henderson *et al.*, 2025; Onwineng *et al.*, 2025; Agbor *et al.*, 2025). This adaptation was necessary to align the instrument with the socio-political context of South-South Nigeria and the purpose of the present study. The questionnaire consisted of 24 items organised into three main constructs:

- I. Voter education and democratic participation (8 items);
- II. Voter education and electoral peace (8 items); and
- III. Voter education and environmental awareness (8 items).

The questionnaire also included a section on respondents' demographic characteristics, including gender, age, educational qualifications, state of residence, urban-rural location, and voting experience.

A four-point scale of responses was used with the following options:

- I. Strongly Agree (SA)
- II. Agree (A)
- III. Disagree (D)
- IV. Strongly Disagree (SD).

To minimise midpoint response bias and promote clearer attitudinal positioning among respondents, a four-point scale was used. Some sample items in the questionnaire were: "Voter education programmes help citizens understand their peaceful role in South-South Nigeria"; "Youth exposure to voter education helps reduce youth involvement in election-related violence"; "Voter education campaigns discourage political thuggery, voter intimidation, and vote-buying during elections"; and "Integrating environmental messages into voter education increases awareness of environmentally harmful electoral practices during elections." Other items measured respondents' perceptions of democratic participation, electoral peace, and environmentally responsible electoral conduct. Participants were asked to rate the extent of their agreement with each item on a four-point Likert scale. Responses were coded numerically as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. The scoring system was designed so that higher scores reflected more positive perceptions of the role of voter education in democratic participation, electoral peace, and environmental awareness. A criterion mean of 2.50 was used for interpretation, whereby mean values above 2.50 indicated agreement, while those below 2.50 indicated disagreement with the questionnaire statements. Questionnaire items were framed in a clear and neutral manner and presented on a four-point Likert scale in order to reduce acquiescence bias and patterned responses. The instrument was administered electronically through SurveyMonkey to facilitate geographic coverage, respondent anonymity, and effective management of the response process. Data collection spanned from August to December 2025.

5.2 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

To ensure content and face validity, the study instrument was presented to three experts in Policy Studies, Ecopolitics, and Measurement and Evaluation. Their assessment of the questionnaire items focused on relevance, clarity, appropriateness, and alignment with the study objectives and theoretical framework. Their inputs and suggestions guided the modification and refinement of the final instrument.



Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of a measurement instrument in producing dependable results when used repeatedly (Middleton, 2019; Babbie, 2017). To assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire constructs, Cronbach's alpha was used. The following reliability coefficients were obtained:

- I. Voter education and democratic participation = 0.81;
- II. Voter education and electoral peace = 0.79; and
- III. Voter education and environmental awareness = 0.76.

These coefficients indicate good internal consistency and support the appropriateness of the instrument for the study.

5.3 Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted ethically through the use of anonymous online questionnaires, and no personally identifiable information (such as names, phone numbers, email addresses, or biometric data) was collected. The Research and Ethics Committee of the Department of Public Administration at the University of Calabar reviewed the study protocol and questionnaire and affirmed that the research constituted minimal-risk social science research. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, told that participation was voluntary, advised that the data would be used for academic purposes, and assured that they could withdraw at any time and that their responses would remain anonymous. Each respondent was required to provide informed consent online through the SurveyMonkey platform before completing the survey items. Consent was indicated by ticking the appropriate box in the consent section. To enhance data authenticity and reduce duplicate responses, the online survey settings were configured to limit multiple submissions from the same device and internet protocol (IP) address. In addition, incomplete questionnaires, suspicious response patterns, and duplicate submissions were screened out during data cleaning before analysis. The study was therefore conducted in accordance with the principles of voluntary participation, anonymity, confidentiality, and responsible handling of research data.

