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Candidate Policy Ideas and Other Factors that Affect Election Results: A Case Study of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology

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Abstract: Politics primarily focuses on decision-making and resource allocation. This resource allocation may emerge from political parties and candidates' policy proposals. Numerous studies have explored the impact of candidate policy proposals on election outcomes, but less attention has been paid to the impact of other factors. Using Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) as a case study, the study examines the impact of candidate policy proposals and other factors such as ethnicity, gender, and party affiliation on election outcomes. Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) is located in Kumasi, in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The sample size of 255 people came from the Department of History and Political Studies and the Department of English, both of which are part of the Faculty of Social Sciences. The third and fourth-year students in these departments were given online Google-style questionnaires. In addition, journal, article, and book data were used to support the analysis. The majority of survey respondents stated that politicians' policy opinions have a considerable impact on elections, which was a significant conclusion. In order to provide equal opportunity for all, the laws governing gender discrimination and ethnic politics must be properly enforced and followed. Possession of a party card should not be a prerequisite for receiving benefits in the country. Everyone should have equal access to opportunities.

Keywords: *Election, politics, students, university, outcome.*

1. Introduction

Elections are important political activities that are undertaken in almost every society, organization, and country. It is the basis and one of the strongholds of well-established democracies around the world. An election itself is a stream of connected antecedent and subsequent behavior (Key, 1966). Elections as defined by some scholars like Eulau, Gibbins, and Webb as the formal process of selecting a person for public office or accepting or rejecting a political position by voting. Political candidates are people nominated to run for political offices. Political candidates are very instrumental in determining the outcome of elections in the state. The kind of policy ideas or statements they communicate to electorates can shift things in or out of their favor. To run the affairs of society perfectly, there is the need for good governance with good policies. Policies are a set of ideas or plans that are used as a basis for making good decisions (Dye, 1972) defined policies as anything a government chooses to do or not to do. Thus, a policy is an action that employs governmental authorities to commit resources in support of the preferred value (Considine, 1994).

However, the kind of policies and ideas put in place before elections are some of the major factors that trigger the electorates to vote during an election. But do the electorate focus solely on policies when voting? Or do other factors come into play to determine the outcome of an election? This and many more have been left unresolved and hence, the need for investigation. Elections are the most important and obvious mechanism by which all citizens can pick or remove their leaders peacefully, and they are evidently costly affairs (Anglin, 1998). Elections are the main way that policymakers are forced or encouraged to pay attention to citizens. A multiparty system is needed for elections so that people can vote for candidates from different political parties with different ideas and different ways to solve problems (Mesfin, 2008). Democracy, according to Makinda (1996), is a form of government that is strongly anchored in the notion that everyone in any community should be free to establish their own political, economic, social, and cultural systems.

2. Literature Review

Impact of Candidate Policies and Factors on Election Results: According to Lago and Martínez (2011), citizens elect other citizens to reflect their interests. For the purposes of this study, an election is any formal way that voters choose who will run for public office. According to Dye (1972), a policy is anything a

government chooses to do or not do. This "something" is defined by Birkland (2001) as the acts or decisions to act or not act to alter or retain certain characteristics of the status quo. Anderson (2015) defines policies as the behavior of a key actor or group of players, such as an official, a government agency, or a legislature, in a particular area or activity, such as public transportation or consumer protection. Policies and manifestos will be used the same way for the purposes of this research and based on what these researchers have said. Laver and Garry (2000) define manifestos as the ideal policy solutions, stated policy solutions, and policy predictions that reflect a party's actual convictions, what they believe the audience or the public would purchase, and what they claim to accomplish in the future if elected. In a similar vein, Ray and Bell (2008) view manifestos as little more than party advertisements or contracts between parties and voters. Harmel et al. (2016) agree that the main goals of manifestos are to show how the party wants to be seen and to help people figure out who the party is. Manifestos are papers that outline, in greater or lesser depth, the policies or programs a political party intends to follow if elected. They outline the development approach the party will undertake if it wins the election (Ayee, 2011). Dolezal et al. (2016) contend that manifestos are the richest sources of information regarding party policies. In contrast, Royed (1996) defines it as a party's chosen course of action if elected to office.

Like other political science terms, the term "candidate" is difficult to define. This phrase has very few or no known definitions. According to the research, a candidate is an application for a post. According to the Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary, a candidate is also a person who has been officially proposed for a job, an honor, or an election. According to Dictionary.com, a candidate is a person nominated to run for political office or fill a specific post. According to the Oxford definition, a candidate is an individual who applies for a position or is nominated for an election. According to the New Oxford American Dictionary, a candidate is a person who has been formally nominated for an office. These sources indicate that candidates are individuals nominated for a certain office. Before being nominated to lead a political party or an organization, they must go through a number of procedures. Before Ghana's independence in 1957, elections and manifestos were a part of the country's governance, politics, and culture. This is demonstrated by the number of elections held in the country and the number of manifestos associated with these elections (Ayee, 2011). Many experts and extant literature tend to believe that policies are developed to entice voter support (Harmel et al., 2016). Additionally, others say that voters do not even consider policies while being aware of their existence. From Down's 1957 fundamental work, it can be deduced that parties provide policies to both retain their current supporters and attract new ones. Thus, policies are designed primarily with the party's prospective voters in mind.

Referring to the mandate model and using British parties as examples, Kavanagh argues that British parties are programmatic; they campaign on policies and pledge to implement them if elected (Kavanagh, 1981). Consequently, policies are viewed as contracts between parties and voters (Ray & Bell, 2008). However, while the mandate model may be appropriate for British issues, it may not be relevant to parties worldwide (Harmel et al., 2016). Even though it is ambiguous to emphasize the "contract" concept, political parties formulate policies with voters in mind. Given that voters have options, how do they choose whom to support (Hague & Harrop, 2004)? They would seek a candidate who could bring progress to the district. If this is credible, then we can claim that such voters are socio-tropic (Sanders, 2009) in the sense that they vote for the benefit of the whole, wherein the parts share the greatest good of the greatest number (Dwivedi, 2005). This indicates that voters do consider policies while casting their ballots. Ayee (2011) says, using the Ghanaian situation as an example, that the promises made on political parties' platforms are the basis for communication during elections and the policies they choose when they are in power. In addition to how parties use their policies to set the agenda for their campaigns, Wagner and Meyer (2014) argue that some parties may choose to stress their concerns, whereas others may choose to ride the wave by focusing on issues that are important to voters. They show that a party's first strategy is to speak as much as possible about its subject. These are policy areas where the government has a long-standing reputation for effectively addressing issues and prioritizing the resolution of major obstacles.

