

**Assessment of NTA Voter Education Programmes on the Awareness and Participation in 2023 General Elections among Residents of Ugheli South LGA, Delta State, Nigeria**

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**Abstract**

**Background:** Political education is a prerequisite for enhanced political skills, knowledge and participation in democracies. To ensure success in Nigerian elections, the government and the electoral agencies devote much time to the education of Nigerian citizens through mass media mobilisation programmes.

**Objectives:** The study aimed to ascertain whether NTA voter education programmes have influenced the political awareness of Ugheli South Local Government Area of Delta State residents and their participation in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria.

**Methodology:** The study adopted a survey research design. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 384 respondents, while a structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Data were analysed using percentages, mean and standard deviation.

**Results:** The result of this study showed that the level of exposure of residents of Ugheli South LGA to NTA voter education programmes was very high, that the programmes increased the awareness of residents of Ugheli South LGA on political issues and positively influenced their attitudes and participation in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria.

**Contribution to knowledge:** This study has provided first-hand information and understanding of how NTA voter education programmes have influenced the political awareness of residents of Ugheli South LGA and their positive attitude and active participation in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria.

**Conclusion:** This study concluded that NTA voter education programmes are a very effective strategy for informing the masses about political activities and influencing them to participate actively in elections.

**Recommendation:** There is still a need for constant voter education programmes and political sensitisation of Nigerian citizens through NTA, other mass media, and new media to sustain the gains made.

**Keywords:** Voter Education, Political Participation, Election, Mass Media, NTA, Awareness.

### **Introduction**

Political education is a prerequisite for enhanced political skills, knowledge and participation in democracy. Good governance and democracy are ensured by appropriately electing qualified candidates into the political system. Hence, to ensure success in Nigerian elections, the government and electoral agencies devote much time to educating citizens through mass media mobilisation programmes (Amaechi et al., 2018). Generally, electorates learn about their choices in national elections not from personal contact with politicians or interpersonal conversations but from the mass media and their mobilisation programmes. Hence, mass media news coverage is the primary source of voter education (Okon, 2014).

Voter education implies providing important information about a particular election. This includes information on who is eligible to vote, where and how to register, how the voters can check the voter lists to ensure they have been duly included, what type of elections are being held, where, when and how to vote, who the candidates are, etc. Regarding voter education programmes, Iredia (2007) states that people must be assisted in making rational choices and voting wisely during elections. They must have all the information needed to elect the right candidates to ensure good governance. Where such public awareness is lacking, those in the media must accept a share of the blame for failed elections in Nigeria (Iredia, 2007).

For the voting population, Aghamelu (2012) opined that voter education programmes must be user-friendly, especially for disadvantaged groups like the non-literate and physically incapacitated. These programmes must provide opportunities for all issues at stake in the election to be highlighted and explained. It has been observed that most Nigerian voters feel apathy towards the political process. This feeling, according to Ochonogor and Ukaegbu (2010), cannot be separated from the intrigues - thuggery, rigging, politically-motivated killings, ballot snatching and stuffing and arson, among other vices, that characterise elections in Nigeria. The situation above has instilled palpable fear in the electorates and engendered a belief that their votes do not count.

In order to eliminate this fear and feeling of apathy, the Nigerian Government and INEC have embarked on using mass media to enlighten the electorates and increase their confidence that their votes actually count to influence them to participate in the electoral process. Anim (2008) cited in Okon (2014, p.7) emphasised that the “first fundamental role of the mass media for an open society is to gather, process and disseminate the news and information by which people in the society can be guided to be able to make a meaningful contribution towards their own governance.”

Okon (2014) emphasised that in every election, citizens must not only decide on the party or candidate they wish to vote for or support, but they must also decide whether they will vote at all. Voters learn about the choices they make in national elections not from personal contact with politicians or from interpersonal conversations but from the mass media. Hence, mass media news coverage has been found to be the primary source of voter information (p.2). Voter education, as a key indicator in measuring political participation, increases the ability of the individual to reason and process complex political knowledge that enables the individual to participate actively in politics rationally (Nie et al., 1996). It is, therefore, expected that with the increasing level of voter education programmes in Nigeria, the ideological consciousness of the citizens, their level of

awareness of political issues, their verbal ability and related intellectual political assistances, as well as reasoning ability, will improve.

