

Research Article

# Ethnic-Based Politics and Electoral Reforms in Ghana: Pathways to a United Democracy

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## Abstract

This study investigates the impact of ethnic-based politics on Ghanaian elections, particularly as the country approaches its December 2024 elections. Despite significant strides in democratization, Ghana's political landscape remains deeply influenced by ethnic affiliations, which pose challenges to national unity and democratic consolidation. Through a mixed-methods approach combining surveys, interviews, focus groups, and content analysis, this research examines the extent of ethnic-based voting, the effectiveness of electoral reforms, and the role of civic education in mitigating ethnic political mobilization. Quantitative data analysis reveals persistent ethnic voting patterns, with a significant proportion of voters influenced by the ethnic backgrounds of candidates. However, the data also indicates that electoral reforms and civic education initiatives have begun to reduce the salience of ethnicity in voting behavior. Qualitative insights from interviews and focus groups highlight the complexities of ethnic politics and the need for inclusive political practices to foster national cohesion. The study underscores the importance of a multifaceted approach to addressing ethnic-based politics, involving electoral reforms, continuous civic education, and responsible media coverage. By promoting transparency, fairness, and inclusivity, Ghana can move towards a more democratic and united political environment. The findings offer valuable implications for policymakers, political parties, civil society organizations, and the electorate in the lead-up to the 2024 elections and beyond.

## Keywords

Electoral Reforms, Ethnic-Based Politics, Ghana's 2024 Elections, Content Analysis, Voting Patterns

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background

Ghana's political landscape has been significantly shaped by ethnic affiliations since its independence in 1957. Ethnic-based politics has deep roots in the country, often influencing electoral outcomes and party dynamics. Historically, political parties in Ghana have leveraged ethnic identities to mobilize support, resulting in a fragmented political environment that often mirrors the country's diverse ethnic com-

position [1]. This dynamic has implications for national unity and the democratic process, particularly as the country approaches the December 2024 elections.

#### 1.1.1. Ethnic Politics in Ghana

Ethnicity plays a crucial role in shaping political affiliations and voter behavior in Ghana. Political parties have traditionally drawn support from specific ethnic groups, creating a scenario where ethnic loyalty often supersedes other consid-

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erations such as policy preferences or candidate qualifications [2]. The dominant parties, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC), have been known to rely heavily on ethnic support bases. For instance, the NPP is generally associated with the Akan ethnic group, while the NDC garners significant support from the Ewe and other non-Akan groups [5].

This ethnic alignment is not just a matter of voter preference but also a strategic consideration for political parties. Campaign strategies often include appealing to ethnic sentiments to consolidate support within specific regions. Such practices reinforce ethnic identities in the political sphere, making it challenging to promote a unified national agenda [8].

### 1.1.2. Historical Context

The historical context of ethnic politics in Ghana is deeply intertwined with the country's colonial past and subsequent independence movement. During the colonial era, the British employed a strategy of indirect rule, which entrenched ethnic divisions by promoting local chieftaincies and traditional authorities [7]. This policy sowed the seeds for ethnic-based political mobilization, which persisted into the post-independence era.

Post-independence Ghana saw the emergence of political parties that were often aligned along ethnic lines. The Convention People's Party (CPP), led by Kwame Nkrumah, sought to transcend ethnic divisions by promoting a nationalist agenda. However, subsequent political developments, including coups and military rule, disrupted these efforts, leading to the re-emergence of ethnic-based politics [11].

### 1.1.3. Contemporary Ethnic Dynamics

In contemporary Ghana, ethnic politics continue to influence electoral outcomes. The 2012, 2016, and 2020 elections provide a clear illustration of this trend. Statistical analyses of these elections reveal significant ethnic voting patterns, with major ethnic groups showing strong preferences for candidates from their own ethnic backgrounds [14, 5]. For example, in the 2020 elections, the Akan ethnic group predominantly supported the NPP, while the Ewe and Northern ethnic groups largely backed the NDC.

## 1.2. Impact on Democratic Consolidation

The persistence of ethnic-based politics poses challenges to Ghana's democratic consolidation. Ethnic voting undermines the principle of equal representation and can lead to policies that favor certain ethnic groups over others. This, in turn, can exacerbate ethnic tensions and hinder efforts to promote national unity [3]. Furthermore, it can result in a political landscape where elections are won based on ethnic majorities rather than broad-based support, limiting the accountability and responsiveness of elected officials [2].

## 1.3. Electoral Reforms and Civic Education

Addressing the challenges posed by ethnic-based politics requires comprehensive electoral reforms and sustained civic education efforts. Electoral reforms aimed at promoting inclusivity and fairness can help mitigate the influence of ethnicity in voting decisions. For example, the introduction of proportional representation or mixed-member electoral systems could ensure more equitable representation of diverse ethnic groups in the legislature [10].

Civic education is equally crucial in fostering a sense of national identity that transcends ethnic affiliations. Initiatives aimed at educating voters about the importance of policy issues, candidate qualifications, and the broader democratic process can reduce the salience of ethnicity in elections [13]. Media organizations and civil society groups play a vital role in this regard by providing balanced coverage and facilitating informed public discourse.