Political Alignment and Voter Choice: According to Eyestone (1978), issues are the driving force behind politics. The electorate decides whether to support these issues or not after political candidates and the parties they represent identify public concerns and develop strategies to address them. Therefore, if the party's platform focuses on these concerns, it should perform better at the polls. A widely held belief

regarding democratic elections is that the votes of numerous individuals are influenced by their evaluations of the competing candidates' personalities and other personal characteristics, and that, as a result, the outcomes of democratic elections are frequently determined by "personality factors" of this type. The characteristics include race, age, gender, and religion. Gender as a voter When voters have no additional information about candidates, they may utilize first names to infer candidate gender, a ballot-based information cue (McDermott & Monika, 1997, 1997). Voters attribute characteristics and positions to a candidate based on their perceptions of the group to which the candidate belongs (Huddy, 1994; Rapoport et al., 1989; Stephan et al., 2008). Through gender stereotyping, voters can apply their attitudes about women in general to female candidates (Sanbonmatsu, 2002). While the majority of stereotyping involves attributing personality qualities (Esses et al., 1993), gender stereotyping is also associated with political tendencies (McDermott & Monika, 1997). Voters generally perceive female candidates to be more moral and liberal than male ones. When voters express good sentiments regarding women as a group, they are more likely to characterize female candidates positively and vote for them (Esses et al., 1993). In addition to the rational-choice viewpoint, there is the sociological explanation of voting behavior, which is frequently associated with the work of Butler and Stokes (1969).

According to this view, the decisions of voters are impacted by social background and social psychology, particularly variables contained in party identification and sometimes long-term and lifelong attachments, as well as social features, particularly class identity. Pomper (1975) says that voters select candidates based on their social group, with voters favoring candidates of their ethnicity due to the psychological connection of belonging to the same group. Thus, it is believed that ethnic voting is motivated by feelings of group solidarity. Borjas (1999) says that for minority groups, this group solidarity is founded on a perception of discrimination, whereas Kaufman (2003) describes it as a combination of common interests and intergroup competitiveness. Political identification among Hispanics has become so distinctive that Stokes (2003) refers to it as "group consciousness" and Kaufman (2003, p. 201) refers to it as "pan-Latino affinity." Consequently, when the ethnicity of candidates can be deduced from their names on the ballot, Hispanic candidates may have an edge in Miami-Dade County. When it comes to explanations for the voting behavior of the electorate in African countries, however, the literature is replete with articles by Bates (1974) that suggest ethnicity or "political tribalism," as Lonsdale (1986) calls it—is the most influential factor in determining people's electoral choices. Considering the emergence of identity politics and ethnicity in particular (Chabal & Daloz, 1999), ethnicity has been identified as the most significant determinant in African politics. Indeed, elections in African countries have been described as ethnic "censuses" (Rothchild, 1989), with voters more often than not voting along ethnic lines and against policy preferences. As a result, ethnic appeals can be useful to politicians because constituencies are typically dominated by a single ethnic group, and the appeal of common ethnic ties can generate unified support where other issues would be divisive (Bates, 1974).

It is widely believed that ethnic undercurrents have a significant impact on elections in Ghana's Fourth Republic. Similar to ethnicity, another cultural component, a common religious belief system can unify members of a political party. As party members canvass for votes, it can serve as a mobilizing agent. Ghana appears to be one of the most religious nations in Africa. Multiple indicators demonstrate the religiosity of Ghanaians, including religious affiliation, service attendance, prayer frequency, and the significance of religion in daily life (Gallup International, 2016). Consequently, some religious leaders can influence their followers' political decisions, including voting decisions. As a result of a religious renaissance in sub-Saharan Africa (Gifford, 2006) and the fact that most Africans, including Ghanaians, put religion above all other things that make them who they are, U.S. Partisanship is a central factor in determining electoral behavior in all democracies (Plutzer & Zipp, 1996). Identifying parties enables individuals to learn more about the individuals and policies associated with parties (Franklin & Jackson, 1983). According to Bartels (2000), the significance of partisanship in the election process depends not only on the level of partisanship of the voter but also on the amount to which it influences voting behavior. Miller (1991) categorized voters based on their responses to a question he posed on partisanship. Sniderman et al. (1991) consider and underline the significance of long-standing political links to political parties as a key factor in the electoral success of some parties. All of these scholars feel that a voter's decision is more likely to be influenced by partisan and party identification lines than other variables. In addition, Sniderman et al. (1991) accept this truth and then introduce minimalism to the issue's public.

He claims that the public demonstrates a basic amount of political attention and knowledge, minimal mastery of abstract political concepts, minimal stability of political choices, and minimal restraint of attitude. In essence, he argues that the public lacks the fundamental understanding to participate in political issues and debates, lacks sufficient information to pay attention to political events, and is unstable and emotionally committed to political parties. But is that truly the case? Do voters lack logic? According to Popkin (1994), voters do reason about parties, candidates, and issues. They have presuppositions in their minds and draw conclusions based on these presuppositions. In summary, they consider who and what to vote for, what political parties stand for, the significance of political endorsements, and the power of political parties. Sniderman et al. (1991) agree that when voters make decisions, they do take into account a number of public-interest factors.

3. Methodology

Research methodology refers to the procedures that will be utilized to study the research problem. It examines how data would be acquired and evaluated, as well as the rationale behind the adoption of particular procedures or strategies to identify, collect, process, and analyze data used to comprehend the problem (Kallet, 2004). This chapter describes the approach used to achieve the purpose of the study. This chapter's mission is to assess and explain the techniques employed in this research to address the objectives stated in chapter one. This chapter is structured as follows: study area profile; research design; survey area; target population; sample size and sampling procedure; data source; data collection method; and data analysis. The study design includes the researcher's plans, tactics, and procedures for investigating a notion of variables (Creswell, 2009). Research design is the component of methodology that determines the researcher's plans, procedures, and steps for conducting an inquiry into a research problem (Kaniel, 1997). There are numerous sorts of research designs, including experimental, non-experimental, and survey designs. This investigation utilized a survey research design. This method is utilized to collect data from a large population sample. Due to its accessibility and convenience, the study chose Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) as its survey area.