The general election in Nigeria is usually conducted once every eight (8) years in order to select the best candidate that will rule Nigeria and the various States of Nigeria. However, before the election period, there are usually sensitization programmes aimed at educating Nigerians on the political aspirants, the political right of every Nigerian to vote and be voted for and the need for every Nigerian to obtain his/her permanent voter's card and vote during the election. These sensitisation programmes also known as Voter Education Programmes, are carried out by Nigerian Mass media, especially the government-owned Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) in order to make people understand why it is important for them to vote during the election and possibly influence them to actually participate in election by casting their votes for their preferred candidate.

For previous elections and for the 2023 general election in Nigeria, the Nigerian government have used various mass media, especially government-owned media – NTA to embark on voter education programmes and sensitisation to create awareness on the election process and the need for Nigerians to register and get their permanent voter card (PVC) in order to be eligible to participate during the election in the country fully. However, whether these voter sensitisation programmes influence people's awareness and participation in the 2023 general election in Nigeria remains uncertain. Although some studies have been conducted on the election process and politics in Nigeria (Okon, 2014; Ochonoghor & Amadi, 2019), however, none of these studies was focused on NTA voter education programmes on the awareness and participation in elections among residents of Ugheli South LGA of Delta State. Against this background, this study sought to assess NTA voter education programmes on the awareness and participation in elections among residents of Ugheli South LGA of Delta State.

### **Objectives of the study**

This study aimed to: determine the level of exposure to NTA voter education programmes among residents of Ugheli South LGA; ascertain the level of awareness of NTA voter education programmes among residents of Ugheli South LGA; find out the attitude of residents of Ugheli South LGA towards NTA voter education programmes and ascertain whether NTA voter education programmes influenced residents of Ugheli South LGA towards participating in 2023 general elections.

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **Voter Education and Political Participation**

Voter education refers to transmitting and acquiring political knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for informed participation in the political process (Amaechi et al., 2018). According to these authors, a politically educated citizen is a citizen who has acquired the basic political knowledge and awareness that enhance the citizen's involvement in conventional political activities such as registration as a voter, voting in elections, running for political offices, membership in a political party and discussing political matters. Amaechi et al. (2018) state that in a real participatory democracy, the first step is to educate the public about democratic principles and create an environment in which more people are contributing to development by registering to vote and are voting to prepare the ground for greater citizen's voice in decision making, increased pursuit of equity and equality.

In the words of Okon (2014, p.2), "voter education is used to describe the dissemination of information, materials and programmes designed to inform electorates about the specifics and

mechanics of the voting process for a particular election”. In other words, it involves providing relevant information regarding who is eligible to vote, where and how to register, how the electorates can check the voters list to ensure they have been duly included, what type of elections are being held, where and how to vote, who the candidates are and how to file complaints.

Although INEC has the major responsibility of voters’ education, however, Amaechi et al., (2018) state that educating potential voters, is not INEC’s responsibility alone; political parties, civil societies, religious and traditional institutions, as well as the National Orientation Agency should also collaborate with the electoral body in this regard. The government should be willing to fund such organisations in the voter education campaign from the grassroots level upwards.

Gastil (1991) asserts that discussion on political issues can influence the political conversation network and conversation behaviour of citizens. Similarly, Barber (1994) emphasised that full participation in public life by democratic citizens needs their understanding of important policy issues. Because voter education is a requirement for a sustainable democracy, Sewant (2000) cited in Okon (2014) asserts that the requisites of democracy include; a well-informed citizenry, participation of the citizens in the day-to-day governance of the society and accountability to the citizens by those who exercise power on their behalf. In agreement to this assertion, Esu (2014, p.9) citing Sewant (2000) maintained that “none of the functions which the citizens have to perform in a democracy can be achieved by them in the absence of full and truthful information”.