5.4 Method of data analysis

Data obtained from the questionnaire were coded and analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and percentages, were used to summarise respondents' demographic characteristics and opinions regarding voter education, electoral peace, and environmental awareness. In addition, composite scores were computed for the major study constructs, including voter education, democratic participation, electoral peace, and environmental awareness. The Chi-square (χ^2) test of association was then employed to examine the significance of the relationships between voter education and the identified outcome variables. Responses were categorised into low, moderate, and high perception levels based on respondents' aggregate scores across the questionnaire items. The results were interpreted at the 0.05 level of significance.

6. Results

6.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents (N = 5,000)

Table 2 presents the demographic characteristics of respondents across the six states of South-South Nigeria. The demographic variables examined include gender, age, educational qualification, urban-rural residence, voting experience, and state distribution.

Table 2. Demographic characteristics and geographic distribution of respondents across the six South-South states of Nigeria

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	2,860	57.2
	Female	2,140	42.8
	Total	5,000	100.0



Age	18–27 years	1,420	28.4
	28–37 years	1,860	37.2
	38–47 years	1,050	21.0
	48 years and above	670	13.4
	Total	5,000	100.0
Educational Qualification	Secondary Education	690	13.8
	Diploma/NCE	1,120	22.4
	Bachelor's Degree/HND	2,240	44.8
	Postgraduate Qualification	950	19.0
	Total	5,000	100.0
Urban/Rural Residence	Urban	3,280	65.6
	Rural	1,720	34.4
	Total	5,000	100.0
Voting Experience	Voted Once	980	19.6
	Voted 2–3 Times	2,170	43.4
	Voted More than 3 Times	1,530	30.6
	Never Voted	320	6.4
	Total	5,000	100.0
State Distribution	Akwa Ibom	920	18.4
	Bayelsa	610	12.2
	Cross River	740	14.8
	Delta	910	18.2
	Edo	760	15.2
	Rivers	1,060	21.2
	Total	5,000	100.0

The demographic distribution of respondents shows that the study achieved broad participation across the six South-South states. The gender distribution was relatively balanced, with males accounting for 57.2% and females 42.8%. Regarding age, 37.2% of respondents were between 28 and 37 years old, while 28.4% were between 18 and 27 years old. This implies that the sample was weighted toward younger and middle-aged adults, who are more likely to participate in electoral processes and complete online surveys.

In terms of education, most respondents held Bachelor's degrees/HNDs (44.8%), while 19.0% held postgraduate qualifications. This pattern is consistent with the use of an electronic survey, which is more likely to reach literate and technologically proficient participants. Respondents were also distributed across urban (65.6%) and rural (34.4%) areas, reflecting the relative ease of internet-based participation in urban settings.

The distribution of voting experience also shows that most respondents had voted more than once, with 43.4% having voted two to three times and 30.6% having voted in more than three elections. This suggests that respondents had substantial electoral experience, which could have informed their perceptions of voter education, electoral violence, and environmental awareness.

The state-wise distribution shows that Rivers State had the highest participation rate at 21.2%, while Akwa Ibom and Delta States recorded 18.4% and 18.2%, respectively. The relatively even distribution of respondents across the six states enhances the regional relevance and contextual validity of the study's findings.

6.2 Respondents' perceptions of voter education and democratic participation in South-South Nigeria

Table 3. Respondents' perceptions of the relationship between voter education and democratic participation in South-South Nigeria

S/N	Items	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %
1	Voter education programmes improve citizens' understanding of electoral processes in South-South Nigeria.	45	31	14	10
2	Exposure to voter education increases citizens' willingness to participate in elections peacefully.	42	30	17	11
3	Voter education helps citizens to better understand their civic rights and responsibilities.	47	29	13	11
4	Adequate voter education increases public trust in electoral institutions and democratic processes.	44	28	18	10
5	Communities with sustained voter education programmes experience higher voter turnout during elections.	39	33	17	11
6	Voter education discourages political apathy and voter disengagement among youths.	41	30	18	11
7	Civic enlightenment programmes encourage citizens to participate constructively in governance processes.	46	27	16	11
8	Effective voter education strengthens democratic culture and political accountability in Nigeria.	48	30	12	10

Source: Author's field survey, 2025.

*All percentages shown in the table are row percentages based on the number of respondents to each question.