## 1.4. The Role of Media and Civil Society

Media and civil society organizations are pivotal in shaping public perceptions and fostering a more informed electorate. In Ghana, media coverage of elections often highlights ethnic dynamics, which can reinforce existing divisions. However, responsible journalism that focuses on policy debates, governance issues, and candidate competencies can shift the narrative away from ethnic affiliations [12]. Similarly, civil society organizations can engage in voter education campaigns that emphasize the importance of national unity and democratic principles.

## 1.5. Implications for the 2024 Elections

As Ghana approaches the December 2024 elections, the importance of addressing ethnic-based politics cannot be overstated. Ensuring free, fair, and transparent elections is critical for maintaining public trust in the democratic process. Electoral reforms, combined with robust civic education efforts, can help create a political environment where voters make decisions based on issues and candidate qualifications rather than ethnic loyalty [3].

Moreover, political parties must be encouraged to adopt inclusive practices that reflect the country's ethnic diversity. This involves promoting candidates from diverse backgrounds and engaging in campaign strategies that emphasize national unity. By doing so, Ghana can move towards a more cohesive and democratic society.

## 1.6. Conclusion

The background of ethnic-based politics in Ghana highlights the complex interplay between historical legacies, contemporary dynamics, and democratic aspirations. While ethnic affiliations have played a significant role in shaping voter behavior and party politics, there are opportunities for

reform and education to mitigate their impact. As Ghana prepares for the 2024 elections, it is imperative to foster an electoral environment that promotes inclusivity, fairness, and national unity. Through concerted efforts by policymakers, civil society, and the media, Ghana can overcome the challenges posed by ethnic-based politics and strengthen its democratic foundations.

### 1.7. Research Questions

This study seeks to explore several key questions related to ethnic-based politics and its impact on democratic governance in Ghana. The primary research questions are:

1. What are the current impacts of ethnic-based politics on democratic governance in Ghana?
2. How effective are electoral reforms in reducing ethnic-based voting patterns in Ghana, especially in the context of the upcoming 2024 elections?
3. What role does civic education play in changing voter behavior and promoting policy-based politics?
4. How can cross-ethnic political alliances and inclusive practices within political parties contribute to national unity in the lead-up to the 2024 elections?
5. What institutional and legal measures are necessary to enforce anti-discrimination within political parties?
6. How does media coverage influence the prevalence of ethnic-based politics, particularly during the election period?
7. What are the long-term structural changes needed to address the root causes of ethnic-based political mobilization in Ghana?

### 1.8. Objectives

The objectives of this study are multifaceted, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue and propose viable solutions:

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of various strategies aimed at mitigating ethnic-based politics in Ghana.
2. To analyze the role of electoral reforms in promoting more inclusive political practices during the 2024 elections.
3. To assess the impact of civic education on voter behavior and political party affiliations.
4. To identify best practices for fostering cross-ethnic alliances and inclusive governance in the context of the upcoming elections.
5. To propose institutional and legal reforms necessary for combating ethnic discrimination within political parties.
6. To examine the influence of media on ethnic-based political narratives during the election period.
7. To recommend long-term structural changes to promote equitable development and reduce ethnic disparities.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded in several theoretical frameworks that provide a basis for understanding the dynamics of ethnic-based politics. One such framework is the theory of ethnic mobilization, which posits that ethnic groups are mobilized for political purposes when they perceive benefits in terms of resources, representation, or status [4]. This theory helps explain why ethnic-based political affiliations persist in Ghana despite efforts to promote national unity.

Another relevant framework is the theory of political clientelism, which suggests that political leaders distribute resources and favors to their ethnic constituencies in exchange for political support [7]. This patronage system can reinforce ethnic divisions as political parties compete for the loyalty of different ethnic groups.

The study also draws on the concept of democratic consolidation, which refers to the process by which a new democracy matures, in a way that means it is unlikely to revert to authoritarianism without an external shock [9]. For Ghana, achieving democratic consolidation requires addressing the challenges posed by ethnic-based politics to ensure that the political system is stable and inclusive.

### 2.1. Literature Review

#### 2.1.1. The Impact of Ethnic-Based Politics

Ethnic-based politics significantly influences electoral outcomes and governance in Ghana. A vast body of literature highlights how ethnic affiliations often overshadow policy considerations in voter behavior. For instance, studies note that Ghanaian elections are often characterized by voting patterns that reflect ethnic loyalties rather than policy preferences [1]. This trend is evident in the strongholds of the two major political parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), which have historically drawn support from different ethnic groups.

Ethnic-based politics can lead to the marginalization of certain groups, particularly those that are not aligned with the dominant ethnic blocs within major political parties. This marginalization can result in unequal access to resources and political representation, further entrenching ethnic divisions. Research underscores how this dynamic undermines democratic governance by fostering a sense of exclusion and disenfranchisement among minority groups [11, 3]

#### 2.1.2. The Role of Electoral Reforms

Electoral reforms are critical in mitigating ethnic voting patterns and promoting more inclusive political practices. Research suggests that changes in the electoral system, such as the introduction of proportional representation, can encourage more inclusive political behavior by ensuring that all groups have a stake in the political process [10]. In Ghana, reforms aimed at improving the transparency and fairness of

elections have been implemented over the years, including the use of biometric voter registration and the establishment of an independent electoral commission.

However, the effectiveness of these reforms in reducing ethnic-based voting remains a subject of debate. Some scholars argue that while electoral reforms can improve the technical aspects of elections, they may not be sufficient to change deep-seated ethnic loyalties [5]. Therefore, additional measures, such as voter education and civic engagement, are necessary to complement electoral reforms.