### **Mass Media and Voter Participation in Election**

The mass media have been known to exert huge powers in moulding public opinion and mobilising the citizenry to participate in the electoral process. The media are credited with creating awareness, clarifying and interpreting issues and programmes, educating people on their rights and civic obligations and motivating them to exercise those rights (Ochonoghor & Amadi, 2019). In order to educate and enlighten the electorate in the context of successful elections, media reports must encompass the 5Ws and H (Okon, 2014, p.2). Okon further stated that media reports should not just stop at generalisations such as “the election was successful, because, if you say elections were successful, then show the how and why of the report (p.2).

In agreement with the above statement, Akinfeleye (2002, p.16), assert that “the power of mass media in the creation of awareness of the politician’s intention is well known and to set political agenda for campaigns is indisputable.” Citizens’ participation in the political process can be influenced by the quality of media information available to them about the contestants, the voting procedure, their expected conduct during the elections and other different issues (Ochonoghor et al., 2019).

The mass media are playing a significant role in providing information to the public on political events, engaging the audience and encouraging them to get involved in political activities. The media have become vital for political discussions and political participation. Okon (2014) states that mass media have the capacities to exert an enormous influence on the people through widespread voter enlightenment and awareness. In line with this statement, Ochonogor and Omego (2012), citing Umechukwu (2004), note that the role of the mass media in the electoral process can be incorporated under enlightenment. Thus, Umechukwu (2004, p.18) cited in Ochonogor and Omego (2012) states that:

“Political mobilization means the role played by the mass media in creating awareness, interpretation of issues, personalities, programmes and educating the people purposely to ginger, encourage and motivate them to exercise their political

rights and take informed political decision. Such decisions will basically include participating in elections.”

In the beginning, mass media was only used as a one-way communication tool for political parties to inform the public through their various media channels. However, in recent times, most media (radio and television) stations have understood the need for two-way communication to enable audience participation in political discourse. Hence, as a result of a successful deliberative experience, the electorates might develop more positive expectances, self-efficacy, and group efficacy regarding political engagement and participation (Ochonoghor & Amadi, 2019).

### **Empirical Review**

Some studies have been carried out on media and voter education and participation in elections. In his study on immigrants and political participation, Adamson (2006) found that political education is positively correlated with participation in politics among any social groups. He concluded that education is the most important factor in any policy seeking to increase immigrant participation.

Ochonoghor and Amadi (2019) conducted a study on interactive broadcast programmes and citizens' participation in the 2015 general elections. The aim was to establish the effect of broadcast media programmes on voters' election participation. The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the respondents actually participated in the electoral process and that their participation was influenced to a very large extent by the media interactive programmes. The study recommended among other things that media interactive programmes should be monitored and moderated by the NBC to ensure that they are not used to cause disaffection among members of the society.

Ahmad et al., (2019) investigated the use of social media on political participation among university students. This study aimed at knowing how online political activities influence political efficacy and real-life political participation among university students in rural Pakistan. This study also sought to understand the relationship between political activities and political awareness. The study found that the majority of the students use social media for political awareness and information. Findings also showed that social media is a vital platform for netizens to participate in real-life political activities. The study concluded that online political activities strongly correlate to political awareness and offline political participation.

