



## **Electoral Accessibility and Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities: Evidence from Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*This study examines the relationship between electoral accessibility and the political participation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, focusing on the provision of assistive aids during the 2023 general elections. Using a mixed-methods design, survey data and structured field observations were collected from 285 registered voters with disabilities across selected local government areas. Descriptive statistics and multivariate and univariate tests were employed to assess the influence of magnifying glasses for persons with albinism, easy-to-read voter education guides for persons with autism, and ramps for mobility-impaired voters on electoral participation. The results indicate a significant relationship between the provision of magnifying glasses and participation among persons with albinism. In contrast, easy-to-read guides did not show a significant effect for persons with autism, while the widespread absence of ramps revealed persistent structural barriers for mobility-impaired voters. The study highlights gaps in the implementation of disability-inclusive electoral measures and advances policy recommendations for strengthening institutional accessibility standards in Nigeria's electoral framework.*

**Keywords:** electoral accessibility, persons with disabilities, political participation, assistive aids, inclusive elections, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.



## **1.1 Introduction**

Participation in political and electoral processes is a fundamental expression of citizenship and a cornerstone of democratic governance. Electoral participation enables citizens to influence public decision-making and reinforces the legitimacy of democratic institutions (Udoms et al., 2024). The right to vote is widely recognized as an indispensable civic and political right that must be guaranteed to all eligible citizens without discrimination. Contemporary democratic systems increasingly emphasize the need to remove structural, physical, and informational barriers that inhibit the full participation of marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities, in order to promote equity, autonomy, and social inclusion (Iyoho et al., 2023).

Historically, persons with disabilities have experienced systemic exclusion from political and electoral processes, often resulting from inaccessible infrastructure, inadequate assistive technologies, and limited availability of disability-sensitive voter education. Persons with disabilities are defined as individuals with long-term physical, sensory, intellectual, or psychosocial impairments that, in interaction with various societal barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (Center for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD), 2023, in Effiong et al., 2023). This exclusion reflects broader patterns of marginalization in governance and development, despite the fact that persons with disabilities contribute meaningfully to society as parents, professionals, students, and political actors (ODIHR, 2019).

Persistent stigmatization and negative societal perceptions continue to undermine the political participation of persons with disabilities. Myths regarding their capacity to engage in civic and political life have contributed to discrimination and reduced electoral engagement (Effiong & Asangausung, 2023). Empirical evidence suggests that such stigmatization, combined with environmental and institutional barriers, leads to low voter turnout among persons with disabilities, particularly in developing democracies such as Nigeria (Eniola et al., 2023). The absence of systematic, rights-based frameworks to address the specific needs of persons with disabilities has further entrenched their exclusion from meaningful participation in public affairs (Amulu & Abu, 2010; Nigeria Institute of Legal Studies, 2010).

International and national legal instruments have increasingly emphasized the obligation of states to ensure equal political participation for persons with disabilities. Key frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (2006), the Nigerian Constitution (1999, as amended), the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (2018), and the Electoral Act (2022) provide normative and legal foundations for the protection and promotion of disability-inclusive electoral processes (United Nations, 2014; Effiong &



Asangaung, 2023). Article 29 of the UNCRPD, in particular, mandates state parties to guarantee the political rights of persons with disabilities, including the right to vote independently and in secret, supported by appropriate assistive technologies and accessible polling environments.

In Nigeria, early post-democratic transition elections were characterized by limited consideration for disability inclusion. The absence of explicit constitutional and electoral provisions for persons with disabilities resulted in inaccessible polling units, lack of assistive devices, and minimal disability-focused voter education (Iyoho et al., 2023). Although subsequent electoral cycles witnessed incremental improvements, such as the introduction of Braille ballot guides, tactile voting aids, and priority voting, the scope and effectiveness of these measures remained uneven, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas (World Bank, 2011; Thompson, 2020). More recently, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has adopted a disability inclusion framework that incorporates assistive and inclusive tools, including magnifying glasses for voters with visual impairments, easy-to-understand voter education materials, and accessible polling infrastructure such as ramps and adjustable voting booths (Punch, 2023).

Despite these national-level policy commitments, localized implementation remains a critical challenge. In Akwa Ibom State, evidence suggests that many polling units continue to lack basic accessibility features, including ramps for voters with mobility impairments, disability-sensitive voter education materials for persons with neurodevelopmental conditions such as autism, and adequate visual aids for voters with low vision or albinism (Akpan & Effiong, 2021; Effiong, 2019). These deficiencies have significant implications for the ability of affected groups to participate independently, confidently, and effectively in the electoral process.

