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Factors influencing voting behaviors among first-time Voters in Cameroon

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Abstract

Low voter turnout among first-time voters in Cameroon poses a significant threat to the country's democratic development. Understanding the factors that influence their voting behaviour is crucial to addressing this issue. This study argues that convenience factors, advertising mediums, and social pressures play a significant role in shaping the voting decisions of first-time voters in Cameroon. The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors that influence voting behaviour among first-time voters in Cameroon, with a focus on identifying strategies to increase voter turnout. A quantitative research approach was employed, using a survey design to collect data from a sample of first-time voters in Cameroon. The data was analysed using statistical models to identify the relationships between the independent variables and voting intention. The study found that convenience factors, such as ease of registration and accessibility of polling stations, have the most significant influence on voting intention among first-time voters in Cameroon. Advertising mediums and social pressures were found to have minimal impact on voting behaviour. The study's results also indicate that the assumptions of homoscedasticity in linear regression analysis are met, suggesting that the variance of the errors is constant across all levels of the independent variables. Overall, this study contributes to our understanding of the factors that shape voting behaviours among first-time voters in Cameroon, providing valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders seeking to promote democratic participation among young people.

Keywords: Voter Turnout; Voting Behaviour; Convenience Factors; Democratic Development; First-Time Voters

1. Introduction

Factors influencing voting behaviours among first-time voters in Cameroon is a critical topic, especially considering the country's growing youth population and increasing social media penetration. Voting decisions are shaped by various factors, including socio-demographic characteristics, political awareness, and social media influence (Kulachai et al., 2023; Lerdtomornsakul & Homyamyen, 2020; Auala, 2017).

Voting practices around the world have undergone significant changes over time, reflecting the unique social, political, and historical contexts of each country (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Dahl, 2006; Norris, 2015). In the United States, voting rights have evolved through landmark legislation, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Finley, 2014; Bloch, 2016). These laws aimed to address racial disparities and ensure equal access to the ballot.

Russia's voting practices are deeply influenced by its complex political history and electoral system (Komatsu, 2013; White, 2011; Ross, 2017). The country's electoral commission plays a crucial role in shaping voting outcomes. Allegations of electoral interference and manipulation have raised concerns about the integrity of Russia's democratic processes (Borschevsky, 2018; Golosov, 2011).

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In Europe, voter apathy and disillusionment with traditional parties have become pressing concerns (Chiluwa, 2015; Mair, 2013; Webb, 2017). The rise of populist movements and euroscepticism have contributed to decreased voter turnout and erosion of trust in institutions (Hobolt, 2015; Inglehart, 2016).

Africa's electoral landscape is characterized by diversity, with some countries experiencing peaceful transitions and others facing electoral violence (NTIC, 2020; Adebayo, 2017; Cheeseman, 2015). Factors such as colonial legacy, economic development, and social stability influence voting practices across the continent.

In Cameroon, voting practices have been marred by controversy, including allegations of electoral fraud and voter suppression (Crisis Group, 2018; Konings, 2011; Eboko, 2015). The country's electoral law has been criticized for favoring the ruling party, and opposition parties have raised concerns about the impartiality of the electoral commission (Elecam) (Global Integrity, 2019). The Centre Region, home to the capital city Yaoundé, has a high voter turnout but faces challenges such as voter apathy and limited civic education (NTIC, 2020).

Despite the importance of first-time voters in shaping Cameroon's democratic future, there is limited research on the factors influencing their voting behaviours. This study aims to address this knowledge gap by investigating the socio-demographic, political, and social media factors influencing voting decisions among first-time voters in Cameroon. The main objective of this paper is to examine the socio-demographic factors influencing voting behaviours among first-time voters in Cameroon.

This is how the rest of the paper is organized. The literature is reviewed in Section 2. The variables, sources, and dataset are explained in Section 3. We concentrate on the method in Section 3. The results are discussed in Section 4. Everything is brought together in Section 5, which also addresses the policy implications.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptual Issues

Voting behaviour among first-time voters in Cameroon is a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors. According to Kulachai et al. (2023), voting decisions are shaped by a combination of individual, social, and environmental factors. In the Cameroonian context, factors such as political socialization, cultural identity, and socioeconomic status play a significant role in shaping voting behavior (Kamga, 2018). Additionally, the country's historical and political landscape, including the dominance of the ruling party, also impacts voting decisions (Mbah, 2020).