Okon (2014) conducted a study on voter education by Nigerian broadcast media. The aim was to streamline the programmes of the radio stations in order to find out if they have special programmes on voter education and how much of their airtime is allotted to those programmes among others. Findings revealed that the three stations studied did not devote a significant portion of their informative and educative programmes to democracy education geared towards enlightening the populace on the benefits of active participation in the democratic and electioneering processes. Similarly, the finding of Agba (2007) showed that 43% of the Nigerian population is still illiterate, a rather large group requiring the media's special attention. From the literature review, studies have been conducted on the election process and politics in Nigeria; however, none of these studies was specifically directed towards assessing NTA voter education programmes on the awareness and participation in elections among residents of Ugheli South LGA of Delta State, Nigeria. It is this gap in the literature that this study sought to fill through empirical findings.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was anchored on the cognitive mobilisation theory of political literacy and participation, propounded by John Dalton in 1984. Cognitive mobilisation theory is the process through which people receive their cognitive cues to make decisions on voting and participation in other forms of political activities (Dalton, 1984; Tan Cho, 1999). The main thrust of this theory is that political education and political engagement act upon the individual to mobilise his mental capabilities in dealing with politics. This theory also argues that political education increases engagement in politics by developing the citizens' cognitive skills, enabling them to process complex information about the political system and enhance their feeling of civic duty (Denny & Doyle, 2008).

According to this theory, political education has a very strong effect because it reduces the costs and increases the benefit of voting in multiple ways (Dalton, 1984; Tan Cho, 1999). First, education increases the cognitive skills that facilitate learning about politics. Second, the well-educated receive more satisfaction from electoral participation. Tan Cho (1999) notes that it is not necessarily higher education that increases one's likelihood of voting, rather the socialization process that is provided through education.

This theory is found relevant to this study because constant voter education programmes through mass media (NTA) are expected to increase people's (residents of Ugheli South LGA) awareness of election and political issues. It is, therefore, expected that, with the increasing level of voter education in Nigeria, the ideological consciousness of residents of Ugheli South LGA, their intellectual political skills and their cognitive ability will improve.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research design**

This study adopted the survey research design. Survey design was adopted because of its reliability and accuracy in providing first-hand primary data from the respondents, which made the data collected exclusive and original. This design was also adopted based on the nature of the study, which entails eliciting direct responses from the sampled respondents and the impossibility of studying the entire population in Ugheli South LGA; hence, a representative sample was studied, and generalization was made on the entire population.

#### **Population of Study**

The population of the study comprised all the residents of the six (6) towns in Ugheli South Local Government Area. According to the 2006 population census of the National Populations Commission, the population figure of Ugheli South LGA is 213,576 (NPC, 2006).

#### **Sample Size and Sampling Procedure**

A sample size of 384 was obtained from the population of 213,576 using Krejcie & Morgan (1970) formula, as shown below:

**Table 1: Krejcie and Morgan's prescription of sample size for different population at 95% confidence level.**

S/N	Population Size	Sample Size	S/N	Population Size	Sample Size
1	50	44	15	260	155
2	75	63	16	280	162
3	100	80	17	300	169
4	120	92	18	400	196
5	130	97	19	500	217
6	140	103	20	1000	278
7	150	108	21	1500	306
8	160	113	22	2000	322
9	170	178	23	3000	241
10	180	123	24	4000	251
11	190	127	25	5000	357
12	200	132	26	10,000	370
13	220	132	27	50,000	381
14	240	148	28	100,000 & over	<b>384</b>

**Source: R.V.Krejcie & D.W. Morgan, (1970) Determining sample size for research activities.**

Therefore, considering the suggestions of Krejcie & Morgan above and highest figure of 100,000 and its corresponding sample size of 384, the researchers therefore, used the sample size of 384.

The simple random sampling technique was used in selecting samples for this study. This sampling technique gave each respondent an equal chance of being selected for the study. Ugheli South LGA is made up of six (6) Urhobo towns namely: Olomu, Eghwu, Okparabe, Arhavwarien, Effurun Otor and Ughievwen. Copies of the questionnaire was administered to the respondents in these towns in their houses, shops, schools and restaurants. This is for convenience as the questionnaires was filled immediately by the respondents and collected by the researchers.