For persons with albinism and other low-vision conditions, the availability of magnifying glasses and visual aids is essential for accurately reading ballot papers and making informed voting choices. The absence or inadequate provision of such tools may result in reliance on third-party assistance, thereby compromising the secrecy and autonomy of the vote. Similarly, for persons with autism, the complexity of electoral procedures and conventional voter education materials can present cognitive and communication barriers. Easy-to-read voter education guides, designed with simplified language, clear visuals, and structured formats, have the potential to enhance understanding, reduce anxiety, and promote informed electoral participation.

In the case of voters with mobility impairments, physical access to polling units remains a fundamental determinant of participation. The presence or absence of ramps and accessible pathways directly affects the ability of these individuals to reach voting



areas independently and safely. Inaccessible infrastructure not only discourages turnout but also reinforces broader patterns of social exclusion and political marginalization.

Within this context, the present study is situated in Akwa Ibom State and focuses on the relationship between specific assistive measures and the electoral participation of distinct disability groups. Specifically, it examines how the provision of magnifying glasses influences the participation of persons with albinism, how easy-to-read voter education guides affect the engagement of persons with autism, and how the availability of ramps shapes the participation of voters with mobility impairments in general elections. By disaggregating disability inclusion strategies along functional and impairment-specific lines, the study seeks to contribute empirical evidence to policy and academic debates on the effectiveness of targeted assistive interventions in strengthening inclusive democratic participation in Nigeria.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Despite the existence of national and international legal frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (2006), the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (2018), and the Electoral Act (2022) guaranteeing the political rights of persons with disabilities, these people in Nigeria continue to experience significant barriers to effective participation in the electoral process. This persistent exclusion raises concerns about the inclusiveness and representativeness of democratic outcomes, particularly at the sub-national level.

Data from the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (2018) records indicate that approximately 19 million Nigerians live with one form of disability, yet records from the Independent National Electoral Commission's Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) 2021/2022 review suggest that persons with disabilities constitute a disproportionately low proportion of registered voters. This discrepancy points to implementation gaps between policy commitments and practical accessibility at polling units.

In Akwa Ibom State, reports and empirical observations indicate that essential assistive and accessibility measures remain inconsistently provided. Polling units often lack functional ramps for voters with mobility impairments, adequate magnifying devices for voters with albinism and other low-vision conditions, and simplified, easy-to-read voter education guides tailored to the cognitive and communication needs of persons with autism. The absence of these targeted interventions constrains independent, informed, and dignified participation in general elections.

Notably, there is limited empirical evidence that disaggregates the effects of

specific assistive measures across different disability groups within the state. Consequently, a critical research gap exists regarding how the provision of magnifying glasses influences the participation of persons with albinism, how easy-to-read voter education guides affect the engagement of persons with autism, and how the availability of ramps shapes the electoral participation of voters with mobility impairments in Akwa Ibom State. This study addresses this gap by systematically examining the effectiveness of these targeted interventions in promoting inclusive electoral participation.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to examine how the provision of assistive aids in the electoral process has influenced the participation of persons with disabilities in the 2023 general election in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. Ascertain the extent to which the provision of magnifying glasses influenced the electoral participation of persons with albinism in the 2023 general election in Akwa Ibom State.
- ii. Examine the implications of easy-to-read voter education guides on the electoral participation of persons with autism in the 2023 general election in Akwa Ibom State.
- iii. Determine the effect of the provision of ramps on the electoral participation of persons with mobility impairments in the 2023 general election in Akwa Ibom State.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The research was guided by the following questions:

- i. How did the provision of magnifying glasses affect the electoral participation of persons with albinism in Akwa Ibom State?
- ii. In what ways did easy-to-read voter education guides enhance the electoral participation of persons with autism in Akwa Ibom State?
- iii. What was the effect of ramps on election participation for mobility-impaired persons in Akwa Ibom State?

### **1.5 Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide empirical investigation and statistical analysis:

- I. **H<sub>0</sub>:** The provision of magnifying glasses did not significantly influence the electoral participation of persons with albinism in Akwa Ibom State.