The aforementioned survey region decreased the expenses associated with performing this study. KNUST is located in the Oforikrom Municipality in the Kumasi Metropolitan Area in Ghana's Ashanti Region. It is situated on a 16-square-kilometer campus with varied terrain and attractive surroundings. It is around seven kilometers away from Kumasi's major business district. In its brief history (bestbrainz.com), it has become a key center for the training of scientists and technicians not only for Ghana but also for other African nations and the rest of the world in its brief history (bestbrainz.com). The US News and World Report ranked it as the best university in Ghana and West Africa, the fourteenth (14th) best in Africa, and seven hundred and sixth (706th) best in the world in 2019. A study population is a subset of the broader population with similar characteristics, such as age and sex. The target audience for this study is male and female students from the Department of English and the Department of History and Political Studies at KNUST. This is because they have participated in college elections and are familiar with campus politics. The research employed a convenience sampling method. Convenience sampling is a nonprobability sampling strategy in which individuals are chosen based on their accessibility and availability to the researcher.

Students in both departments were chosen using the convenience sampling method. This method assisted in selecting students who were available and willing to supply the necessary data for the study. The emphasis of the study was on third- and fourth-year KNUST students in the Department of History and Political Studies and the Department of English. The Department of History and Political Studies selected majors in political studies. There are 701 students in the History and Political Studies and English departments combined. Yamane's formula, n=N/(1+N(e)2), is used. The given sample size was 255 with a 95% level of confidence and a margin of error of 0.05. Students were administered surveys in both departments. Students in their third and final years who have previously participated in an election were handed questionnaires. The research included both primary and secondary data. The main data consists of the responses collected on the ground by the researchers for this study. This provided firsthand information regarding respondents' perceptions and general knowledge regarding the candidate's policy proposals and other factors influencing election outcomes. 255 students from the two departments at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology served as the primary data sources.

In addition, a literature assessment on the concept of candidates' policy views and other factors that influence election outcomes will be conducted for secondary data sources. These were found in journal articles, standard books, and online sources that were easy to find and related to the topic being studied. The study's primary data collection instrument was a survey. Due to the impossibility of conducting interviews with the sample size, questionnaires were employed in surveys. They are also cost-effective and save time. Invented by Sir Francis Galton, a questionnaire is a research tool consisting of a series of questions (items) designed to collect standardized replies from respondents (Bhattacherjee, 2012). The 255 questionnaires that were sent contained both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Closed-ended questions were employed to clarify the questions for the respondent and prevent misinterpretation, as well as because they are simple to answer and require minimal time. When open-ended questions were asked, people could say what they thought and felt in their own words. The acquired data sets were quantitatively examined. The information received from respondents was quantitatively evaluated using the SPSS program. To evaluate the responses of respondents, the closed-ended portion of the surveys was input into SPSS. The open-ended portion of the questionnaire was qualitatively evaluated. The research was conducted in accordance with the following ethical principles: First and foremost, the respondents were reassured by the researchers that none of the information they supplied would be used against them and that their identities would not be disclosed, i.e., anonymity and confidentiality would be maintained. In addition, respondents will not be required to participate in the study.

4. Results and Discussion

Socio-Demographic Data: This explains the socio-demographic data of respondents and gives a general background of the respondents involved in the study.

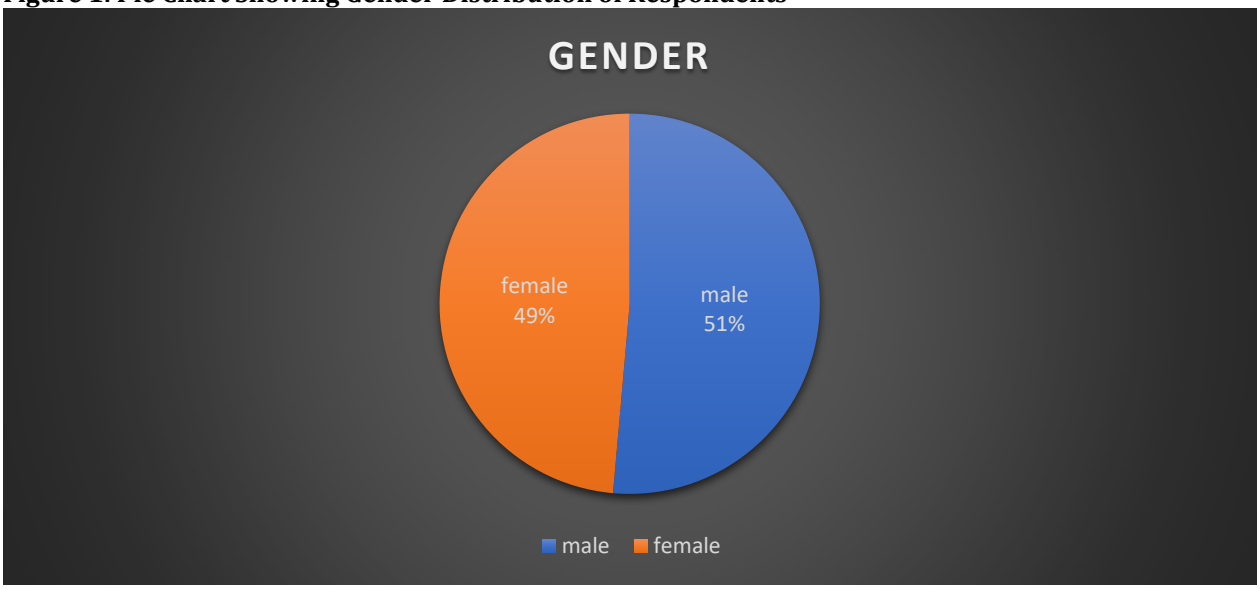
Gender of Respondents: This study covered all gender groups. Both males and females were identified and questionnaires were issued to them. The table below shows that researchers issued questionnaires to 255 respondents. Out of the total, 131 (51.4%) represented males and 124 (48.6%) represented females**.**

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Male	131	51.4	51.4	51.4
Female	124	48.6	48.6	100.0
Total	255	100.0	100.0	

Source: Online Survey 2020.

Figure 1: Pie Chart Showing Gender Distribution of Respondents



Source: Online Survey 2020.