Individual factors, particularly political socialization, significantly influence voting behavior among first-time voters in Cameroon. Political socialization refers to the process by which individuals acquire their political beliefs, values, and attitudes (Niemi & Jennings, 1991). In Cameroon, family, education, and media play crucial roles in shaping political socialization (Kamga, 2018). For instance, individuals from families with strong political affiliations are more likely to adopt similar views. Furthermore, socioeconomic status also impacts voting decisions, with economic concerns such as employment and income being top priorities (Mbah, 2020).

Social factors, including cultural identity and community influence, also shape voting behavior among first-time voters in Cameroon. Cultural identity, encompassing ethnic and regional affiliations, can significantly influence voting decisions (Elaigwu, 2005). In Cameroon's diverse cultural landscape, voters often prioritize cultural loyalty over other considerations. Community influence, comprising opinions and behaviours of family, friends, and community leaders, also sways voting decisions (Kamga, 2018).

Environmental factors, specifically Cameroon's historical and political landscape, contribute to voting behaviour. The country's complex history, including the dominance of the ruling party, contributes to voting behaviour (Mbah, 2020). The general political atmosphere, including levels of trust in institutions and perceptions of corruption, also plays a role (Bratton, 2013). Understanding these factors is crucial for grasping the complexities of voting behaviour among first-time voters in Cameroon.

2.2. Overview of Theories

Several theoretical frameworks can be applied to understand voting behaviour among first-time voters in Cameroon.

2.2.1. Rational Choice Theory

The Rational Choice Theory (Downs, 1957) suggests that voters make informed decisions based on their self-interest. This theory assumes that voters weigh the costs and benefits of voting for a particular candidate or party and choose the option that best aligns with their personal interests. In the context of Cameroon, this theory can help explain why first-time voters may prioritize economic stability or job creation when casting their ballots.

2.2.2. Social Identity Theory

In contrast, the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) posits that voters are influenced by their group affiliations and social norms. This theory suggests that individuals derive a sense of identity and belonging from their membership in various groups, such as ethnic or regional communities, and that these affiliations shape their voting behavior. In Cameroon, where ethnic and regional identities are particularly salient, this theory can help explain why first-time voters may vote along ethnic or regional lines.

2.2.3. Civic Voluntarism Model

The Civic Voluntarism Model (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995) emphasizes the role of civic engagement and community involvement in shaping voting behaviour. This theory suggests that individuals who are actively engaged in their communities and participate in civic activities are more likely to vote and to make informed decisions at the polls. In Cameroon, this theory can help explain why first-time voters who are involved in community organizations or volunteer work may be more likely to participate in elections

2.3. Overview of Empirical Literature

Empirical studies on voting behaviour among first-time voters in Cameroon are scarce, but existing research sheds light on key factors influencing their decisions. According to Kamga (2018), education, age, and socioeconomic status significantly impact voting choices.

Research has identified several factors that shape voting decisions among first-time voters in Cameroon. Education is a crucial factor, with voters having higher education levels tend to make more informed decisions (Kamga, 2018). Age is another significant factor, as younger voters are more likely to prioritize economic considerations (Mbah, 2020). Additionally, socioeconomic status plays a substantial role, with economic stability and job creation being top priorities for many voters.

Social media also plays a significant role in shaping voting behaviour among young Cameroonians. Ngang (2019) found that social media platforms are increasingly influential in shaping voting decisions, particularly among first-time voters. This highlights the need for further research on the impact of social media on voting behaviour.

The intersectionality of individual, social, and environmental factors also significantly impacts voting decisions. This literature review emphasizes the importance of considering these intersecting factors when examining voting behaviour among first-time voters in Cameroon.

Despite existing research, there are significant gaps in understanding voting behaviour among first-time voters in Cameroon. Future studies should investigate the impact of social media on voting behaviour, examine the role of civic engagement and community involvement, and analyse the effects of political socialization on voting decisions.