The results presented in Table 3 indicate that respondents perceived a strong positive relationship between voter education and democratic participation in South-South Nigeria. For the first item, 45% strongly agreed and 31% agreed that voter education programmes deepen citizens' understanding of electoral processes, while only 24% disagreed. Regarding the second item, 42% strongly agreed and 30% agreed that exposure to voter education makes citizens more willing to participate peacefully in elections, whereas 17% disagreed and 11% strongly disagreed. The third item indicates that 47% strongly agreed and 29% agreed that voter education increases citizens' awareness of their civic rights and responsibilities. Likewise, 44% strongly agreed and 28% agreed that voter education increases citizens' confidence in electoral institutions and democratic processes. For the fifth item, 39% strongly agreed and 33% agreed that communities with sustained voter education programmes experience higher voter turnout during elections. Responses to the sixth item show that 41% strongly agreed and 30% agreed that voter education reduces political apathy and disengagement among youths. Strong positive responses were also recorded for the seventh item, with 46% strongly agreeing and 27% agreeing that civic enlightenment programmes promote constructive engagement in governance processes. Finally, 48% strongly agreed and 30% agreed that effective voter education would strengthen democratic culture and political accountability in Nigeria. Overall, the findings indicate that respondents perceive voter education as an important instrument for enhancing democratic participation, civic responsibility, and trust in institutions in South-South Nigeria.



6.3 Respondents' perceptions of the role of voter education in preventing electoral violence in South-South Nigeria

Table 4. Respondents' perceptions of the role of voter education in preventing electoral violence in South-South Nigeria

S/N	Items	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %
1	Voter education programmes increase citizens' understanding of peaceful electoral participation in South-South Nigeria.	41	29	17	13
2	Exposure to voter education reduces the likelihood of youth involvement in election-related violence.	37	28	19	16
3	Voter education campaigns discourage political thuggery, vote-buying, and intimidation during elections.	43	26	17	14
4	Regular voter sensitisation helps reduce political tension during elections.	44	24	20	12
5	Communities with effective voter education programmes experience fewer incidents of election-day violence.	45	30	15	10
6	Civic education encourages political tolerance among supporters of opposing political parties.	40	31	18	11
7	Adequate voter education reduces the spread of electoral misinformation and political incitement.	42	27	19	12
8	Sustained voter education contributes to peaceful coexistence before, during, and after elections.	47	28	14	11

Source: Author's field survey, 2025.

* All percentages shown in the table are row percentages based on the number of respondents to each question.

As indicated in Table 4, respondents strongly perceived voter education as a means of preventing electoral violence in South-South Nigeria. For the first item, 41% strongly agreed and 29% agreed that voter education programmes enable citizens to participate peacefully in elections, while 17% disagreed and 13% strongly disagreed. For the second item, 37% strongly agreed and 28% agreed that exposure to voter education reduces youth involvement in election-related violence, whereas 19% disagreed and 16% strongly disagreed. For the third item, 43% strongly agreed and 26% agreed that voter education campaigns discourage political thuggery, vote-buying, and intimidation during elections, while 17% disagreed and 14% strongly disagreed. Likewise, 44% strongly agreed and 24% agreed that voter sensitisation during elections reduces political tension. For the fifth item, 45% strongly agreed and 30% agreed that communities with effective voter education programmes experience less election-day violence. Responses to the sixth item show that 40% strongly agreed and 31% agreed that civic education fosters political tolerance among supporters of opposing political parties. For the seventh item, 42% strongly agreed and 27% agreed that adequate voter education helps deter the spread of electoral misinformation and political incitement. Finally, 47% strongly agreed and 28% agreed that sustained voter education contributes to peaceful coexistence before, during, and after elections. Overall, the findings indicate that respondents view voter education as an important tool for combating electoral violence and promoting peaceful democratic practices among voters in South-South Nigeria.