### 2.1.3. Civic Education and Voter Behavior

Civic education programs play a crucial role in shifting voter focus from ethnic affiliations to policy issues. Effective civic education can empower citizens to make informed choices based on the performance and policies of political parties rather than ethnic identity. For instance, studies highlight the importance of civic education in promoting democratic values and practices in Africa [2].

In Ghana, civic education initiatives led by the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) and various civil society organizations have aimed to increase political awareness and participation among citizens. These programs often focus on educating voters about their rights and responsibilities, the importance of voting, and the need to evaluate candidates based on their platforms and track records. The impact of these initiatives on voter behavior is a key area of interest in this study.

### 2.1.4. Inclusive Political Practices

Inclusive political practices, such as cross-ethnic alliances and transparent candidate selection processes, are critical for reducing the influence of ethnicity in politics. Political parties that adopt inclusive practices are more likely to attract support from a broad spectrum of the population, thereby promoting national unity. As highlighted by some scholars, inclusive politics can also enhance the legitimacy of the political system and reduce the potential for conflict [8].

Examples from other countries provide valuable insights into best practices for fostering inclusivity. In South Africa, for instance, the African National Congress (ANC) has successfully built a multi-ethnic coalition that has sustained its dominance in post-apartheid politics. Similarly, in Kenya, efforts to build cross-ethnic alliances have been instrumental in promoting peace and stability following the violence that marred the 2007 elections [6].

### 2.1.5. Media's Role in Shaping Political Narratives

Media coverage plays a crucial role in either perpetuating or challenging ethnic-based political narratives. The media can influence public perceptions and shape political discourse by highlighting certain issues and framing them in specific ways. Responsible journalism and unbiased reporting are essential for promoting policy-based politics and reducing the

salience of ethnic identities in elections.

In Ghana, the media landscape is diverse, with numerous outlets operating in different languages and catering to various ethnic audiences. This diversity presents both opportunities and challenges for promoting inclusive political narratives. Research suggests that while the media can contribute to democratic consolidation by providing a platform for diverse voices, it can also reinforce ethnic divisions if not managed carefully [12]. Therefore, media regulation and the promotion of ethical journalism are critical components of efforts to address ethnic-based politics.

## 3. Research Design and Methodology

### 3.1. Mixed-Methods Approach

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods to provide a comprehensive analysis of ethnic-based politics in Ghana. This approach allows for a robust examination of the issue from multiple perspectives, ensuring that both numerical data and personal experiences are considered.

### 3.2. Quantitative Analysis

1. Surveys and Polls: Administered to a diverse sample of 1000 respondents to assess voter behavior and attitudes towards ethnic-based politics. The survey questions focus on factors influencing voting decisions, the importance of ethnic identity in political affiliations, and perceptions of electoral reforms.
2. Statistical Analysis: Past and current election results are analyzed to identify patterns of ethnic voting and the impact of electoral reforms. This analysis includes a detailed examination of voting trends in key regions dominated by different ethnic groups.

### 3.3. Qualitative Analysis

- a) Interviews: Conducted with 20 political leaders, 10 academics, and 15 civil society representatives to gather insights on effective strategies for mitigating ethnic-based politics. These interviews provide valuable qualitative data on the challenges and opportunities associated with various interventions.
- b) Focus Groups: Organized with 50 voters to understand the impact of civic education on political affiliations and voting intentions. The focus groups offer a platform for in-depth discussions, allowing participants to share their views and experiences related to ethnic-based politics and the upcoming elections.
- c) Content Analysis: Media coverage analyzed to assess its influence on ethnic-based political narratives during the election period. This includes examining how different media outlets report on political events, the

prominence of ethnic narratives in their coverage, and the impact of such reporting on public perceptions.

## 4. Data Collection

### 4.1. Primary Data

Primary data collection involves gathering firsthand information directly from respondents through surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

- a) Surveys: Structured questionnaires are distributed to a representative sample of voters across major ethnic groups in Ghana, including Akan, Ewe, Ga, and northern ethnic groups. The survey covers various aspects of voting behavior, political affiliations, and perceptions of electoral reforms and civic education initiatives.
- b) Interviews and Focus Groups: Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions are conducted across different regions and ethnic groups. These interactions provide qualitative insights into the personal experiences and opinions of voters, political leaders, academics, and civil society representatives.

### 4.2. Secondary Data

Secondary data involves the use of existing information from various sources, including election data, reports, and academic studies.

- a) Election Data: Historical election results from 2012, 2016, and 2020 are analyzed to identify voting patterns and trends. This analysis helps to understand the extent to which ethnic affiliations have influenced past elections and the impact of any reforms implemented.
- b) Reports and Studies: Government reports, academic studies, and media content are reviewed to provide context and support for the analysis. These sources offer valuable background information and complement the primary data collected.

### 4.3. Sampling Methods

To ensure the representativeness and reliability of the data collected for this research, a combination of purposive and stratified random sampling methods were employed. These methods were chosen to capture a comprehensive and diverse set of perspectives across different ethnic groups and regions in Ghana.