### Measuring Instrument

The instrument used for data collection was the structured questionnaire. The questionnaire contained multiple choice questions to provide answers to the four research questions. The questionnaire had two sections - A and B. Section A was designed to collect personal data of the respondents such as sex, age and highest educational qualification. Section B contained the structured questionnaire designed to ascertain the opinion of residents of Ugheli South LGA on their awareness and participation in 2023 general elections as a result of NTA voter education programmes. The 18-item questionnaire contained only closed-ended questions designed to answer the four (4) research questions in this study. The close-ended questions provided options for the respondents to choose from. Some of the questions were structured in a 4-point Likert Scale format. The copies of the questionnaire were distributed to only respondents who have radio and television sets in their households.

### Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

To ascertain validity, great care was taken in the construction of the questionnaire. The objectives of the study were paired with the questions. The initial outline of the questionnaire was

scrutinized by a Mass Communication lecturer from Edwin Clark University, Kiagbodo, Delta State, who evaluated the content, wording and layout of the instrument. His comments and observations were used to improve the content and quality of the instrument.

To ensure reliability of the measuring instrument, a pilot test was conducted using 20 copies of the questionnaire that were distributed in one of the towns (Olomu) in Ugheli South LGA. After an interval of two weeks, another 20 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the same respondents in this same town. The essence was to ascertain whether the respondents understood the questions and if would answer the questions in the first and second test in the same direction. Afterwards, the two sets of data were analyzed in line with the objectives of the study, using Karl Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient statistical procedure. The responses were compared with each other and the calculation showed uniformity of responses with 0.88 reliability. (see equation below).

$$r_{xy} = \frac{\sum XY - \frac{(\sum X)(\sum Y)}{n}}{\sqrt{\left[\left(\sum X^2 - \frac{(\sum X)^2}{n_x}\right)\left(\sum Y^2 - \frac{(\sum Y)^2}{n_y}\right)\right]}}$$

Where X = the frequency figure on variable X

Y = the frequency figure on variable Y.

The respective figures presented in the table below shows the frequency at which respondents watch NTA voter Education Programme by variables X and Y. The value of N in the formula is the total number of subjects measured on both variables.

**Table 2: Reliability Calculation**

Number of Variables	Frequency at which respondents watched watch NTA voter Education Programme on their TV <b>(1<sup>st</sup> Test)</b>		Frequency at which respondents watched watch NTA voter Education Programme on their TV <b>(2<sup>nd</sup> Test)</b>		<b>(XY)</b>
	<b>X</b>		<b>Y</b>		
<b>(N)</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>X<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>(Y)</b>	<b>Y<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>(XY)</b>
Very often	10	100	9	81	90
Not very often	7	49	8	64	56
Rarely	3	9	3	9	9
<b>3</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>155</b>

Where: N = 4,  $\sum X = 20$ ,  $\sum Y = 20$ ,  $\sum XY = 155$ ,  $\sum X^2 = 158$ ,  $\sum Y^2 = 154$ ,

$$(\sum X)^2 = 400, (\sum Y)^2 = 400$$



**Calculation:**

$$\begin{aligned}
 r_{xy} &= \frac{\sum XY - \frac{(\sum X)(\sum Y)}{n}}{\sqrt{\left[\left(\sum X^2 - \frac{(\sum X)^2}{n_x}\right)\left(\sum Y^2 - \frac{(\sum Y)^2}{n_y}\right)\right]}} \\
 &= \frac{155 - \frac{(20)(20)}{3}}{\sqrt{\left[\left(158 - \frac{(20)^2}{3}\right)\left(154 - \frac{(20)^2}{3}\right)\right]}} \\
 &= \frac{155 - \frac{400}{3}}{\sqrt{\left(158 - \frac{400}{3}\right)\left(154 - \frac{400}{3}\right)}} \\
 &= \frac{155 - 133}{\sqrt{(158 - 133)(154 - 133)}} \\
 &= \frac{22}{\sqrt{(25)(25)}} \\
 &= \frac{22}{\sqrt{625}} \\
 &= \frac{22}{25}
 \end{aligned}$$

$$r_{xy} = 0.88$$

**Method of Data Analysis**

Data collected to achieve objectives one and five were analyzed using percentages, while data collected to achieve objectives two and three were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to determine the weight of the responses. The 4-point likert scale of Strongly Agree, (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree was arranged from 4 to 1 in descending order. The likert scale assumes that if the mean value obtained from respondents is greater than the mean criterion level (2.50) the statement is accepted but if the obtained mean value is less than the mean criterion level, the statement is rejected. See formula below:

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

Where  $\sum X =$  Total number of responses  
Number of responses

$\therefore$  The Mean decision point for determining the acceptance or rejection of responses in this study is:  $\frac{SA+A+D+AD}{4+3+2+1} = \frac{4+3+2+1}{4+3+2+1} = 2.50$

N 4

**Results**

A total of 370 out of 384 copies of the questionnaire distributed to the respondents were duly returned, hence, analysis was done based on these returned copies.

**Table 3: Biographic Data Analysis**

S/N.	Variable	Respondents' Distribution	Percentage
1.	Gender	Male	47%
		Female	53%
2.	Age	18-27	20%
		28-37	26%
		38-47	22%
		48-57	18%
		58 and above	14%
3.	Marital Status	Single	32%
		Married	66%
		Divorced/Separated	1%
		Widowed	1%
4.	Educational Qualification	No formal Education	2%
		Primary Education	18%
		Secondary Education	45%
		Tertiary Education	27%
		Other Degrees	8%
5.	Religion	Muslim	0%
		Christian	98%
		Traditional Religion	2%

The biographic data of the respondents as shown in Table 3 indicate that 53 percent are female, with 26 percent of the respondents being between the age range of 28 – 37 years as the highest while the lowest age range was between 58 years and above with 14 percent. The biodata representation also shows that 66 percent of the respondents were married, 98 percent of them being Christians, with 45 percent of the respondents having secondary education.

**Table 4: Responses on whether the respondents have a television set**

Variables/Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Television</b>		
Yes	284	77
No	86	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>100</b>

Result in Table 4 revealed that majority of the respondents have a television set (77%) in their households. This is in contrast with 23% who do not have this mass media channel.

**Table 5: Responses on the level of exposure to NTA Voter Education Programmes among residents of Ugheli South LGA**

<b>Variables/Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Have you watched NTA voter education programme</b>		
Yes	363	98
No	7	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>How often did you watch NTA voter Education Programme</b>		
Very often	260	70
Not very often	59	16
Rarely	51	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>What is NTA voter Education programme is about?</b>		
- Need to get PVC in order to vote	85	23
-where to get PVC and register for election	31	18
-Identity of electoral aspirants	61	8
-political right of Nigerian citizens	72	19
-None of the above	-	-
-All of the above	121	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>100</b>

From data presented in Table 5 it was obvious that the level at which the sampled respondents were exposed to NTA Voter Education Programmes was very high. This was evident in the frequency of their responses where 98% of them indicated they have watched the programme, 70% of them confirmed they watched the programme very often during the election campaign and 33% of them knew what the programme was about.

**Table 6: Mean and Standard Deviation on the level of awareness of NTA Voter Education Programmes among residents of Ugheli South LGA**

S/N	Items	$\bar{x}$	SD	Dec
1	NTA voter education programmes make people to know about election and their political rights	3.4	99.22	A
2	NTA voter education programmes encourage people to vote and participate during election	3.4	78.67	SA
3	NTA voter education programmes encourage people to stop violence and apathy during election	3.1	50.28	SA
	Grand Mean	3.3	76.06	Accepted

Key:  $\bar{x}$  = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; Dec = Decision

Table 6 reveals the level of awareness of the sampled respondents on the fact that NTA voter education programmes make peoples to know about election and their political rights showed a mean value of  $3.4 > 2.50$  and a standard deviation of 99.22. Data on the awareness level of respondents that NTA voter education programmes encourage people to vote and participate during elections showed a mean of 3.4 and a standard deviation of 78.67. Also, the result in Table 4 on the awareness that NTA voter education programmes encourage people to stop violence and apathy during election revealed a mean value of 3.1 and a standard deviation of 76.06.