- ii. **H<sub>0</sub>:** The use of easy-to-read voter education guides did not significantly improve the electoral participation of persons with autism in Akwa Ibom State.
- iii. **H<sub>0</sub>:** The provision of ramps did not have a significant effect on the electoral participation of persons with mobility impairments in Akwa Ibom State.

## **Literature Review**

### **2.1 Concept of Persons with Disabilities**

Contemporary disability scholarship has shifted from a predominantly medical model to a social and rights-based framework that emphasizes the interaction between individual impairments and environmental, institutional, and attitudinal barriers. The World Health Organization (2023) conceptualizes disability as the outcome of the interaction between impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions within a given social context. Similarly, the World Bank (2023) and the International Disability Caucus (Schulze, 2009) define persons with disabilities as individuals whose full participation in social, economic, and political life is constrained by physical, social, and structural barriers rather than impairment alone.

This perspective aligns with legal and policy frameworks such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which frames disability inclusion as a matter of equality, autonomy, and state obligation to provide reasonable accommodation. Within this framework, disability is not merely an individual condition but a relational concept shaped by the accessibility of public systems, including electoral institutions.

The present study adopts this social model in examining impairment-specific experiences of electoral participation in Akwa Ibom State. It focuses on three functional categories relevant to the study objectives: persons with albinism and low vision, whose participation is influenced by access to visual aids such as magnifying devices; persons with autism, whose engagement is shaped by the clarity, simplicity, and cognitive accessibility of voter education materials; and persons with mobility impairments, whose turnout and voting autonomy depend largely on the physical accessibility of polling environments, particularly the availability of ramps and accessible pathways.

By situating these groups within a rights-based and interaction framework, the study conceptualizes electoral exclusion as a product of environmental and institutional design rather than individual limitation. This approach enables an assessment of how targeted assistive interventions can transform electoral participation from a formally guaranteed right into a practically realizable civic experience.

### **2.1.2 Concept of Electoral Participation**

Electoral participation is widely understood as both a civic right and a democratic obligation, encompassing the ability of citizens to engage meaningfully in voting and broader political processes (European Union Democracy Observatory, 2020). For persons with disabilities, participation extends beyond legal enfranchisement to include the practical conditions that enable independent, informed, and barrier-free engagement at all stages of the electoral process.

Lang and Upah (2008) and Schur et al. (2013) conceptualize participation as the involvement of persons with disabilities as voters and political actors, contingent upon the accessibility of polling environments, availability of assistive technologies, and the removal of discriminatory institutional practices. The UNCRPD further emphasizes that electoral participation requires reasonable accommodation, including accessible infrastructure, disability-sensitive voter education, and appropriate voting aids to ensure equality of opportunity and secrecy of the ballot.

Within this framework, electoral participation is understood as an outcome shaped by the interaction between voters' functional needs and the responsiveness of electoral systems. Accordingly, this study operationalizes participation in terms of the extent to which targeted interventions, like the provision of magnifying glasses for voters with albinism, easy-to-read voter education guides for persons with autism, and ramps for voters with mobility impairments, facilitate autonomous, informed, and dignified engagement in general elections in Akwa Ibom State.

### **2.1.3 Concept of Assistive Aids**

Assistive aids are defined as devices or systems designed to enhance, maintain, or improve the functional performance of individuals with disabilities (Alper & Rahariririna, 2016). Within the electoral context, such aids include Braille and tactile ballot guides, magnifying devices, simplified voter education materials, and physical accessibility features such as ramps and adapted voting booths. These interventions are intended to reduce physical, sensory, and cognitive barriers at polling units and promote independent, informed, and dignified participation in elections.

In Nigeria, recent electoral cycles have witnessed incremental efforts by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to integrate disability-friendly measures, including the deployment of braille ballot guides and limited provision of magnifying glasses for voters with low vision or albinism. However, empirical evidence suggests that these measures remain inconsistently implemented and unevenly distributed, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas (Syamsuri & Kambo, 2020; Onajoba & Yahya, 2023). As a result, many voters with disabilities continue to face



barriers related to inaccessible polling locations, inadequate voting technologies, and limited institutional support (Belt, 2016).

For voters with visual impairments, assistive tools such as Braille ballot guides and magnifying devices are central to preserving ballot secrecy and voting autonomy. Schur et al. (2017) demonstrate that the absence of such aids increases reliance on third-party assistance, thereby compromising confidentiality and independent choice. In contrast, accessible physical infrastructure, particularly ramps and unobstructed pathways, is a primary determinant of participation for voters with mobility impairments, as it directly affects their ability to reach and navigate polling environments.

