

Psychometric Approach to Measuring Perceived Quality of Candidate for Elective Office

Ojo Monday¹; Olapegba Peter²; Adudu Chiangi³

¹Department of Social Sciences, Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, Nigeria

²Department of Psychology, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

³Department of Business Administration, Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, Nigeria

Publication Date: 2026/05/02

Abstract: As the platform for electing political office holders is increasingly expanding to accommodate the institutions of independent candidacy in Nigeria, such candidates must possess required qualities that will attract and influence voters in their voting decision. Due to the dearth of direct psychometric-based measure of perceived quality of candidate, this study developed a generic scale to measure the construct in Nigeria context in order to ensure culture relevance using two thousand three hundred and nine (2309) randomly selected respondents from the three senatorial districts in Lagos State with ages ranging from 18-65 years old, a mean age of 25.2 and standard deviation of 9.7. This is a 13-item self-reporting scale in the Likert format with 5-point response options ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Result shows that the scale has content validity (using 80% agreements of experts). Reliability test of the scale revealed a Cronbach's coefficient alpha of .86 with standardized item alpha of .88 and correlation between forms of .62. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) extracted three factors: compassion, respect and experience with eigenvalues ranging from 5.76 - 1.15 and cumulative percentage variance of 66.5. It was concluded that this scale is a valid measure of perceived quality of candidate among Nigerian voters. Future studies are suggested to explore probable culture-specific differences among the various ethnic groups in relation to their perception of quality of candidates for elective office.

Keywords: Elective Office, Perceived Quality of Candidate Scale, Psychometric, Validation, Culture-Relevance.

How to Cite: Ojo Monday; Olapegba Peter; Adudu Chiangi (2026) Psychometric Approach to Measuring Perceived Quality of Candidate for Elective Office. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 11(3), 4106-4112. <https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26mar1995>

I. INTRODUCTION

The dynamic of politics has brought about a new trend to the platform through which political leaders governing the affairs of the country are elected. Hitherto, election of candidate into political office was mainly through the platform of political parties with its attendance benefits. According to the submission of Jane (2023) who examined how primaries affect voter evaluation of candidate quality candidates selected through primaries are perceived to be less corrupt, less competent and less experienced. In United States of America, the shift is on candidacy. By implication, attention is focused on evaluating the quality of the candidate and less on the structure of political parties in presenting candidate for elective office.

This twist of political platform on candidacy is referred to as "Personalization of politics" and it has played prominent roles in influencing voting in the western politics (Barbaronelli, et al, 2006), but not in the third world countries. According to Brunnerorva (2018), evaluation of candidate rather than institution forms the basis of political participation. In fact, recent studies have pointed out the importance of candidates becoming more prominent and

more relevant than political parties in influencing voting behaviour ((Larger & Sagarzazu, 2018; Townsley & Milazzo, 2023).

Credible candidates can only emerge through the identification of attributes adjudged to be suitable in quality. This phenomenon of perceived quality of candidate refers to individual judgment about another person as possessing certain distinctive attributes that would likely make the individual suitable for certain tasks. In other words, perceived quality of candidate connotes the belief that a particular individual has some characteristics which are required and desirable in a given situation.

However, there are divergent views among scholars on what constitutes the desirable attributes. One notable study on "personalization of politics" reported that voters use candidates' personality trait as cues to determine how they will act in political situation and when making decisions (Filipe, et al, 2023). Some argued that implicit-competence association serves as good predictors of explicit evaluation of candidate (Vitriol, et al, 2018). Yet, Ksiazklewics et al (2012) asserted that implicit-warmth association does not predict explicit evaluation of candidate. Ferreira de Silva &

Costa (2014) in their study examined how the evaluation of candidates' traits influence turnout in election and reported the importance of candidates' warmth in turnout. In the same vein, Holian, et al (2014) noted that traits perception weakened the influence of evaluation of presidential performance while empathy and leadership take prominence.

Aside from traits, the personal make-up of the individual can influence voter choice on the candidate. The gender, occupation and income of a political candidate are reported to affect the degree to which the candidate is perceived by voter to be understanding, approachable and competent (Carnes & Lupu, 2016; Kirkland & Cappock, 2017). It is even adduced that such background characteristics to traits are likely to influence the electoral popularity of candidate as perceived traits have effect on electoral support (Mondak & Huckfeldt, 2006; Franchino & Zucchini, 2015).