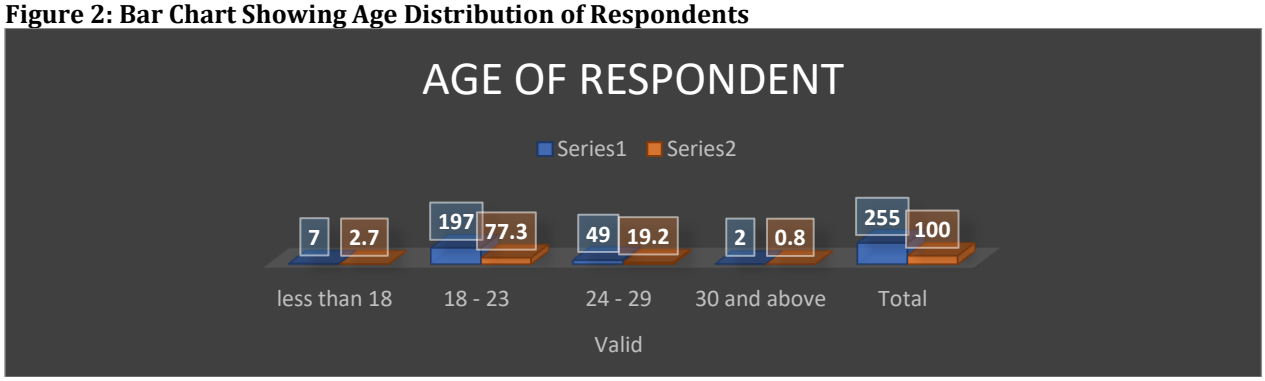
Age of Respondent: The average age group was respondents who fell between the ages of 18-23 which constituted 77.3 % (197 respondents), followed by the age between 24-29 years which constituted 19.2 % (49 respondents). Seven respondents were of the age less than 18 age group, representing 2.7 % while two respondents of the ages 30 and above represented 0.8 %.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
less than 18	7	2.7	2.7	2.7
18 – 23	197	77.3	77.3	80.0
24 – 29	49	19.2	19.2	99.2
30 and above	2	.8	.8	100.0
Total	255	100.0	100.0	

Source: Online Survey 2020.

Figure 2: Bar Chart Showing Age Distribution of Respondents



Source: Online Survey 2020.

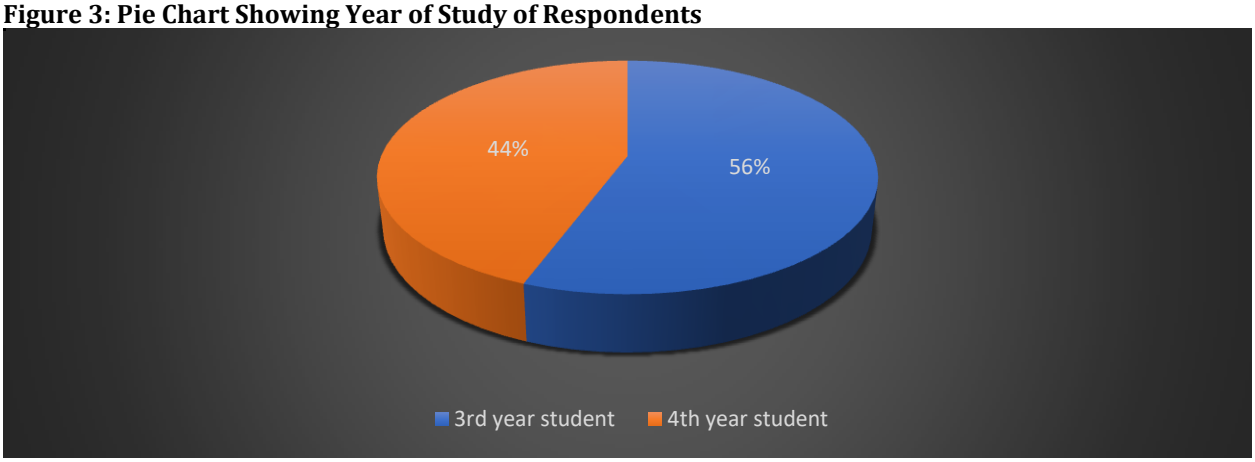
Year of Study of Respondent: Table 3 shows clearly the respective year of study of the respondent. Out of the 255 respondents, 142 respondents representing 55.7% were 3rd-year students and the remaining 113 respondents representing 44.3 % were 4th-year students.

Table 3: Year of Study of Respondents

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	3rd-year student	142	55.7	55.7	55.7
	4th-year student	113	44.3	44.3	100.0
	Total	255	100.0	100.0	

Source: Online Survey 2020.

Figure 3: Pie Chart Showing Year of Study of Respondents



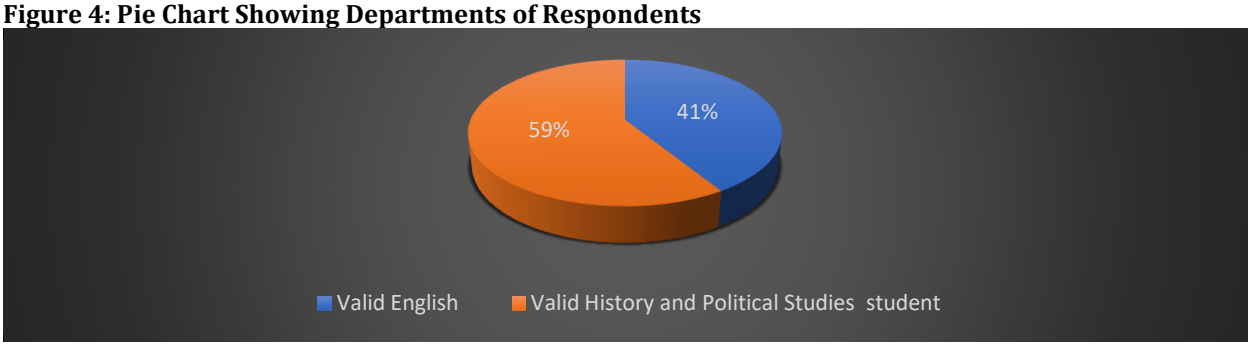
Department of Study: The table below shows the departments of the various respondents. Out of the 255 respondents, 105 respondents representing 41.2 % were students in the department of English and the remaining 150 people representing 58.8 % were students from the department of History and Political Studies all in the faculty of Social Science.

Table 4: Department of Respondents

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	English	105	41.2	41.2	41.2
	History and Political Studies student	150	58.8	58.8	100.0
	Total	255	100.0	100.0	

Source: Online Survey 2020.