6.4 Respondents' perceptions of the contribution of voter education to environmental awareness during elections in South-South Nigeria

Table 5. Respondents' Perceptions of the Contribution of Voter Education to Environmental Awareness during Elections in South-South Nigeria

S/N	Items	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %
1	Voter education campaigns increase citizens' awareness of the environmental consequences of election-related violence.	24	28	27	21
2	Voter education programmes provide guidance on environmentally responsible behaviour during elections.	26	25	29	20
3	Awareness gained through voter education discourages destructive practices such as tyre burning and vandalism during elections.	22	30	28	20
4	Communities that participate in voter education initiatives are more likely to protect public infrastructure during elections.	27	29	25	19
5	Integrating environmental messages into voter education helps reduce pollution associated with election violence.	38	30	19	13
6	Voter education promotes environmentally responsible disposal of campaign materials and election waste.	25	27	29	19
7	Civic sensitisation discourages the destruction of community facilities and public property during political unrest.	31	28	24	17
8	Sustained voter education contributes to environmental protection and community sustainability during elections.	34	29	22	15

Source: Author's field survey, 2025.

* All percentages shown in the table are row percentages based on the number of respondents to each question.

Table 5 shows that public opinion on the role of voter education in fostering environmental awareness during elections in South-South Nigeria is divided. For the first item, 24% strongly agreed and 28% agreed that voter education campaigns raise awareness of the environmental consequences of election-related violence, while 27% disagreed and 21% strongly disagreed. For the second item, 26% strongly agreed and 25% agreed that voter education programmes provide guidance on environmentally responsible behaviour during elections, whereas 29% disagreed and 20% strongly disagreed. The third item shows that 22% strongly agreed, 30% agreed, 28% disagreed, and 20% strongly disagreed that awareness created through voter education discourages destructive practices such as tyre burning and vandalism during elections. Responses to the fourth item indicate that 27% strongly agreed and 29% agreed that communities involved in voter education activities are more likely to protect public infrastructure during the electoral period, while 25% disagreed and 19% strongly disagreed. There was relatively stronger agreement on the fifth item, with 38% strongly agreeing and 30% agreeing that the inclusion of environmental messages in voter education helps reduce pollution associated with election violence. Likewise, 25% strongly agreed and 27% agreed that voter education encourages environmentally responsible disposal of campaign materials and election waste, although nearly half of the respondents disagreed. For the seventh item, 31% strongly agreed and 28% agreed that civic sensitisation helps prevent damage to community facilities and public property during political unrest. However, many respondents still expressed reservations about the effect of voter education on reducing



environmentally harmful political actions. Specifically, 34% strongly agreed and 29% agreed that sustained voter education contributes to environmental protection and community sustainability during elections, while 37% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Overall, the findings indicate that voter education has the potential to promote environmental awareness during elections, but respondents feel that environmental issues are not yet adequately featured in existing voter education programmes in South-South Nigeria.

6.5 Test of Hypotheses

To test the study's hypotheses, respondents' scores on the major constructs were aggregated and categorized into low, moderate, and high perception levels. Chi-square (χ^2) tests of association were then conducted to determine whether significant relationships existed between voter education and the outcome variables of democratic participation, electoral peace, and environmental awareness.

6.5.1 Hypothesis One

Ho1: Voter education has no significant relationship with democratic participation in South-South Nigeria.

Table 6. Chi-square association between voter education and democratic participation

Voter Education Level	Low Democratic Participation	Moderate Democratic Participation	High Democratic Participation	Total
Low	180	240	130	550
Moderate	310	870	620	1,800
High	220	760	1,670	2,650
Total	710	1,870	2,420	5,000

As shown in Table 6, the Chi-square test yielded a calculated χ^2 value of 842.61 with 4 degrees of freedom and a p-value < 0.05. Since the result is statistically significant, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that a significant relationship exists between voter education and democratic participation in South-South Nigeria.

6.5.2 Hypothesis Two

Ho2: Voter education has no significant relationship with electoral peace in South-South Nigeria.