Despite the recognized importance of these interventions, the literature largely treats assistive aids as a generalized category, with limited empirical analysis of how specific tools affect distinct disability groups. This gap underscores the need for targeted evaluation of the effects of magnifying glasses on voters with albinism, easy-to-read voter education guides for persons with autism, and ramps for voters with mobility impairments within localized electoral contexts such as Akwa Ibom State.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

This study is grounded in three complementary theoretical perspectives: the Social Model of Disability, Political Inclusion Theory, and Human Rights Theory. These frameworks provide an analytical basis for examining how institutional design, accessibility measures, and rights-based obligations shape the electoral participation of persons with disabilities in Akwa Ibom State.

### **2.2.1 Social Model of Disability**

The social model of disability, articulated by Oliver (1983), conceptualizes disability as a product of social, environmental, and institutional barriers rather than individual impairments. The model shifts responsibility for inclusion from the individual to society, emphasizing the need for systemic reforms that remove physical, informational, and attitudinal constraints (Finkelstein, 1990; Breckenbach, 2003).

Within the electoral context, this framework directs attention to how inaccessible polling environments, inadequate assistive technologies, and limited voter education materials function as disabling conditions. Accordingly, the study operationalizes disability inclusion in terms of the availability and effectiveness of targeted interventions, such as magnifying glasses, easy-to-read voter education guides, and ramps, in enabling independent and dignified participation for distinct disability groups.



### **2.2.2 Political Inclusion Theory**

Political Inclusion Theory, associated with Young (2000), extends democratic participation beyond formal enfranchisement to the institutional and practical conditions that enable meaningful engagement. The theory posits that political rights are insufficient unless supported by enabling environments that allow marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities, to influence political processes and outcomes.

Applied to this study, political inclusion is assessed through the extent to which electoral institutions provide functional accessibility measures at polling units. Assistive aids are conceptualized not as discretionary support but as instruments of democratic legitimacy aligned with Nigeria's legal obligations under the Electoral Act and international commitments under the UNCRPD, particularly Article 29 on effective participation in political life (Norris, 2002).

### **2.2.2 Human Rights Theory**

Human Rights Theory, articulated in contemporary form by Donnelly (1989), frames rights as universal, inalienable, and institutionally enforceable, irrespective of social or cultural context. The framework emphasizes equality, non-discrimination, and state responsibility in ensuring the practical realization of rights.

In the context of electoral participation, this perspective positions persons with disabilities as rights-holders rather than beneficiaries of charity. The persistent denial of political participation through inaccessible voting environments and inadequate assistive measures constitutes a violation of core human rights principles (Fiala-Butora et al., 2014; Lord & Stein, 2013). The theory thus provides a normative foundation for evaluating state and institutional compliance with obligations to ensure inclusive electoral processes.

### **2.2.3 Relevance to the Study**

The study adopts the social model of disability as its primary analytical anchor, complemented by political inclusion and human rights theories. This integrated framework shifts analytical focus from individual impairment to institutional responsibility, enabling an assessment of how structural conditions and targeted assistive interventions shape electoral participation outcomes.

By situating accessibility measures within both democratic inclusion and rights-based obligations, the framework supports a systematic evaluation of whether the provision of magnifying devices, easy-to-read voter education guides, and ramps constitutes effective institutional accommodation or reflects persistent gaps in the realization of inclusive citizenship for persons with disabilities in Akwa Ibom State.

### **2.3 Empirical Review**

Empirical scholarship on disability and electoral participation in Nigeria and comparable contexts consistently identifies accessibility, assistive technologies, and disability-sensitive voter education as critical determinants of inclusive democratic engagement. However, most studies adopt broad, generalized approaches to “persons with disabilities” rather than examining the effects of specific assistive measures on distinct disability groups.

At the policy and systems level, Ahmadu (2025), Ogbanje et al. (2023), and Suleiman and Umeakuekwe (2023) demonstrate that Nigeria's electoral and disability laws provide formal recognition of inclusion but lack robust enforcement mechanisms and explicit mandates for assistive voting technologies. These legal and institutional gaps are reflected in field-based evidence showing limited deployment of assistive aids and persistent inaccessibility of polling environments (TAF African Election Report, 2023; Onajoba & Yahya, 2023; Oladunjoye, 2023).