Figure 4: Pie Chart Showing Departments of Respondents



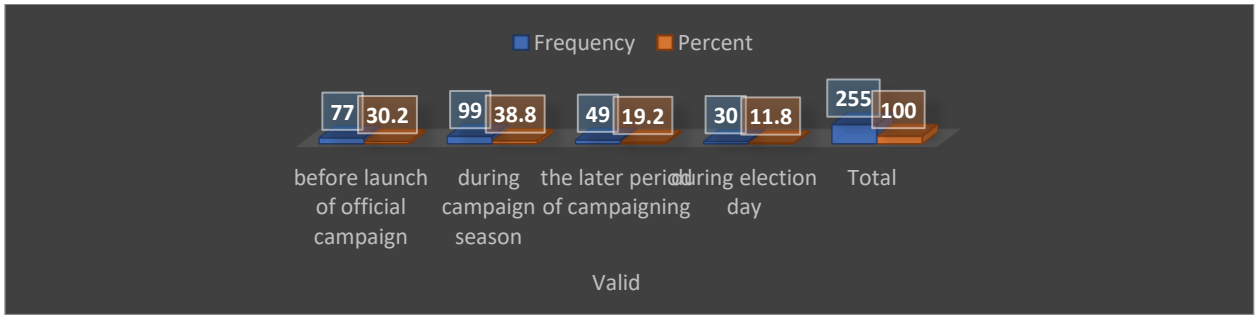
Respondent Made Up their Mind to Vote: Respondents responded to the time they made up their minds to vote in an election. Out of the 255 respondents, 30.2 % representing 77 people selected that they made up their minds before the official launch of the campaign. 38.8 % representing 99 people selected that they made up their minds during the campaign season. Also, 19.2 % representing 49 people selected that they made up their minds at the later period of the campaign. Finally, 11.8 % representing 30 people chose that they made up their minds on the day of the election.

Table 5: Responses on the Respondents Decided to Vote in an Election

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	before the launch of an official campaign	77	30.2	30.2	30.2
	during campaign season	99	38.8	38.8	69.0
	the later period of campaigning	49	19.2	19.2	88.2
	during election day	30	11.8	11.8	100.0
	Total	255	100.0	100.0	

Source: Online Survey 2020.

Figure 5: Bar Chart Showing the Responses on the Time the Respondents Made Up Their Mind to Vote in an Election



Source: Online Survey 2020.

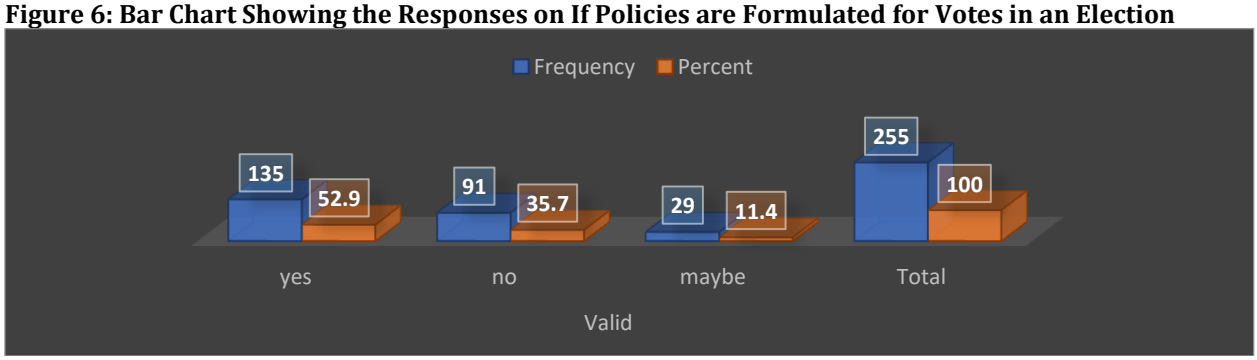
If They Thought Policy Ideas are Formulated for Votes: The table below shows responses of respondents' views on whether policy ideas are formulated solely for votes. The information provided indicates that 180 respondents which represents 70.6 % answered 'yes', while 31 respondents representing 12.2 % answered no.

Table 6: Responses on If Policies are Formulated for Votes

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
	yes	180	70.6	70.6	70.6
	no	31	12.2	12.2	82.7
	maybe	44	17.3	17.3	100.0
	Total	255	100.0	100.0	

Source: Online Survey 2020.

Figure 6: Bar Chart Showing the Responses on If Policies are Formulated for Votes in an Election



Source: Online Survey 2020.

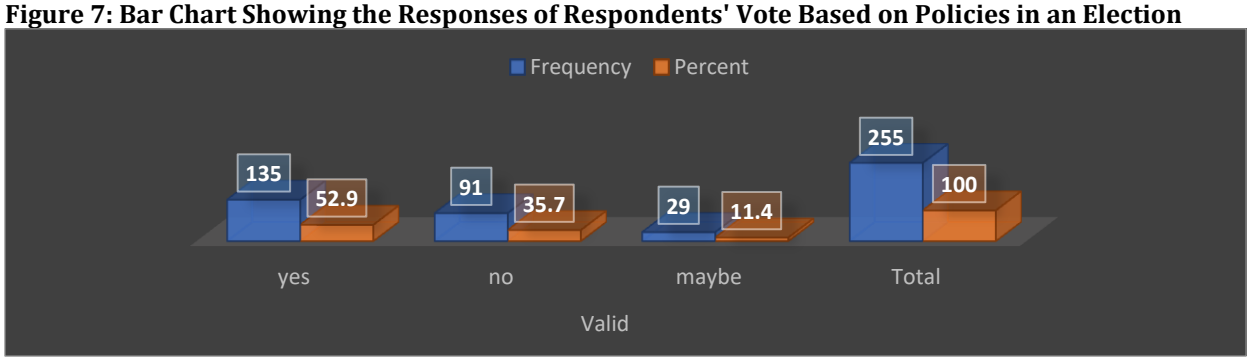
Do Respondents Vote Based on The Policy Ideas of Candidates: The respondents were asked whether they voted based on a candidate's policy proposals. 135 of the respondents, or 52.9%, indicated that they do vote based on a candidate's policy ideas, according to the data. 29 respondents, or 11.4%, could not say whether they vote based on a candidate's policy ideas or not, whilst the remaining 91 respondents, or 37.7%, are certain that they do not vote based on a candidate's policy ideas. First and foremost, respondents vote based on the candidate's policy ideas because the policies are appealing and necessary. Moreover, the policies are realizable and practical. The reforms would ultimately have a positive impact on the economy.

Table 7: Responses on If Respondents Vote Based on the Policies of a Candidate

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	yes	135	52.9	52.9	52.9
	no	91	35.7	35.7	88.6
	maybe	29	11.4	11.4	100.0
	Total	255	100.0	100.0	

Source: Online Survey 2020.

Figure 7: Bar Chart Showing the Responses of Respondents' Vote Based on Policies in an Election



Source: Online Survey 2020.