Table 7. Chi-Square Association between Voter Education and Electoral Peace

Voter Education Level	Low Electoral Peace	Moderate Electoral Peace	High Electoral Peace	Total
Low	210	220	120	550
Moderate	340	890	570	1,800
High	190	740	1,720	2,650
Total	740	1,850	2,410	5,000

As shown in Table 7, the Chi-square analysis yielded a χ^2 value of 916.37 with 4 degrees of freedom and a p-value < 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. The result indicates a statistically significant relationship between voter education and electoral peace in South-South Nigeria.

6.5.3 Hypothesis Three

Ho3: Voter education has no significant relationship with environmental awareness during elections in South-South Nigeria.



Table 8. Chi-square association between voter education and environmental awareness

Voter Education Level	Low Environmental Awareness	Moderate Environmental Awareness	High Environmental Awareness	Total
Low	240	210	100	550
Moderate	470	860	470	1,800
High	320	810	1,520	2,650
Total	1,030	1,880	2,090	5,000

As shown in Table 8, the Chi-square analysis yielded a χ^2 value of 684.24 with 4 degrees of freedom and a p-value less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that a statistically significant relationship exists between voter education and environmental awareness during elections in South-South Nigeria.

Table 9. Cross-Tabulation of respondents' perceptions of the relationship among voter education, democratic participation, and electoral peace across South-South Nigeria

State	Low Perception	Moderate Perception	High Perception	Total
Akwa Ibom	120	310	490	920
Bayelsa	90	210	310	610
Cross River	110	250	380	740
Delta	140	300	470	910
Edo	120	260	380	760
Rivers	160	350	550	1,060
Total	740	1,680	2,580	5,000

As shown in Table 9, the cross-tabulation analysis yielded statistically significant results across South-South Nigeria ($\chi^2 = 78.42$, $p < 0.05$) regarding respondents' perceptions of the link among voter education, democratic participation, and electoral peace. Rivers, Akwa Ibom, and Delta States recorded relatively stronger perceptions of the effectiveness of voter education in fostering electoral peace. This suggests that geographical and socio-political differences may shape citizens' views of the importance of voter education in the region.

7. Discussion

Using Human Security Theory as an analytical lens, this study explored public perceptions of the linkages among voter education, democratic participation, electoral peace, and environmental awareness in South-South Nigeria. Overall, the results suggest that respondents viewed voter education as an important civic tool capable of fostering peaceful electoral participation, enhancing democratic engagement, and increasing awareness of practices that harm the environment during elections. The Chi-square tests supported these perceptions, showing statistically significant associations between voter education and democratic participation ($\chi^2 = 842.61$, $p < 0.05$), electoral peace ($\chi^2 = 916.37$, $p < 0.05$), and environmental awareness ($\chi^2 = 684.24$, $p < 0.05$). It is important to note, however, that the study was a descriptive survey based on self-reported perceptions and opinions. The findings should therefore be interpreted as perceptual evidence rather than as direct evidence of actual reductions in electoral violence or environmental degradation.

The findings revealed a very high public perception of the importance of voter education for democratic participation in South-South Nigeria. Many respondents believed that voter education programmes increase citizens' understanding of the electoral process, their rights, and their civic duties. Respondents also viewed voter education as a factor that enhances public trust in electoral institutions and willingness to participate peacefully in elections. The Chi-square test for Hypothesis One was statistically significant, supporting these perceptions. The cross-



tabulation further showed a positive relationship between voter education and high democratic participation among respondents. These findings align with earlier studies by [Abagen and Yusuf \(2023\)](#), [Ameh-Ogigo \(2024\)](#), and [Mbanusi and Osuagwu \(2024\)](#), which found that civic enlightenment programmes are generally associated with increased democratic awareness and political engagement in fragile states. The results are also consistent with Human Security Theory, as respondents associated voter education with political security, civic inclusion, and democratic stability. According to the theory, democratic stability depends not only on the integrity of elections but also on citizen participation, trust in democratic institutions, and freedom from political intimidation. The findings therefore indicate that a substantial proportion of respondents consider voter education to have a positive effect on these dimensions of democratic stability in South-South Nigeria.