The grand mean of 3.3 with a standard deviation of 76.06 obtained in the above data which is greater than the mean decision point of 2.50 showed that the statements were accepted by the respondents. This implies that the level of awareness of NTA voter Education programmes among residents of Ugheli South LGA was very high.

**Table 7: Mean and Standard Deviation on the attitude of residents of Ugheli South LGA towards NTA Voter Education Programmes**

S/N	Items	$\bar{x}$	SD	Dec
1	NTA voter education programmes are good efforts by the Nigerian government, INEC and NOA to enlighten citizens on the political rights	3.0	47.89	A
2	NTA voter education programmes have raised my interest in getting my PVC and voting during the 2023 election	3.2	58.65	SA
3	With the information I got through NTA voter education, I told my relatives, neighbours and friends about the need to get PVC and participate actively during the election	3.3	73.28	SA
	Grand Mean	3.2	59.94	Accepted

Key:  $\bar{x}$  = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; Dec = Decision

Table 7 revealed the result regarding the attitude of the respondents, the obtained mean of  $3.0 > 3.50$  with a standard deviation of 47.89 showed that residents of Ughelli South LGA have

positive disposition towards NTA Voter Education based on their responses that NTA voter education programmes are good efforts by Nigerian government, INEC and NOA to enlighten citizens on the political rights. From the table above also, mean value of  $3.2 > 2.50$  and a standard deviation of 58.65 showed that NTA voter education programmes have raised the respondents' interest in getting their PVC and voting during the 2023 elections. The mean of 3.3 and a standard deviation of 73.28 equally confirmed that the respondents would tell their relatives, neighbours and friends about the need to get PVC and participate actively during election based on the information they have got through NTA Voter Education programmes.

Therefore, the overall mean of 3.2 which is greater than the mean criterion level (2.50), with a standard deviation of 59.94 implied that the stamen in Table 5 was accepted. Therefore, NTA Voter Education programmes positively influenced the attitude of residents of Ugheli South LGA.

**Table 8: Responses on the influence of NTA Voter Education Programmes on participating in 2023 general elections among residents of Ugheli South LGA**

Variables/Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Do you currently have permanent voter card (PVC)		
Yes	261	71
No	109	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>100</b>
Did you vote during the 2023 general election?		
Yes	282	76
No	88	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>100</b>
Would you be involved in electoral violence and apathy		
Yes	91	25
No	279	75
<b>Total</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>100</b>

From the data presented in Table 8 above, it could be observed that NTA voter education programmes have greatly influenced residents of Ugheli South LGA towards participating in the 2023 general elections. This was confirmed by the frequency of their responses in which a greater percentage (71%) of the sampled respondents indicated that they currently have permanent voters card (PVC); the majority (76%) of them voted during the 2023 general elections and as many as 75% of them promised that they would not be involved in electoral violence and apathy.

## **Discussion of Findings**

From data gathered and analysis made, it was found that the level of exposure of the sampled respondents to NTA voter education programmes was very high. This was confirmed by their responses where 98% of them have watched the programme, 70% of them watched the programme very often during the election campaign and 33% knew what the programme was about. This finding implies that constant emphasis on voter education through the cognitive mobilization function of mass media (NTA) is adjudged to be the reason residents of Ugheli South LGA have heard about the programme. This finding corroborated the finding of Ahmad et al., (2019) who found that the majority of the students were greatly exposed to social media and use social media for political awareness and information. That their use of social media is a vital platform for them to participate in real-life political activities.

It was also found that the level of awareness of NTA voter education programmes among residents of Ugheli South LGA was very high. This was confirmed by the grand mean of 3.3 with a standard deviation of 76.06 (see Table 3). This finding could be attributed to mass media cognitive mobilization efforts of constant sensitization on political education and political engagement which has in turn increased engagement in political participation among the people. This finding was in line with the statement by Okon (2014) that mass media have the capacity to exert an enormous influence on the people through widespread voter enlightenment and awareness. But, contrary to the finding of Agba (2007) which revealed that 43% of the Nigerian population is still illiterate of electoral information, hence, they require the special attention of the media.