3. Methodology

This study employs a quantitative approach to gather comprehensive data. The quantitative approach will involve surveys among first-time voters in Cameroon, election officials, political analysts, and community leaders.

The study will utilize primary data sources. Primary data will be collected through surveys, focus group discussion.

The population will consist of first-time voters in Cameroon's most recent election. A sample size of 100 respondents will be selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation from various regions and demographic groups. Sampling frames will be obtained from voter registration records.

The study will apply Ajzen's Theory of Planned behaviour (TPB) to examine factors influencing voting behaviour. The mathematical model will take the form of:

$$VI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 AM + \beta_2 CF + \beta_3 SP + \varepsilon \qquad \text{.....................} \qquad (1)$$

Where VI= Voting Intention, AM=Advertising Mediums, CF=Convenience Factors, SP=Social Pressures, ε is Error term. β_0, β_1, and β_2 are the model parameters.

To ensure validity and reliability, the study will employ pilot testing of survey questionnaires and member checking for interview data. Triangulation of data sources will also be used to increase confidence in findings.

3.1. Presentation of Findings and Discussion of Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistics reveal that Voting Intention (VI) has a mean score of 3.54, indicating a moderate level of voting intention among first-time voters in Cameroon. The independent variables, Advertising Mediums (AM), Convenience Factors (CF), and Social Pressures (SP), have mean scores of 3.59, 3.7, and 3.72, respectively, suggesting that these factors have a significant influence on voting intention (Campbell et al., 1960; Verba & Nie, 1972; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). The standard deviation scores range from 1.207 to 1.319, indicating a moderate level of variability in the data.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
vi	100	3.54	1.267	1	5
am	100	3.59	1.319	1	5
cf	100	3.7	1.283	1	5
sp	100	3.72	1.207	1	5

Source: Authors (2024)

In Table 2, the Table for the reliability test is presented. The item-total statistics show that the corrected item-total correlation for VI is .163, indicating a moderate relationship between VI and the overall scale (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The Cronbach's alpha values range from .755 to .831, indicating good internal consistency reliability for the scale (Cronbach, 1951).

Table 2 Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
V1	14.55	11.179	0.123	0.764
VI	61.51	862.959	0.163	0.825
AM	61.46	882.796	-0.100	0.755
CF	61.35	854.391	0.275	0.812
SP	61.33	866.870	0.118	0.831

Source: Authors (2024)

Table 3 Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
VI	0.252	100	0.210	0.868	100	0.310
AM	0.252	100	0.470	0.852	100	0.970
CF	0.292	100	0.570	0.818	100	0.850
SP	0.262	100	0.740	0.849	100	0.360

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction Source: Authors (2024)

Table 3 shows the normality test. The tests of normality reveal that the data does not significantly deviate from normality, with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test yielding significance values greater than 0.05 for all variables. The Lilliefors significance correction was applied to account for the use of sample-based parameters (Lilliefors, 1967). The Shapiro-Wilk test also confirms normality, with significance values greater than 0.05.

Table 4 shows the correlation coefficient. Additionally, Advertising Mediums (AM) and Social Pressures (SP) show moderate correlations with VI (r = 0.152 and r = 0.153, respectively), suggesting that these factors also play a role in shaping voting intentions (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Berelson et al., 1954). The correlation between CF and AM (r = 0.231) and CF and SP (r = 0.297) further highlights the interconnectedness of these factors.

Table 4 Pairwise correlations

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(1) vi	1.000			
(2) am	0.152	1.000		
(3) cf	0.355	0.231	1.000	
(4) sp	0.153	0.283	0.297	1.000

Source: Authors (2024)

Table 5 presents the test for multicollinearity. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) results indicate no significant multicollinearity issues, with VIF values ranging from 1.115 to 1.158, well below the threshold of 5 or 10 (Hair et al., 2010; Kutner et al., 2005). This suggests that the independent variables are not highly correlated, allowing for reliable estimates of their individual effects on VI.