The findings regarding electoral peace also indicate strong public awareness of the importance of voter education in minimising violence during elections. Most respondents believed that voter education campaigns could help reduce political thuggery, electoral misinformation, intimidation, and election-related tension. The Chi-square result for Hypothesis Two also revealed a statistically significant relationship between voter education and electoral peace, with respondents exposed to higher levels of voter education reporting stronger perceptions of peaceful electoral conduct. This mirrors the findings of [Yusuf and Saminu \(2023\)](#), and [Omodunbi *et al.* \(2023\)](#), who recommended sustained voter sensitisation as a means of reducing political tension and enhancing public confidence in electoral processes. However, the findings should be interpreted with caution because the study was not based on actual incidents of electoral violence, security reports, or verified behavioural outcomes during elections. Rather, the findings reflect respondents' views on the potential usefulness of voter education in promoting peaceful electoral behaviour. Accordingly, the study does not provide causal evidence that voter education directly reduced electoral violence in the region.

The results on environmental awareness showed a more varied pattern of responses. Although many respondents felt that voter education helped raise awareness of electoral activities that harm the environment, responses across the environmental items were generally mixed. The Chi-square analysis for Hypothesis Three, however, still showed a statistically significant relationship between voter education and environmental awareness during elections. The cross-tabulation also indicated that respondents with higher levels of voter education were more likely to report higher levels of environmental awareness. This suggests that environmental issues are less prominent than democratic participation and peace messages in current voter education programmes. Importantly, the study did not measure real-world environmental outcomes such as pollution levels, physical damage, waste reduction, or observable behavioural change during elections. Rather, the results reflect respondents' views on how voter education might influence environmental awareness and environmentally responsible electoral practices. From this perspective, the findings indicate growing public awareness of a possible link between civic education and environmental responsibility in electoral settings. They also align with the emerging body of research on civic engagement and environmental awareness. [Ardoin *et al.* \(2023\)](#) noted that civic and environmental education programmes can shape public environmental awareness and responsible social action, while the [United Nations Development Programme \(2025\)](#) observed that environmental issues are becoming increasingly central to electoral processes. The present study therefore adds to this emerging discourse by suggesting that many respondents in South-South Nigeria view environmental responsibility as a growing component of voter education.

The cross-tabulation and state-level analyses also showed statistically significant perceptual differences among the six South-South states ($\chi^2 = 78.42$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that local political climate, civic exposure, and socio-environmental realities may influence citizens' perceptions of the role of voter education in their communities. Perceptions of the effectiveness of voter education in fostering democratic participation and electoral peace were generally stronger among respondents from Rivers, Akwa Ibom, and Delta States. Another noteworthy finding concerns public trust and civic legitimacy. Many respondents believed that voter education fosters greater trust in democratic institutions and electoral governance. This reinforces the observations of [Chanda \(2024a\)](#) and [Chanda \(2024b\)](#), which indicate that voter education has the potential to increase democratic participation by improving citizens' knowledge of electoral processes and reducing political alienation. From the perspective of Human Security Theory, these perceptions are significant because they relate to citizens' feelings of inclusion, transparency, and political empowerment, which are crucial for democratic stability.

Overall, the findings indicate that voter education is widely viewed as an important civic tool that can improve electoral behaviour, increase democratic participation, and raise awareness of environmentally harmful electoral practices among respondents in South-South Nigeria. The study, however, remains perception-based and descriptive. Thus, the findings should not be understood as a direct empirical test of whether voter education alone is responsible for measurable declines in electoral violence or environmental degradation. Further research using longitudinal designs, observational methods, or independent electoral incident data would provide a stronger empirical basis for assessing these relationships in the Nigerian context.

8. Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations

This study examined public perceptions of the link between voter education, democratic participation, electoral peace, and environmental awareness in South-South Nigeria. The descriptive survey revealed that a substantial proportion of respondents believed that voter education facilitates peaceful electoral participation, political inclusion, and awareness of environmental responsibility during elections. The results also indicate that respondents perceive a relationship among voter education, democratic stability, and civic responsibility in the region.