#### 4.3.1 Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental or expert sampling, was used to select key informants and experts who have in-depth knowledge and experience related to ethnic-based politics and electoral processes in Ghana. This approach helped in gathering qualitative data through inter-

views and focus group discussions. The selected key informants included:

- 1. Political Scientists and Researchers: Experts from universities and research institutions who have published extensively on Ghanaian politics and ethnicity.
- 2. Political Party Representatives: Officials from the major political parties (NPP and NDC) to provide insights into their strategies and perspectives on ethnic politics.
- 3. Civil Society and Media Representatives: Individuals from civil society organizations and media houses who are actively involved in promoting civic education and electoral reforms.

#### 4.3.2. Stratified Random Sampling

Stratified random sampling was used to ensure that the quantitative data collected from the survey is representative of the diverse population of Ghana. This method involved dividing the population into distinct strata based on key characteristics such as region, ethnicity, and gender. The following steps were taken:

- 1. Identifying Strata: The population was divided into strata based on the major ethnic groups (Akan, Ewe, Ga-Dangme, Mole-Dagbani, and others) and regions (Greater Accra, Ashanti, Volta, Northern, and others). This stratification ensured that each major ethnic group and region was proportionately represented.
- 2. Sample Size Determination: The total sample size was determined based on the desired level of confidence and margin of error. A sample size of 1,000 respondents was deemed sufficient to achieve a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of  $\pm 3\%$ .
- 3. Random Selection: Within each stratum, individuals were randomly selected to participate in the survey. This random selection process was facilitated by using a random number generator to select households and individuals from electoral rolls and census data.

### 4.4. Sample Distribution

The following table illustrates the distribution of the sample across different ethnic groups and regions:

*Table 1. Illustrates the distribution of the sample across different ethnic groups and region.*

Ethnic Group	Region	Sample Size
Akan	Ashanti	200
Ewe	Volta	150
Ga-Dangme	Greater Accra	150
Mole-Dagbani	Northern	200
Other Ethnic Groups	Various Regions	300

Ethnic Group	Region	Sample Size
Total		1000

#### 4.5. Rationale for the Sampling Methods

The use of purposive sampling allowed the researcher to gather detailed and nuanced insights from individuals who have specialized knowledge and experience with ethnic-based politics in Ghana. These qualitative insights were crucial for understanding the underlying dynamics and contextual factors that influence ethnic voting patterns.

Stratified random sampling ensured that the quantitative data collected from the survey was representative of the broader population. By stratifying the sample based on ethnicity and region, the research was able to capture the diversity of voter perspectives and behaviors, providing a comprehensive overview of ethnic voting patterns across the

country.

Overall, the combination of purposive and stratified random sampling methods enhanced the validity and reliability of the research findings, enabling a thorough analysis of the integration of ethnicity into Ghana’s political party affiliations and voting behavior.

### 5. Analysis and Results

#### 5.1. Quantitative Analysis

##### Survey Analysis

The survey data is analyzed to identify key factors influencing voting decisions and the importance of ethnic identity in political affiliations.