Table 5 Variance Inflation Factor

	VIF	1/VIF
sp	1.158	0.863
cf	1.126	0.888
am	1.115	0.896
Mean VIF	1.133	.

Source: Authors (2024)

Table 6 presents the model summary. The research on factors influencing voting behaviours among first-time voters in Cameroon yielded some interesting results. The model summary indicates a moderate correlation between the independent variables (Advertising Mediums, Convenience Factors, and Social Pressures) and the dependent variable (Voting Intention). The Model R value of .364 suggests that about 36.4% of the variation in Voting Intention can be explained by the independent variables [1].

Furthermore, the R Square value of .133 and Adjusted R Square value of .106 indicate that approximately 13.3% and 10.6% of the variance in Voting Intention is accounted for by the independent variables, respectively. The Standard Error of the Estimate (1.198) suggests that the predicted values of Voting Intention are reasonably accurate, with a moderate margin of error (Brady et al., 2011; Kaminski et al., 2013; Pattie & Johnston, 2017).

The ANOVA results confirm the significance of the regression model, with an F-value of 4.895 and a p-value of .003. This implies that the independent variables collectively contribute to predicting Voting Intention. Specifically, Convenience Factors (CF) have a significant positive effect on Voting Intention (β = .330, p = .002), while Advertising Mediums (AM) and Social Pressures (SP) do not have statistically significant effects (Verba et al., 1995; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980; Leighley, 1995).

Table 6 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.364[a]	0.133	0.106	1.198

a. Predictors: (Constant), SP, AM, CF Source: Authors (2024)

In Table 7, the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is presented. The ANOVA results for the research on factors influencing voting behaviors among first-time voters in Cameroon are quite revealing. The Model Sum of Squares for Regression is 21.072, with 3 degrees of freedom, yielding a Mean Square of 7.024. This, combined with an F-value of 4.895 and a p-value of .003, indicates that the independent variables (Advertising Mediums, Convenience Factors, and Social Pressures) collectively contribute to predicting Voting Intention.

In essence, the significant F-value suggests that the regression model is effective in explaining the variation in Voting Intention. Specifically, the model accounts for approximately 13.3% of the variance in Voting Intention, as indicated by the R Square value in the Model Summary table. This is consistent with previous research on voting behavior, which highlights the importance of various factors influencing voting decisions (Verba et al., 1995; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980; Leighley, 1995).

Table 7 ANOVAa

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	21.072	3	7.024	4.895	0.003[b]
	Residual	137.768	96	1.435		
	Total	158.840	99			

a. Dependent Variable: VI; b. Predictors: (Constant), SP, AM, CF Source: Authors (2024)

In Table 8 the coefficients of the model are presented. The results of your research on factors influencing voting behaviours among first-time voters in Cameroon are quite revealing. The coefficients table shows that Convenience Factors (CF) have a significant positive effect on Voting Intention (VI), with a beta value of .330 and a p-value of .002. This suggests that making voting more accessible and convenient can increase the likelihood of first-time voters participating in the electoral process. This finding is consistent with previous research, which highlights the importance of practical considerations in voting decisions (Brady et al., 2011; Pattie & Johnston, 2017; Leighley, 1995).

On the other hand, Advertising Mediums (AM) and Social Pressures (SP) do not have a statistically significant impact on Voting Intention, with p-values of .515 and .724, respectively. This implies that the influence of advertising and social pressures on voting behaviour may be limited among first-time voters in Cameroon. However, it is essential to consider the potential interactions between these variables and other factors that may affect voting behaviour (Verba et al., 1995; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980; Kaminski et al., 2013).

Table 8 Coefficientsa

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.969	0.502		3.924	0.000
	AM	0.063	0.096	0.066	0.654	0.515
	CF	0.325	0.100	0.330	3.267	0.002
	SP	0.038	0.107	0.036	0.354	0.724
a. Dependent Variable: VI						

Source: Authors (2024)

In Table 9 the Heteroskedasticity resukts are shown. The Breusch-Pagan/Cook-Weisberg test results for heteroskedasticity in your research on factors influencing voting behaviours among first-time voters in Cameroon

indicate that the null hypothesis of constant variance cannot be rejected. The chi-squared statistic is 0.35 with 1 degree of freedom and a p-value of 0.5522, suggesting that the variance of the errors is constant across all levels of the independent variables.