With respect to visual impairment and low vision, including conditions such as albinism, studies consistently report inadequate availability of visual aids at polling units. Hanafi (2019) and Adeniyi and Kuku (2020) found that the absence of assistive devices for visually impaired voters constrained independent ballot marking and increased reliance on third-party assistance, thereby compromising voting autonomy. While experimental research suggests that assistive technologies significantly improve the voting experience of visually impaired persons (Olayemi & Dada, 2023), there is limited empirical evidence on the specific impact of low-cost visual tools, such as magnifying glasses, on voter participation outcomes at the sub-national level.

In relation to informational accessibility and voter education, several studies highlight low awareness of voting rights and procedures among persons with disabilities as a major barrier to participation. Nwaham and Ndupechi (2023) and Sule and Abubakar (2021) demonstrate that conventional voter education materials are often insufficiently adapted to the cognitive and communication needs of persons with disabilities. Although political mobilization and targeted communication improve awareness (Odu & Ogundele, 2023; Akpan & Effiong, 2021), the literature provides little impairment-specific analysis, particularly concerning the effectiveness of simplified, easy-to-read voter education guides for persons with autism and related neurodevelopmental conditions.

Regarding physical accessibility and mobility impairment, a strong body of evidence identifies inaccessible infrastructure as a primary deterrent to electoral participation. Studies conducted in Nigeria and other African contexts reveal that the absence of ramps, poorly designed polling environments, and inadequate transport



options significantly reduce turnout among voters with mobility impairments (Onyishi and Bala, 2020; Tesemma and Coetzee, 2023; Eleri and Elemukan, 2023). Comparative research further indicates that jurisdictions with stronger infrastructure accessibility standards demonstrate higher levels of participation among mobility-impaired voters (Maduka & Mthembu, 2024; Arthur, 2017).

At the sub-national level, Iyoho et al. (2023) provide direct evidence from Akwa Ibom State, showing that limited deployment of assistive aids and inadequate support for voters with disabilities constrained participation during the 2023 elections. However, their analysis does not disaggregate findings by disability type or examine the differential effects of specific assistive measures.

However, while existing studies establish that assistive technologies, voter education, and physical accessibility are central to inclusive electoral participation, there remains a notable empirical gap in impairment-specific, localized analyses. In particular, the literature lacks systematic evidence on how the provision of magnifying glasses affects the participation of persons with albinism, how easy-to-read voter education guides influence the engagement of persons with autism, and how the availability of ramps shapes the participation of voters with mobility impairments in general elections in Akwa Ibom State. This study addresses this gap by examining the effectiveness of these targeted interventions within a specific sub-national electoral context.

### **3 Methodology**

This study adopted a mixed-methods design to examine the availability and effectiveness of assistive aids in shaping the electoral participation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey generated quantitative data on access to assistive devices, polling unit accessibility, and participation levels, while focus group discussions (FGDs) provided qualitative insights into lived experiences and institutional barriers. The study population comprised 1,101 registered voters with disabilities across the 31 Local Government Areas (LGAs), identified through the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Continuous Voter Registration records (2023). Using Cochran's formula for finite populations at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, a minimum sample of 285 respondents was proportionally allocated across LGAs based on the distribution of registered PWD voters.

A multi-stage sampling approach ensured geographic and impairment-category representation by stratifying LGAs into urban and rural areas, identifying clusters of PWDs through INEC records and disability associations, and selecting respondents via

simple random sampling within clusters. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and an FGD guide. Instrument validity was established through expert review, and reliability testing produced a Cronbach's alpha above 0.70. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and qualitative data were thematically analyzed. Ethical standards were observed through informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw.

#### 4 Result and Discussion of Findings

**Table 4.1: Analysis of Assistive Aids provided for Persons with Disability during 2023 elections**

| S/N | Category            | Registered no of voters | Assistive aids needed                                     | No of assistive aids provided |
|-----|---------------------|-------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| 1   | Albinism            | 354                     | Magnifying glasses  | 321                           |
| 2   | Mobility Impairment | 248                     | Ramps/voting booths with lower decks for wheelchair users | 2                             |
| 3   | Persons with Autism | 21                      | Easy to read voting procedure                             | 199                           |

*Source: Field Survey, (2025)*

Table 4.1 illustrates marked disparities in the provision of assistive aids across disability categories during the 2023 general elections in Akwa Ibom State. For persons with albinism, 321 magnifying glasses were provided for 354 registered voters, indicating relatively high coverage but still falling short of universal access. In contrast, the provision for voters with mobility impairments was critically inadequate, as only two ramps or adapted voting booths were recorded for 248 registered voters, reflecting a severe infrastructural gap likely to have constrained independent access to polling units. For persons with autism, the reported distribution of 199 easy-to-read voting guides, compared with 21 registered voters, suggests non-targeted or inefficient allocation of informational materials. Overall, the table demonstrates uneven and misaligned deployment of assistive measures, with stronger emphasis on visual aids and substantial neglect of physical accessibility and targeted cognitive-accessibility support.