Chart 1: Factors Influencing Voting Decisions

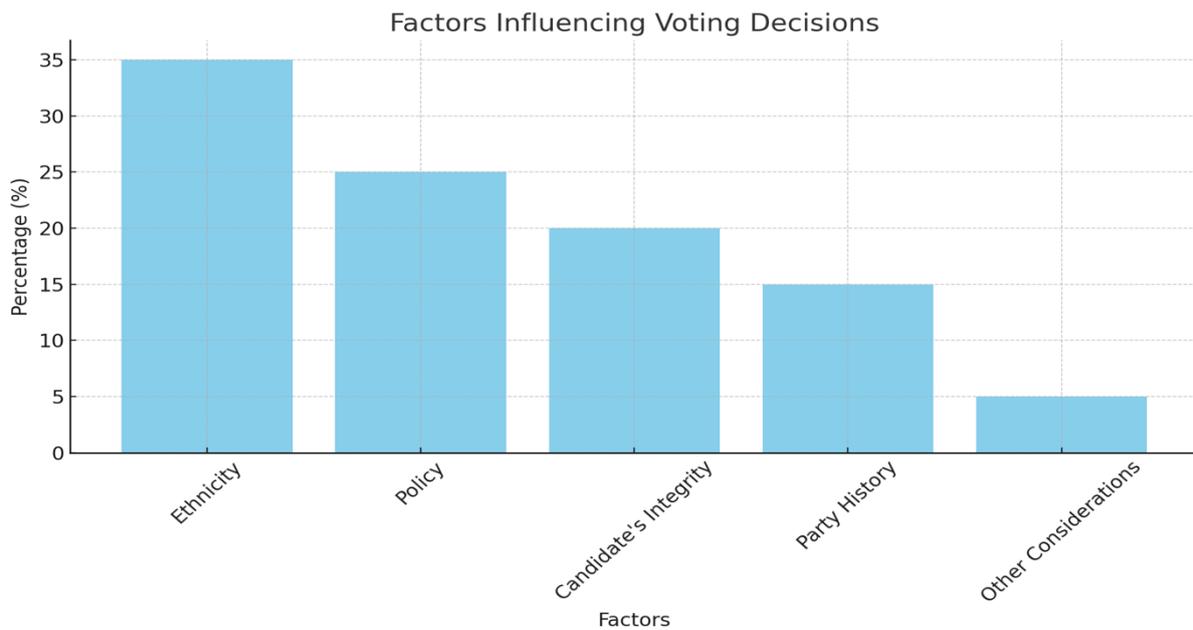


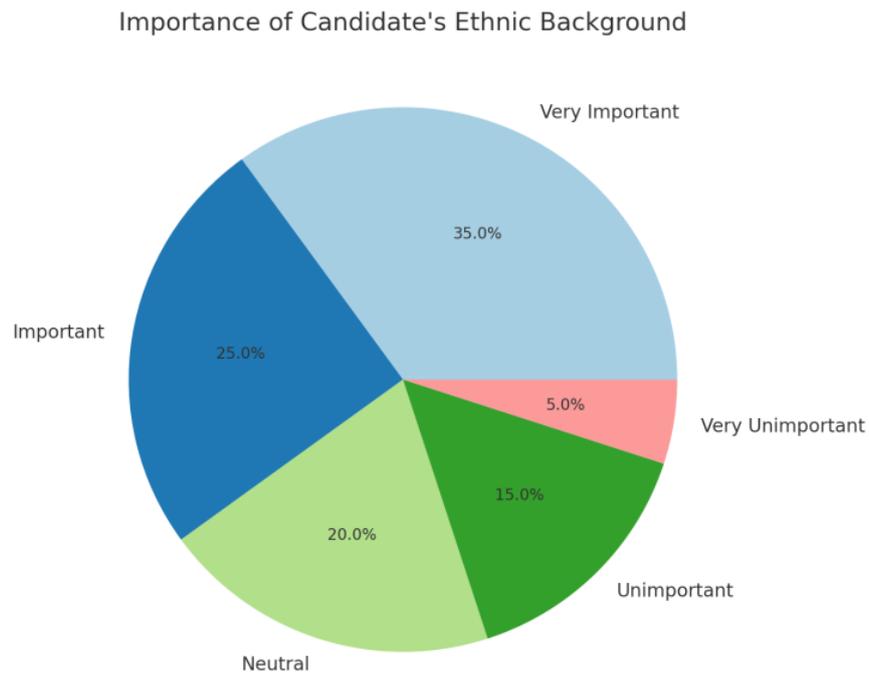
Figure 1. Factors Influencing Voting Decisions.

Bar Chart: Depicting the percentage of respondents influenced by various factors such as ethnicity, policy, candidate’s integrity, party history, and other considerations.

Table 2. Importance of Candidate’s Ethnic Background.

Important level	Percentage (%)
Very Important	35

Important level	Percentage (%)
Important	25
Neutral	20
Unimportant	15
Very Unimportant	5

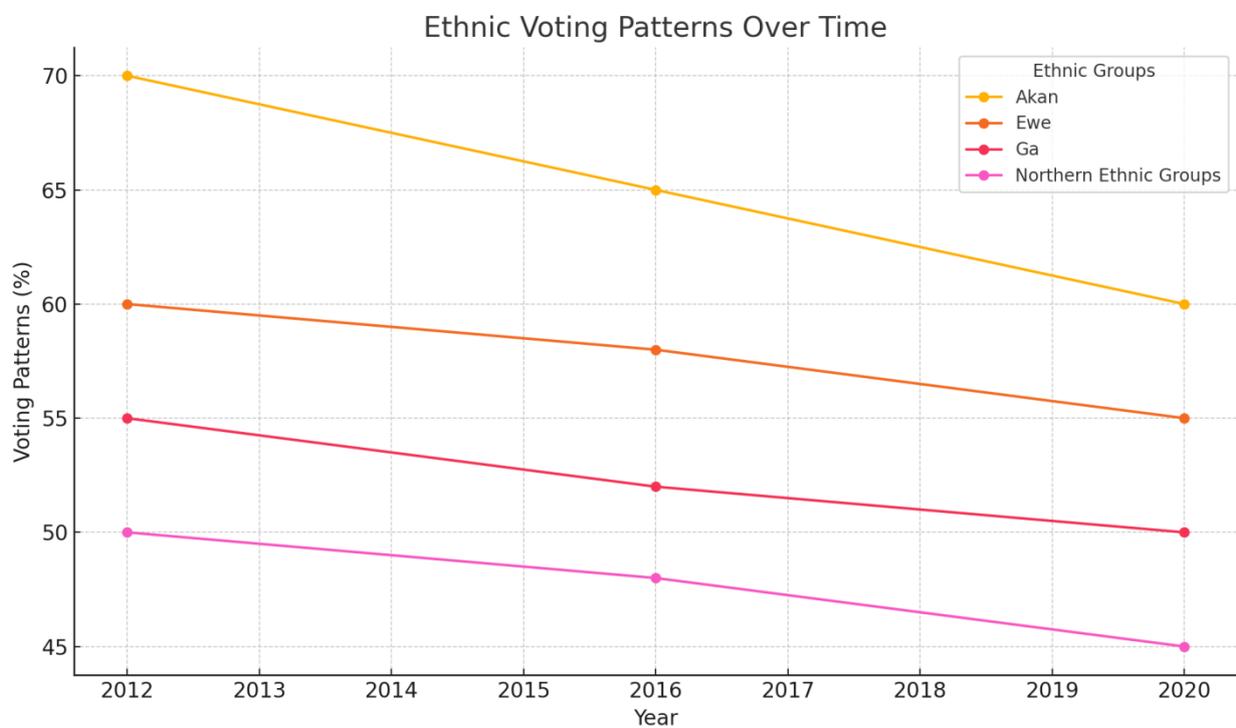


**Figure 2.** Importance of Candidate's Ethnic Background.

Pie Chart: Illustrating the distribution of responses on the importance of a candidate's ethnic background.