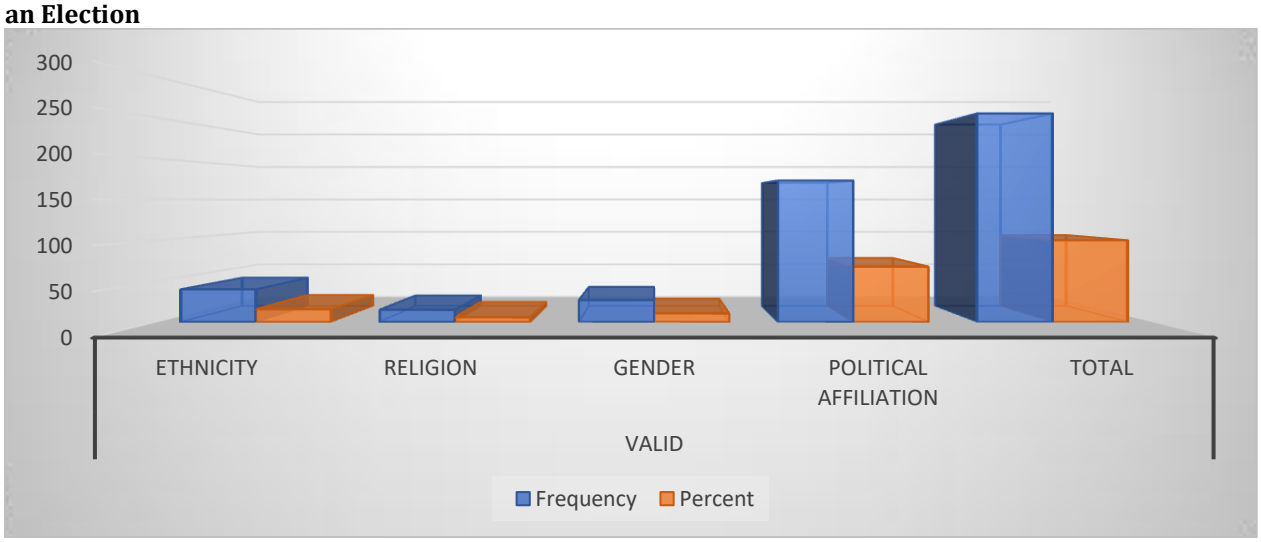
Other Factors That Motivate People to Vote: At this point, respondents were asked about other factors that encourage them to vote in an election. 40 respondents, or 15.7%, replied that they are occasionally motivated to vote based on the ethnic background of the candidate. 15 people, or 5.9%, said that a candidate's religion affects their decision about whether or not to vote for them. Also, 10.6% of respondents (27 people) said that the gender of the candidate makes them want to vote, while 67.8% of respondents (173 people) said that their political affiliation is the main reason they vote.

Table 8: Responses on the Other Factors That Motivate Respondents to Vote in an Election

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Ethnicity	40	15.7	15.7	15.7
	Religion	15	5.9	5.9	21.6
	Gender	27	10.6	10.6	32.2
	political affiliation	173	67.8	67.8	100.0
	Total	255	100.0	100.0	

Source: Online Survey 2020.

Figure 8: Bar Chart Showing the Response to the Other Factors That Motivate Respondents to Vote in an Election



Source: Online Survey 2020.

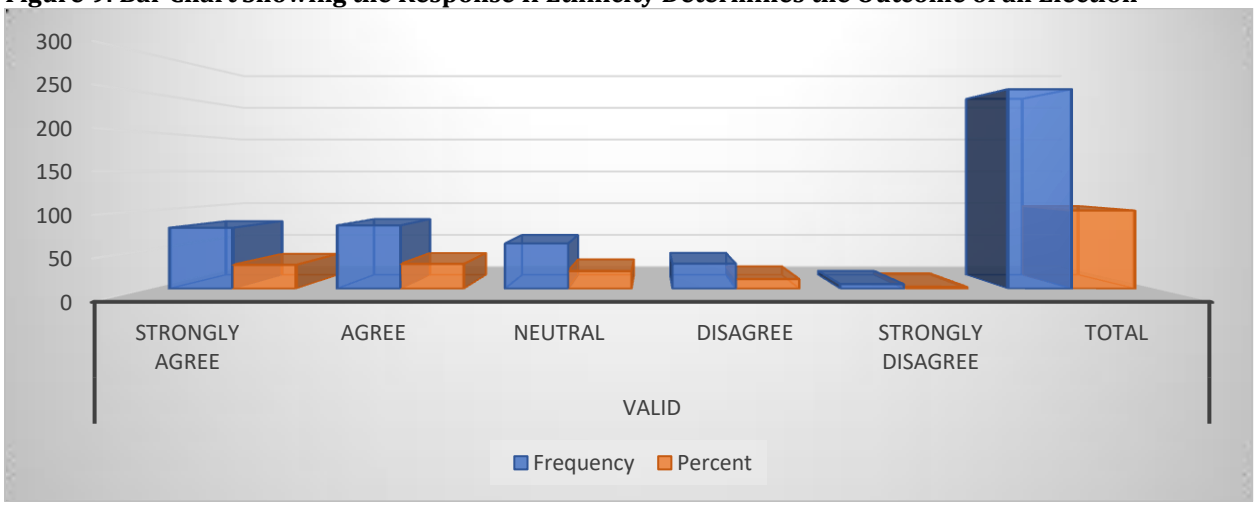
If Ethnicity Determines the Outcome of Elections: The table below shows the tabulation of respondents' views on the extent to which they think ethnicity has an impact on the outcome of an election. Data gathered from the respondents showed that 78 respondents represented 30.6 % "strongly agree", 81 respondents representing 31.8 % "agree", 58 respondents representing 22.7% "neutral," and 32 respondents representing 12.5 % "disagree," while the remaining 6 respondents represented 2.4 % strongly "disagree." Among the reasons given by the respondents include: firstly, people vote for candidates because they belong to the same ethnic group; hence they want to support their own. Secondly, some of the respondents hold to the fact that ethnicity has nothing to do with politics but rather what the leader can do.

Table 9: Responses on if Ethnicity Determines the Outcome of Election

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	strongly agree	78	30.6	30.6	30.6
	Agree	81	31.8	31.8	62.4
	Neutral	58	22.7	22.7	85.1
	Disagree	32	12.5	12.5	97.6
	strongly disagree	6	2.4	2.4	100.0
	Total	255	100.0	100.0	

Source: Online Survey 2020.

Figure 9: Bar Chart Showing the Response If Ethnicity Determines the Outcome of an Election



Source: Online Survey 2020.