The findings of this study must be understood within the context of its descriptive and perception-based design. The study reflects respondents' assessments of the linkages among voter education, electoral peace, democratic participation, and environmental awareness in South-South Nigeria. It does not measure actual reductions in electoral violence, actual behavioural change, or observable environmental impacts during elections. The conclusion should therefore not be construed as causal evidence that voter education alone reduced electoral incidents or ecological damage within the region.

These findings have several implications. First, the statistically significant relationship between perceptions of voter education and perceptions of electoral peace underscores the need for sustained, rather than episodic, civic enlightenment as a security-oriented public policy. Voter education should therefore be viewed as both a preventive peacebuilding tool and a means of promoting political stability. Second, incorporating environmental issues into civic education opens up a new space for sustainable democracy. The results indicate that respondents believe that adding environmental protection messages to voter education efforts can influence public environmental awareness during elections. This supports the human security ideal that development should protect both human dignity and environmental integrity. Third, the broad public support for the potential of voter education suggests that it should become a central component of electoral governance and national policy rather than a peripheral one.

These findings lead to three important recommendations. First, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), in partnership with civil society and the media, should implement voter education as a continuous civic engagement programme rather than as a pre-election activity alone. This would promote greater consistency, inclusion, and message penetration in both urban and rural areas. Second, the content of voter education curricula should deliberately incorporate environmental themes and show how burning tyres, vandalising property, and polluting waterways during elections affect long-term livelihoods. Promoting environmental responsibility as a civic duty will help align electoral behaviour more closely with the goals of sustainable development. Third, collaboration among electoral bodies, educational institutions, and local communities should be strengthened so that voter education reflects the specific security and ecological conditions of each area. For example, community-based sensitisation can directly reach youths and traditional institutions in the South-South region to reduce violence and environmental degradation.

For policymakers, the results indicate that respondents believe voter education can reinforce civic trust, peaceful electoral participation, and awareness of environmentally responsible electoral behaviour. Electoral management bodies, civil society groups, and community stakeholders may therefore wish to broaden and strengthen the scope of voter education activities, especially in politically and environmentally sensitive areas such as South-South Nigeria. A national-level approach to policy integration could be useful, but additional empirical studies based on behavioural and longitudinal evidence would strengthen the basis for broader policy generalisation.

9. Limitations

The results of this study should be interpreted with the following limitations in mind. First, the use of an online survey excluded individuals without internet access, digital literacy, or electronic devices. This may have reduced the representation of people from rural and low-income areas. Second, the results may have been influenced by sampling bias arising from convenience sampling, which favoured more highly educated, more urban, and more politically aware individuals who were more likely to be online. The findings obtained, therefore, may not be representative of the perceptions of the entire population of South-South Nigeria.

Third, the study was based solely on perception data from a descriptive cross-sectional survey. The findings are therefore based on respondents' opinions, beliefs, and judgements about the role of voter education, rather than on empirical evidence of reductions in electoral violence, environmental degradation, or behavioural change during elections. Lastly, the study did not use independent electoral incident records, environmental monitoring data, or longitudinal observational evidence to establish causal relationships between voter education and electoral or environmental outcomes. Future studies may strengthen the evidence base by combining perception surveys with statistical data on electoral violence and environmental impacts, as well as with longitudinal field observations.

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Itojong Anthony Ayamba: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – Original Draft. Ugo Samuel Bassey: Validation. Agnes Ubana Enang: Methodology. Regina Elejie Abue: Investigation, Writing – Review & Editing. Sylvester Effefiom Nsa: Investigation, Data Curation. Christiana Efiong Awatt: Writing – Review & Editing. Benjamin Emmanuel Ekom: Investigation. Kelvin Isaac Ezor: Resources. Valentine Tobechukwu Achum: Formal Analysis. Kevin Bankong Apie: Data Curation. All the authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Does this article screen for similarity?

Yes

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare. There is also no financial interest to report. The author certifies that the submission is original work and is not under review at any other publication.

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