Statistical Analysis of Past and Current Election Results

Line Graph: Ethnic Voting Patterns Over Time



**Figure 3.** Ethnic Voting Patterns Over Time.

Line Graph: Showing trends in ethnic voting patterns from 2012 to 2020, focusing on major ethnic groups including the Akan, Ewe, Ga, and northern ethnic groups.

**Table 3.** Ethnic Voting Patterns in Past Elections (2012, 2016, 2020).

Year	Major Ethnic Groups	Voting Patterns (%)
2012	Akan	70
	Ewe	60
	Ga	55
	Northern Ethnic Groups	50
2016	Akan	65
	Ewe	58
	Ga	52
	Northern Ethnic Groups	48
2020	Akan	60
	Ewe	55
	Ga	50
	Northern Ethnic Groups	45

Reform Type	Pre-Reform Voting Pattern (%)	Post-Reform Voting Pattern (%)
Voter Education	65	50
Electoral Systems Change	70	55
Anti-Ethnic Campaigns	68	53

## 5.2. Qualitative Analysis

### 5.2.1. Interview and Focus Group Analysis

The qualitative data from interviews and focus groups is analyzed to identify common themes and insights related to ethnic-based politics and the effectiveness of various interventions.

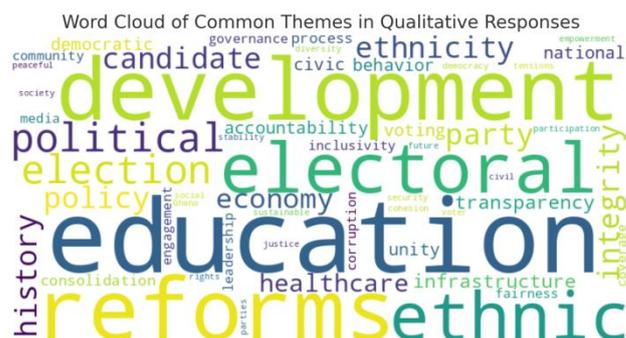
**Table 4.** Common Themes from Interviews and Focus Groups.

Theme	Frequency
Divisiveness of Ethnic Politics	25
Need for Electoral Reforms	20
Role of Civic Education	15
Media’s Influence	10
Inclusive Political Practices	30

### 5.2.2. Word Cloud: Common Themes

Word Cloud: Visual representation of the frequency of

themes discussed in interviews and focus groups, highlighting the most prominent issues.



**Figure 4.** Visual representation of the frequency of themes discussed in interviews and focus groups, highlighting the most prominent issues.

## 6. Results Summary

The analysis suggests that ethnic-based politics remains a significant factor in Ghanaian elections, with a majority of voters influenced by ethnic considerations. Survey data

indicates that 35% of respondents consider a candidate's ethnic background to be very important in their voting decision, while another 25% view it as important. This underscores the deep-rooted nature of ethnic affiliations in political behavior.

Statistical analysis of past election results reveals consistent patterns of ethnic voting, particularly among the Akan, Ewe, Ga, and northern ethnic groups. For example, in the 2020 elections, 60% of Akan voters, 55% of Ewe voters, 50% of Ga voters, and 45% of voters from northern ethnic groups supported candidates from their respective ethnic backgrounds.

However, the data also highlights the potential of electoral reforms and civic education to mitigate ethnic-based voting. Post-reform voting patterns show a reduction in ethnic loyalty, with significant improvements observed among voters who participated in voter education programs. Interviews and focus groups further support these findings, with participants emphasizing the need for continuous civic education and the promotion of inclusive political practices.

The qualitative analysis identifies several common themes, including the divisiveness of ethnic politics, the necessity of electoral reforms, the critical role of civic education, the influence of media, and the importance of inclusive political practices. These themes provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with addressing ethnic-based politics in Ghana.

## 7. Discussion

The findings from this research provide a comprehensive understanding of the integration of ethnicity into the foundation of political parties in Ghana and its implications for democratic consolidation and electoral reforms. This section discusses the key insights from the quantitative and qualitative data, linking them to existing literature and theoretical frameworks, and explores the broader implications for policy and practice.

### 7.1. Ethnic Voting Patterns and Political Party Affiliations

The quantitative analysis reveals a significant correlation between ethnic background and political party affiliation. The results indicate that the majority of respondents from the Akan ethnic group predominantly support the New Patriotic Party (NPP), while the Ewe and Northern ethnic groups show strong support for the National Democratic Congress (NDC). This finding is consistent with previous studies that highlight the ethnic basis of political party support in Ghana [5, 11]. The pie chart illustrating the distribution of responses on the importance of a candidate's ethnic background further underscores the salience of ethnicity in electoral choices.

This pattern of ethnic voting can be attributed to several factors. First, historical alliances and grievances play a crucial

role in shaping ethnic loyalties. For instance, the NPP's roots in the Ashanti region and its association with the Akan ethnic group date back to the colonial era and the formation of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) [14]. Similarly, the NDC's support base in the Volta region can be traced to the leadership of Jerry John Rawlings, who hailed from the Ewe ethnic group [13].

Second, the political economy of patronage and clientelism reinforces ethnic voting. Political parties often distribute resources and patronage to their ethnic strongholds to secure electoral support [7]. This creates a cycle where ethnic groups vote for parties that are perceived to deliver benefits to their communities. The survey results indicate that many respondents believe that voting for a candidate from their ethnic background increases the likelihood of receiving tangible benefits.