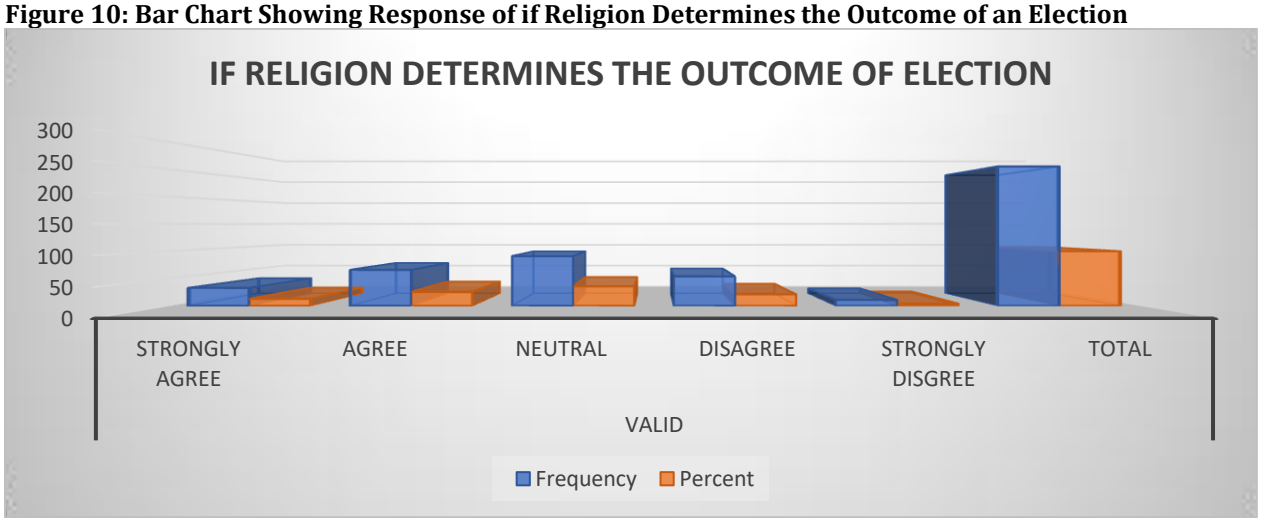
If Religion Determines the Outcome: Within the scope of the survey, respondents were questioned about the extent to which religion can influence the outcome of an election. 12 responses representing 4.7% "strongly agree"; 73 respondents representing 28.6% "agree"; 97 respondents representing 38.0% "neutral"; 67 respondents representing 26.3% "disagree"; and 6 respondents representing 2.4% "strongly disagree". First, individuals vote for candidates of the same faith to demonstrate their support for the candidate and also to express support for their religion. Secondly, others concur that religion has no actual impact on the electorate or elections. Therefore, anyone of any religion is capable of performing a given task.

Table 10: Responses on If Religion Determines the Outcome of an Election

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	strongly agree	12	4.7	4.7	4.7
	Agree	73	28.6	28.6	33.3
	Neutral	97	38.0	38.0	71.4
	Disagree	67	26.3	26.3	97.6
	strongly disagree	6	2.4	2.4	100.0
	Total	255	100.0	100.0	

Source: Online Survey 2020.

Figure 10: Bar Chart Showing Response of if Religion Determines the Outcome of an Election



Source: Online Survey 2020.

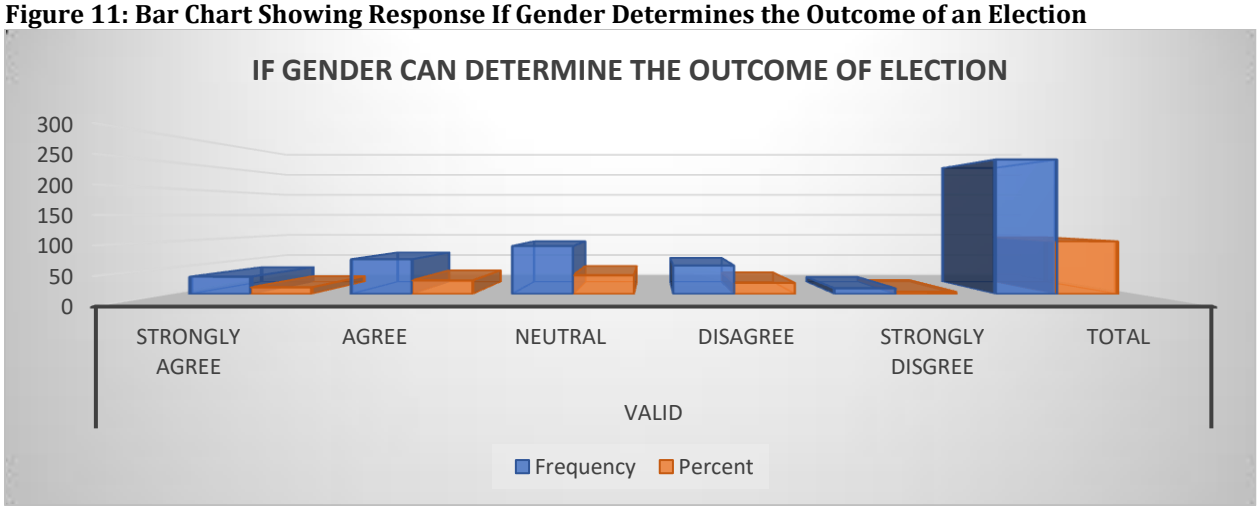
If Gender Determines the Outcome of Elections: The study explored the extent to which the gender of a candidate can influence the outcome of an election, and found that 33 respondents represented 12.9 % "strongly agree," 66 respondents representing 25.9 % "agree," 91 respondents representing 35.7 % "neutral," 54 respondents representing 21.2 % "disagree," and 11 respondents representing 4.3 % "strongly disagree." According to one of the most common responses, men are excellent leaders who do not wish to be dominated by women. Additionally, they desire that certain positions be reserved for only one gender. Second, other people agreed with the idea that anyone, regardless of gender, can be a leader.

Table 11: Responses on If Gender Determines the Outcome of an Election

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	strongly agree	33	12.9	12.9	12.9
	Agree	66	25.9	25.9	38.8
	Neutral	91	35.7	35.7	74.5
	Disagree	54	21.2	21.2	95.7
	strongly disagree	11	4.3	4.3	100.0
	Total	255	100.0	100.0	

Source: Online Survey 2020.

Figure 11: Bar Chart Showing Response If Gender Determines the Outcome of an Election



Source: Online Survey 2020.