This implies that the assumptions of homoscedasticity in linear regression analysis are met, and the ordinary least squares (OLS) estimates are unbiased and efficient. In other words, the variance of the residuals does not change significantly across different levels of Voting Intention (VI), Advertising Mediums (AM), Convenience Factors (CF), and Social Pressures (SP).

Table 9 Heteroskedasticity

Breusch-Pagan / Cook-Weisberg test for heteroskedasticity	df	p
Ho: Constant variance		
Variables: fitted values of vi		
chi2(1) = 0.35		
Prob > chi2 = 0.5522		

Source: Authors (2024)

4. Discussion of Results

The findings suggest that Advertising Mediums, Convenience Factors, and Social Pressures significantly influence Voting Intention among first-time voters in Cameroon. These results align with previous studies on voting behavior, which highlight the importance of external factors in shaping voting intentions (Verba & Nie, 1972; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993).

The study's findings underscore the importance of Convenience Factors in influencing Voting Intention among first-time voters in Cameroon. Policymakers and electoral bodies should prioritize streamlining voting processes to encourage participation. The moderate correlations between Advertising Mediums and Social Pressures with Voting Intention also highlight the need for targeted campaigns and community engagement strategies. The findings suggest that Convenience Factors, such as accessibility and voting ease, play a crucial role in shaping Voting Intention among first-time voters in Cameroon. This aligns with previous research highlighting the importance of practical considerations in voting decisions (Pattie & Johnston, 2017; Brady et al., 2011). The findings suggest that the independent variables have a statistically significant impact on Voting Intention among first-time voters in Cameroon. This aligns with previous studies on voting behavior, which emphasize the role of external factors in shaping voting intentions (Brady et al., 2011; Kaminski et al., 2013; Pattie & Johnston, 2017). The significance of Convenience Factors, in particular, underscores the importance of practical considerations in voting decisions. The findings of this study underscore the significance of Convenience Factors in shaping Voting Intention among first-time voters in Cameroon. This aligns with previous research emphasizing the role of accessibility and voting ease in determining voting behaviour (Pattie & Johnston, 2017; Brady et al., 2011). The lack of significant effects for Advertising Mediums and Social Pressures suggests that first-time voters in Cameroon may be more influenced by practical considerations than external factors. The absence of heteroskedasticity in the data is a positive sign, as it increases the reliability of the regression estimates. This allows for a more accurate interpretation of the relationships between the independent variables and Voting Intention. The findings are consistent with previous research on voting behavior, which often assumes homoscedasticity in the error terms (Verba et al., 1995; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980; Leighley, 1995). The results also suggest that the factors influencing voting behavior among first-time voters in Cameroon do not vary significantly across different subgroups. This implies that policymakers can target these factors uniformly across different demographic groups to increase voting participation.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study on factors influencing voting behaviours among first-time voters in Cameroon reveals crucial insights into the complexities of voter decision-making. Convenience factors, such as ease of registration and accessibility of polling stations, significantly impact voting intention [1]. This suggests that efforts to streamline the voting process and increase voter accessibility could lead to higher turnout among first-time voters.

On the other hand, advertising mediums and social pressures were found to have minimal influence on voting behaviour. This implies that first-time voters in Cameroon are more inclined to make informed decisions based on their own research and values rather than external factors.

The study's findings have important implications for policymakers, political parties, and civil society organizations seeking to promote democratic participation among young people. By addressing the convenience factors that hinder voting, these stakeholders can create an environment that encourages first-time voters to exercise their civic rights. Convenience factors significantly influence voting intention among first-time voters in Cameroon. Advertising mediums and social pressures have minimal impact on voting behaviour. Policymakers and stakeholders should focus on improving voter accessibility and streamlining the voting process.

Overall, this research contributes to our understanding of the factors that shape voting behaviours among first-time voters in Cameroon, providing valuable insights for promoting democratic participation and civic engagement among young people.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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