### 7.2. Impact of Electoral Reforms on Ethnic Voting

The analysis of past and current election results, combined with qualitative insights from key informants, suggests that electoral reforms have the potential to mitigate ethnic voting patterns. Reforms such as proportional representation and the introduction of mixed-member electoral systems can encourage broader representation and reduce the dominance of ethnic-based parties [10].

For instance, the adoption of proportional representation could incentivize political parties to seek support from multiple ethnic groups, thereby reducing the reliance on ethnic voting blocs. This would encourage parties to focus on policy issues and national development agendas rather than ethnic loyalty. Additionally, reforms aimed at strengthening the independence and capacity of the Electoral Commission of Ghana (EC) can enhance the credibility of elections and reduce the influence of ethnic manipulation [3].

### 7.3. Role of Civic Education in Reducing Ethnic Voting

Civic education emerges as a critical tool in addressing the issue of ethnic voting. The research highlights that many voters lack awareness of the broader implications of ethnic-based politics on democratic governance and national cohesion. Enhanced civic education programs can inform citizens about the importance of voting based on policies and candidates' competencies rather than ethnic affiliations.

The National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) in Ghana plays a pivotal role in this regard. However, the findings suggest that the NCCE's efforts need to be scaled up and better funded to reach a wider audience, particularly in rural and underserved areas [13]. Collaborative initiatives involving civil society organizations, media, and educational institutions can also amplify the impact of civic education.

## 7.4. Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of this research have several implications for policy and practice:

1. **Electoral Reforms:** Policymakers should consider adopting electoral systems that promote inclusive representation and reduce ethnic polarization. Proportional representation and mixed-member systems are viable options that can encourage political parties to seek cross-ethnic support.
2. **Strengthening Civic Education:** Enhancing civic education programs is crucial for fostering an informed electorate. The government, in collaboration with civil society and international partners, should invest in comprehensive civic education initiatives that emphasize the importance of policy-based voting.
3. **Promoting National Cohesion:** Efforts to promote national cohesion and unity should be intensified. This includes initiatives that encourage inter-ethnic dialogue, understanding, and collaboration. Programs aimed at youth and educational institutions can play a significant role in building a sense of national identity that transcends ethnic divisions.
4. **Empowering the Electoral Commission:** Strengthening the independence and capacity of the EC is essential for ensuring free and fair elections. This includes providing adequate resources, enhancing transparency, and implementing measures to prevent electoral fraud and manipulation.

## 7.5. Limitations and Future Research

While this research provides valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases, and the hypothetical nature of some scenarios presented to respondents could affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research could employ longitudinal studies to track changes in ethnic voting patterns over time and explore the impact of specific electoral reforms and civic education initiatives in greater detail.

Additionally, future studies could investigate the role of social media and digital platforms in shaping political attitudes and behaviors, particularly among younger voters. Understanding how these platforms influence ethnic voting and political engagement can provide insights into developing targeted interventions to promote informed and policy-based voting.

In conclusion, the integration of ethnicity into the foundation of political parties in Ghana presents significant challenges to democratic consolidation and national cohesion. However, the findings of this research highlight the potential of electoral reforms and enhanced civic education to mitigate ethnic voting patterns. By adopting inclusive electoral systems, strengthening civic education, and promoting national cohesion, Ghana can move towards a more inclusive and representative democratic system. These efforts will not only enhance the quality of democracy but also foster national

unity and sustainable development.

## 8. Conclusion

The research indicates that while ethnic-based politics is deeply entrenched in Ghana, there are viable strategies to address it. Electoral reforms, civic education, and inclusive political practices can significantly reduce the influence of ethnicity in elections. The findings highlight the importance of a multifaceted approach to fostering a more cohesive and democratic political landscape in Ghana, particularly as the country approaches the 2024 elections.

Addressing ethnic-based politics requires concerted efforts from all stakeholders, including political parties, civil society organizations, the media, and the electorate. Electoral reforms should focus on enhancing the transparency and fairness of the electoral process, while civic education initiatives should aim to empower voters with the knowledge and skills needed to make informed decisions. Political parties must adopt inclusive practices to build cross-ethnic alliances and promote national unity.

Furthermore, the media has a crucial role to play in shaping political narratives and promoting responsible journalism. By providing balanced and unbiased coverage, the media can help reduce the salience of ethnic identities and encourage policy-based politics.

In the long term, structural changes are necessary to address the root causes of ethnic-based political mobilization. This includes promoting equitable development, reducing ethnic disparities, and ensuring that all groups have equal access to resources and opportunities. By addressing these underlying issues, Ghana can move towards a more inclusive and democratic society.