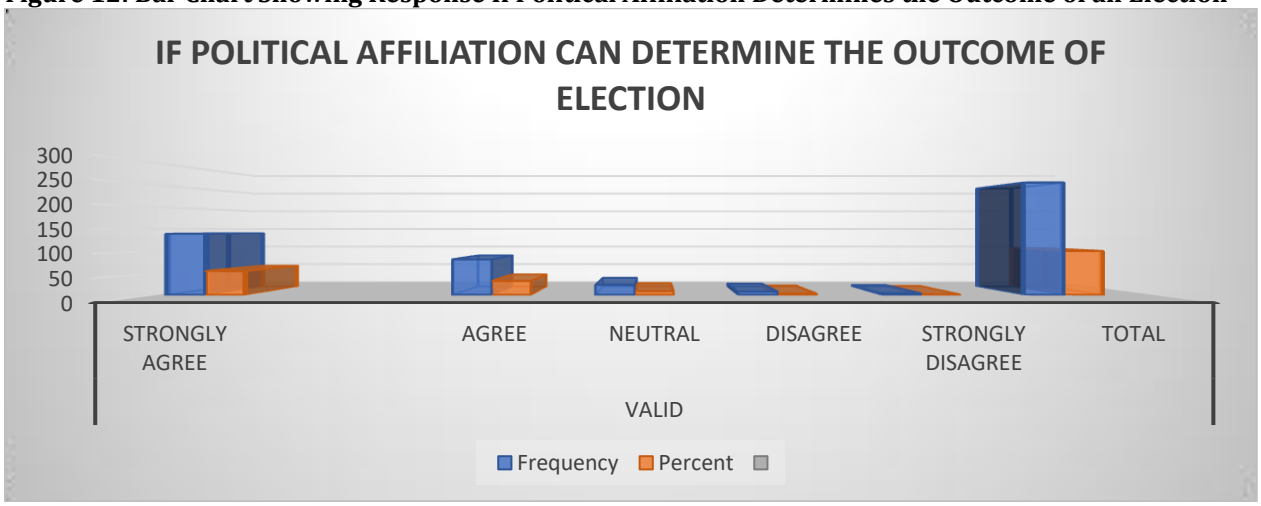
If Political Affiliation Determines the Outcome: The study investigated the extent to which the political affiliation of electorates influences the outcome of elections. The study found that 139 respondents, or 54.5%, strongly agreed that political affiliation has a substantial effect on election outcomes. 81 responses representing 31.8% 'agree', 23 respondents representing 9.0% 'neutral', 8 respondents representing 3.1% 'disagree', and the remaining four respondents representing 1.6%'strongly disagree'. The majority of respondents decided that they vote for the political party with which they are affiliated, and participation in political parties is advantageous. Furthermore, certain political parties perform better than others. Second, some believe that they vote primarily on the candidate's policies rather than their party allegiance.

Table 12: Responses on If Political Affiliation Determines the Outcome of an Election

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	strongly agree	139	54.5	54.5	54.5
	Agree	81	31.8	31.8	86.7
	Neutral	23	9.0	9.0	95.3
	Disagree	8	3.1	3.1	98.4
	strongly disagree	4	1.6	1.6	100.0
	Total	255	100.0	100.0	

Source: Online Survey 2020.

Figure 12: Bar Chart Showing Response If Political Affiliation Determines the Outcome of an Election



Source: Online Survey 2020.

Analysis of the Findings: The study presented above illustrates respondents' perspectives on candidate policy ideas and other factors that influence election outcomes. According to the notion of behavioral persuasion, the majority of people had already decided to vote when the material was released. Before the elections, only 77 people had decided to vote for a candidate. The remaining voters decided when candidates presented their policy proposals. When the stimuli (ideas of policy) were applied to the organism (the electorate), the organism changed its psychological composition and moved in a particular direction. The notion of low-information rationality is an additional validated theory of significance. This idea asserts that people use signals and shortcuts to react to government issues due to a lack of information. This was made abundantly clear by respondents' agreement that political affiliation influenced their voting behavior. They may not have understood the candidate's policies, but they chose to vote for him anyhow.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The goal of this study was to discover whether electors vote based on policy ideas during elections and whether other factors such as gender, religion, and ethnicity influence election outcomes. It also investigated whether voters vote based on political affiliation. Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in the Ashanti Region served as the study region. The group included students in their third and final years from the English, history, and political studies departments. 255 students were chosen as the sample size using a technique of convenience sampling. Online Google forms were used to distribute questionnaires to collect the essential data for the study. Using descriptive statistics, items were analyzed using frequency tables, charts, and narrative data presentation. The respondents' general knowledge of policy concepts and their effects on election outcomes was a noteworthy finding. The majority of responders from the departments of English, history, and political science concur with the statement that the outcome of an election depends heavily on the candidates' policy proposals. Some respondents said that they vote based on policies because some of the policies are appealing and others address societal issues. Few respondents from each field disagreed that policy ideas influence election outcomes. In addition, respondents were asked if other factors could significantly affect the outcome of an election. Forty respondents stated that the ethnic affiliation of a candidate occasionally motivates them to vote. 15 respondents indicated that a candidate's religion influences their decision to vote.

In addition, 27 respondents indicated that the gender of the candidate motivates them to vote, whereas the majority of respondents, 173, indicated that they vote based on their political affiliation. In examining respondents' perspectives on the extent to which ethnicity, religion, gender, and party affiliation influence election outcomes, a larger proportion of respondents agreed that ethnicity influences election outcomes. They disclosed that they voted for them to support their own. Also, the majority of respondents concurred that they vote for candidates of the same faith because they believe religion affects the candidate's life and

personality, and hence they support their own. In addition, a greater proportion of respondents agreed that gender has a significant impact on election outcomes. They confirmed that the majority of individuals believe that men are superior leaders and that the majority of men and women do not wish to be dominated by women. In conclusion, the majority of respondents concurred that they vote according to their political identity. They affirmed that they vote for the parties to which they are attached because some parties smell better than others, and they may readily receive benefits from the parties to which they are affiliated. The statements of individuals who disagreed with the ethnicity, gender, religion, and political affiliation variables demonstrated that gender, ethnicity, and religion have no bearing on one's talents. Therefore, anyone of any race, creed, gender or political affiliation is capable of performing a given duty. Therefore, the focus should be on the policy proposals.

Recommendations: It was evident from the collected data that a candidate's policy ideas are not the only factor influencing elections.

- political parties should develop programs that are feasible and motivate more people to vote.
- To offer equal opportunity for all, the laws controlling gender discrimination and ethnic politics should be strictly enforced and adhered to.
- Possession of a party card should not be required to access advantages in the country. Everyone should have the same opportunity. At the beginning of voting, political parties and their candidates have given policy proposals to electorates. It is important to emphasize that while policy ideas might influence election outcomes, they are not the only determinant. Ethnicity, religion, gender, and party affiliation can all have a significant impact on election outcomes. Consequently, future researchers can examine how these other factors influence election outcomes by examining them individually. Since this study focused solely on literate university students, it would be prudent for other researchers to evaluate the influence of candidates' policy proposals among illiterate voters. This will help provide a full understanding of the young and the variables influencing their candidate selection. To get people to vote for them, political parties can also come up with plans that include all of the above factors.

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