Regarding the attitude of the respondents, it was found that residents of Ughelli South LGA have a positive disposition towards NTA voter education programme. This finding was confirmed by the overall mean of 3.2 which is greater than the mean criterion level (2.50), with a standard deviation of 59.94, thus implying that NTA voter education programmes positively influenced the attitude of residents of Ugheli South LGA, hence they have positive disposition and perception towards the programme. This finding in relation to the cognitive mobilization theory used in this study has confirmed that NTA voter education programmes have actually influenced residents of Ugheli South LGA to perceive that such programmes are good efforts by the Nigerian government, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and National Orientation Agency (NOA) to enlighten citizens on the political rights, which has translated to their positive attitude towards developing interest in getting their PVC and voting during the 2023 election.

Further finding revealed that NTA voter education programmes has greatly influenced residents of Ugheli South LGA towards participating in the 2023 general elections. This finding was confirmed by their responses in which a greater percentage (71%) of them currently have permanent voter's card (PVC); the majority (76%) of them voted during the 2023 general elections and as many as 75% of them promised they would not be involved in electoral violence and apathy. The implication of this finding is that constant voter education programmes through NTA cognitive mobilization efforts have undoubtedly increase residents of Ugheli South LGA's awareness of election and political issues and with this high level of information they became more interested in political issues including voting in the 2023 general elections. This finding corroborated that of Ochonoghor and Amadi (2019) whose finding revealed that the majority of the respondents actually participated in the 2015 electoral process and that their participation was influenced to a very large extent by the broadcast media interactive programmes. This finding equally confirmed the statement by Amaechi et al., (2018) that political knowledge promotes

supports for democratic values and the more knowledge citizens have of political principles and institutions, the more likely they are to support core democratic principles, starting with tolerance.

### **Conclusion/Recommendations**

This study concluded that voter education programmes through the mass media, especially National Television Authority (NTA) are very effective strategy of informing the masses about political activities and influencing them to actively participate in elections. NTA voter education programmes aimed at sensitizing people on elections, political parties and political activities is adjudged to be very influential in increasing audience awareness and their active participation in the 2023 general elections, as evident from the findings. The cognitive motivation theory used in this study also confirmed this conclusion. Based on this theory, the constant voter education programmes through NTA cognitive mobilization efforts have undoubtedly increased residents of Ugheli South LGA's awareness of the election and political issues which has in turn translated into active participation in the 2023 general elections.

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, it is recommended that there is still a need for constant voter education programmes and political sensitization of Nigerians, not only through NTA but other media stations and a combination of both conventional and new media. There is a need to further intensify political education programmes at all levels of government, especially at the local government level for better electoral results. There is equally the need to delegate electoral agents to the remote areas, not only during elections but throughout the year, with the mandate to use grassroots-based communication methods to educate the citizens. When this is done, political education in Nigeria will effectively influence the awareness, knowledge and participation of the citizens in political matters and electoral processes.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The major limitation of this study was the fact that most residents of Ugheli South LGA were reluctant to fill the questionnaire. Hence, much effort was devoted in convincing them to fill the questionnaire. There was also financial challenge, as the process of producing this paper, especially during the field work involved spending a lot of money.

### **Recommendations for further Studies**

This study was limited to only one local government area of the State. A study should be conducted on all the Local Government Areas of Delta State and Nigeria as a whole, in order to get a comprehensive information and understanding of how NTA voter education programmes influenced the political awareness and participation in elections of Deltans and Nigerians. Therefore, studies should be conducted on the suggested topics below:

1. Assessment of NTA voter education programmes on the awareness and participation in General Elections among citizens of Delta State, Nigeria.
2. Influence of NTA voter education programmes on the awareness and participation in General Elections among citizens of the six geo-political zones of Nigeria.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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