#### 4.1 Test of Hypotheses

**H<sub>0</sub>:** The provision of magnifying glasses did not significantly influence the electoral participation of persons with albinism in Akwa Ibom State.

**Table 4.2: Univariate test for the relationship between magnifying glasses for persons with albinism and election participation in Akwa Ibom State**

| Test                       | Compare p-value to $\alpha = 0.05$ | Decision              | Interpretation   |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Multivariate Test          | $p \leq 0.05$                      | Reject H <sub>0</sub> | Assistive aids jointly influence all disability groups |
| Individual Predictor on DV | $p \leq 0.05$                      | Reject H <sub>0</sub> | Specific assistive aid significantly influences group  |

*Source: Field Survey, 2025.*

The multivariate test results indicate that assistive aids jointly exert a statistically significant influence on electoral participation across disability groups at the 0.05 significance level, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Specifically, the univariate analysis for persons with albinism shows that the provision of magnifying glasses had a highly significant and substantive effect on participation ( $p = .000$ ), with a very large effect size ( $\eta^2 = .871-.906$ ) and maximum statistical power (1.000), explaining approximately 91% of the variance in the dependent variables. The Wilks' Lambda result ( $\Lambda = .094$ ,  $F(7, 20) = 27.472$ ,  $p < .001$ ) further confirms the robustness of the multivariate model. Consistent with this, the F-statistic ( $F = 176.009$ ) demonstrates that access to magnifying glasses significantly enhanced the electoral participation of persons with albinism in Akwa Ibom State, warranting the rejection of the null hypothesis and affirming a strong positive relationship between assistive aid provision and voting engagement.

**H<sub>0</sub>:** The use of easy-to-read voter education guides did not significantly improve the electoral participation of persons with autism in Akwa Ibom State.

**Table 4.3: Univariate test for the relationship between the use of easy to read voter education guide for persons with autism and election participation in Akwa Ibom State**

| Test                       | Compare p-value to $\alpha = 0.05$ | Decision     | Interpretation   |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------|--|
| Multivariate Test          | $p \leq 0.05$                      | Reject $H_0$ | Assistive aids jointly influence all disability groups |
| Individual Predictor on DV | $p \leq 0.05$                      | Reject $H_0$ | Specific assistive aid significantly influences group  |

**Source: Field Survey, 2025.**

The univariate test results indicate that the use of easy-to-read voter education guides had no statistically significant effect on the electoral participation of persons with autism in Akwa Ibom State. The Wilks' Lambda value of 1.000, with a corresponding p-value of 1.000 and a Partial Eta Squared of .000, reflects the absence of both statistical significance and practical effect. Consequently, the null hypothesis is accepted, confirming that the non-availability or ineffective deployment of easy-to-read voter education materials did not enhance participation among eligible voters with autism. This finding presents a critical gap in the provision of cognitive-accessibility support within the electoral process.

**$H_0$ :** The provision of ramps did not have a significant effect on the electoral participation of persons with mobility impairments in Akwa Ibom State.

**Table 4.4: Univariate test for the provision of ramps for mobility-impaired persons and election participation in Akwa Ibom State**

| Test                       | Compare p-value to $\alpha = 0.05$ | Decision     | Interpretation   |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------|--|
| Multivariate Test          | $p \leq 0.05$                      | Reject $H_0$ | Assistive aids jointly influence all disability groups |
| Individual Predictor on DV | $p \leq 0.05$                      | Reject $H_0$ | Specific assistive aid significantly influences group  |

**Source: Field Survey, 2025.**



The univariate analysis demonstrates that the provision of ramps had no statistically significant effect on the electoral participation of mobility-impaired voters in Akwa Ibom State. The Wilks' Lambda value of 1.000, together with a p-value of 1.000 and a Partial Eta Squared of .000, indicates the absence of both statistical and practical significance. Accordingly, the null hypothesis is accepted, confirming that the non-availability or ineffective provision of ramps did not enhance participation among voters with mobility impairments. This result highlights a critical infrastructural deficiency in ensuring physical accessibility within the electoral process.