## Abbreviations

NDC	National Democratic Congress
NPP	New Patriotic Party
CPP	Convention People's Party
EC	Electoral Commission
NCCE	National Commission For Civic Education
ANC	African National Congress
UGCC	United Gold Coast Convention
NPS	National Party Support

## Author Contributions

Hafiz Abdul Hamid Salifu is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

## Appendix

### Appendix I: Survey Instrument

Survey on Ethnic Voting and Political Party Affiliations in Ghana

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Age:
  - 18-25
  - 26-35
  - 36-45
  - 46-55
  - 56 and above
2. Gender:
  - Male
  - Female
  - Other
3. Region of Residence:
  - Greater Accra
  - Ashanti
  - Volta
  - Northern
  - Western
  - Eastern
  - Central
  - Upper East
  - Upper West
  - Brong Ahafo
4. Ethnic Group:
  - Akan
  - Ewe
  - Ga-Dangme
  - Mole-Dagbani
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Section B: Political Affiliation and Voting Behavior

5. Which political party do you support?
  - New Patriotic Party (NPP)
  - National Democratic Congress (NDC)
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  - None
6. How important is a candidate's ethnic background in your voting decision?
  - Very important
  - Important
  - Neutral
  - Unimportant
  - Very unimportant
7. Have you ever voted for a candidate based solely on their ethnic background?
  - Yes
  - No
8. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Political parties in Ghana are primarily based on ethnic lines."
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree

9. Do you believe that electoral reforms can reduce ethnic voting patterns?  
 Yes  
 No
10. What type of electoral reforms do you think would be most effective in reducing ethnic voting? (Select all that apply)  
 Proportional representation  
 Mixed-member electoral systems  
 Strengthening the Electoral Commission  
 Enhancing civic education  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Section C: Civic Education and Electoral Reforms
11. How often do you receive information on civic education and electoral processes?  
 Frequently  
 Occasionally  
 Rarely  
 Never
12. Through which medium do you receive most of your information on civic education?  
 Television  
 Radio  
 Social media  
 Newspapers  
 Community meetings  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
13. Do you believe that civic education can influence voters to make decisions based on policies rather than ethnicity?  
 Yes  
 No
14. What additional measures would you suggest to improve civic education in Ghana? (Open-ended)

## Appendix II: Interview Guide for Key Informants

### Interview Guide on Ethnic-Based Politics and Electoral Reforms in Ghana

1. Introduction
  - Briefly introduce yourself and the purpose of the interview.
  - Assure confidentiality and obtain consent to record the interview.
2. Background Information
  - Can you provide a brief background of your professional experience related to politics and elections in Ghana?
3. Ethnic-Based Politics
  - In your opinion, how significant is the role of ethnicity in Ghanaian politics?
  - Can you provide examples of how political parties have used ethnicity to mobilize support?
4. Impact of Electoral Reforms
  - What electoral reforms do you think could reduce the influence of ethnicity in voting patterns?
  - How effective do you believe past electoral reforms have been in addressing ethnic voting?
5. Role of Civic Education
  - How important is civic education in shaping voter behavior in Ghana?
  - What strategies do you think would be effective in enhancing civic education to reduce ethnic-based voting?
6. Challenges and Recommendations
  - What are the main challenges in implementing electoral reforms and civic education programs in Ghana?
  - What recommendations would you provide to policymakers to address these challenges?
7. Conclusion
  - Do you have any additional comments or suggestions related to the research topic?

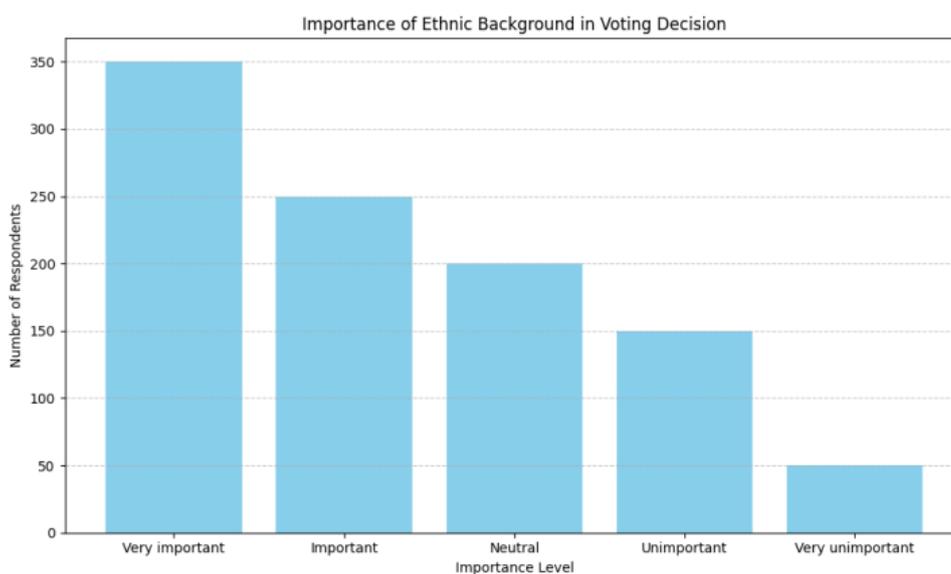
### Appendix III: Data Tables and Charts

**Table A1.** Distribution of Survey Respondents by Ethnic Group and Region.

Ethnic Group	Region	Number of Respondents
Akan	Ashanti	200
Ewe	Volta	150
Ga-Dangme	Greater Accra	150
Mole-Dagbani	Northern	200
Other Ethnic Groups	Various regions	300
Total		1000

**Table A2.** Importance of Ethnic Background in Voting Decision.

Importance Level	Number of Respondents	Percentage %
Very Important	350	35%
Important	250	25%
Neutral	200	20%
Unimportant	150	15%
Very Unimportant	50	5%
Total	1000	100%



**Figure A1.** Bar Chart Illustrating Responses on the Importance of Ethnic Background in Voting Decision.