## **4.2 Discussion of Findings**

### **4.2.1 Magnifying Glasses and Electoral Participation of Persons with Albinism in Akwa Ibom State**

The analysis of the first hypothesis resulted in the rejection of the null hypothesis. Out of 354 persons with albinism registered with INEC, 321 magnifying glasses were provided. This indicates that the provision of magnifying glasses contributed to increased electoral participation among persons with albinism in Akwa Ibom State. These findings are consistent with those of Adegbite (2024) in the study “Engagement of Assistive Principles for the Work Ability of People Living with Impairments”, which demonstrated that voter turnout improves when assistive voting technologies are made available.

### **4.2.2 Easy-to-Read Voter Education Guides and Electoral Participation of Persons with Autism in Akwa Ibom State**

The findings for this hypothesis suggest that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. The provision of easy-to-read voter education guides did not result in a statistically significant increase in electoral participation among persons with autism. Specifically, 21 persons with autism were registered, while 199 easy-to-read voter guides were distributed. Interestingly, multivariate analysis indicated that these guides improved participation for persons with hearing impairments rather than those with autism. These results align with the study by Tassone et al. (2024), “A Pilot Study of Political Experiences and Barriers to Voting Among Autistic Adults Participating in Online Survey Research in the United States”, which reported that autistic adults encounter persistent, unique barriers to voting, including difficulty understanding ballots and navigating polling stations, even when accessible materials are provided. This evidence suggests that easy-to-read voter education guides alone are insufficient to improve electoral participation for persons with autism.

### **4.2.3 Ramps and electoral participation of mobility-impaired persons in Akwa Ibom State**

The analysis of the data revealed that the provision of easy-to-read voter education guides did not produce a statistically significant increase in electoral participation among persons with autism in Akwa Ibom State. Out of 21 registered persons with autism, 199 easy-to-read voter guides were distributed; however, the expected improvement in voter turnout was not observed. Interestingly, multivariate analysis suggested that while these guides did not significantly impact participation for persons with autism, they appeared to facilitate increased engagement for individuals with hearing impairments. These findings are consistent with those reported by Tassone et al. (2024) in their study *“A Pilot Study of Political Experiences and Barriers to Voting Among Autistic Adults Participating in Online Survey Research in the United States.”* Their research highlighted that autistic adults often face persistent and unique obstacles in voting, including difficulties in comprehending ballots and navigating polling stations, even when accessible materials are provided. The present study similarly indicates that the availability of easy-to-read voter education guides alone is insufficient to overcome the barriers faced by persons with autism, suggesting the need for more tailored, comprehensive interventions to enhance their electoral participation.

## **5 Summary and Conclusion**

The study examined the impact of assistive interventions on the electoral participation of persons with disabilities in Akwa Ibom State, focusing on individuals with albinism, autism, and mobility impairments. Findings indicate that the provision of magnifying glasses significantly improved electoral participation among persons with albinism, reflecting the effectiveness of targeted assistive technologies. In contrast, the distribution of easy-to-read voter education guides did not lead to a statistically significant increase in participation among persons with autism, although it appeared beneficial for individuals with hearing impairments. Moreover, the lack of ramps and other infrastructural accommodations at polling units was identified as a substantial barrier to participation for mobility-impaired persons, and it highlights the persistent spatial exclusion despite the legal rights of persons with disabilities. In all, these results show that while assistive tools can enhance participation for some groups, comprehensive and inclusive measures, including tailored educational resources and accessible infrastructure, are essential to ensure equitable electoral engagement for all persons with disabilities.

## 5.1 Recommendations

- i. Electoral bodies should provide appropriate assistive tools, such as magnifying glasses or Braille ballots, tailored to the specific needs of different disability groups to improve voter accessibility and participation.
- ii. Easy-to-read voter education materials should be supplemented with additional interventions for persons with cognitive or developmental disabilities, including individualized guidance, multimedia resources, and in-person support at polling stations.
- iii. Polling units should be made physically accessible through the construction of ramps, centralization of assistive aids, and provision of transport services for mobility-impaired voters. Additionally, persons with disabilities should be included in the planning and staffing of electoral processes to ensure that accessibility needs are addressed systematically.

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