II. METHODOLOGY

This is a cross-sectional survey; a self-report questionnaire made up of 13-items administered to participants across strata and settings.

➤ *Study Participants*

Participants in the study were made up of two thousand three hundred and nine (2309) respondents drawn from the three senatorial districts of Lagos State using convenient sampling technique. Ages of the respondents ranged from 20-65, a mean age of 25.2 and standard deviation of 3.7. One of the inclusion criteria is that the respondents must be above 18 years of age; this is because 18 is the voting age in Nigeria. The sample was made up of 1085 males (47%) and females were 1224 (53%). On educational qualifications, 800 (34.6%) had Ordinary level certificate, 1010 (44%) National Diploma/National certificate of Education, 320 (14%) possessed HND/B.Sc while 179 (8%) had Higher degrees. For ethnicity, 1005 (47%) were Yoruba, 510 (22%) were Igbo while 722 (31%) were Hausa while 72 (3%) were from other ethnic group. 667 (28.8%) of the respondents were married, 1500 (65%) were single, 40 (1.7%) were separated, while 70 (3%) were divorced. In term of occupation, 230 (10%) worked in the organized private sector, 537 (25%) were in the informal sector (traders, artisans, apprentices, cottage business, etc), 610 (26%) were students while 480 (21%) worked in public sector. Christians were made up of 1120 (48%), 1150 (50%) were muslims while 39 (2%) belong to other religious group.

➤ *Measure*

The first step in the development of the scale was the generation of item through extensive search of relevant literature. This was complemented by interview where peoples' ideas about what constitute quality of candidate were sought. These processes yielded a pool of 13 items which were put into questionnaire form of "Yes or No" format and given to experts to rate the appropriateness of each item (Cronbach, 1971). This was followed by establishment of content validity. In this way, all the 13

items were retained as they all had 80% and above support from the experts. Thereafter, all the 13 items were put in a questionnaire using the Likert format with response options ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The items were positively worded and the scoring and interpretation dimension indicates that the higher the score, the higher the perception of quality of candidates.

➤ *Procedure*

The study was in two phases. The first phase involved generation of items through review of the literature and interview of individuals. Using simple random sampling method, interviewees made up of the general population including students, civil servants, artisans, teachers, health workers were used for the study. Those who consented were interviewed with assurance of confidentiality of the information provided. Item generation was followed by establishing content validity by experts (practicing Psychologists and Political scientists) who were informed about the objective of the study and to rate the appropriateness of each item. They were equally encouraged to edit the items and make suggestion where necessary. All the items with 80% of congruence among the experts were picked and were then converted into questionnaire of five options from strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree were taken into the field for the main study. In the second phase, the content-validated items were taken to the field and administered to the two thousand three hundred and nine (2309) participants in the general population covering various strata and status. Convenience and snowballing sampling techniques were adopted in home, shops, religion centers, offices, workshop and schools where the people were mostly found. Informed consent and confidentiality were strictly adhered to all the participants.

III. RESULTS

At the stage of content validity, all the 13 items given out to the nine experts were retained, using 80% support of the expert for each item (Okurame, 2002). In other words, items that 8 out of 10 experts adjudged as appropriate were included. In order to establish the reliability of the scale, item analysis of the responses of participants to the 13-items scale was carried out using the IBM (SPSS) Statistics. Result of the items analysis showed Cronbach' alpha reliability coefficient of .86 and standardized alpha of .88 with McDonald Omega's reliability of .88. It also showed split-half reliability coefficient of .77 with correlation between forms of .69. The Kaiser Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .88 and Bartlett's test of data suitability was ($\chi^2(78) = 13,618, p < .001$ respectively).

Factor analysis using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax & Kaiser Rotation Method of the scale showed communalities of variable's variability ranging between .489 and .631 while the eigenvalues ranged from 5.76 – 1.15 with cumulative percentage variance of 66.56 (see appendix 1). Items 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 loaded on factor 1 which is labeled Compassion. Item 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 loaded on factor 2 which is labeled Respect while items 11 and 12 loaded on factor 3 (Experience). The scoring

dimension of the scale shows that the higher the score of an individual on the scale, the higher the perception of quality of candidate (*See appendix 3*).

IV. DISCUSSION

This study is aimed at developing and validating a generic measure of perceived quality of candidate with a psychometric basis for the Nigerian population in order to fill the present gap. One, contestants to elective offices has various and different qualities upon which the general population can attempt to assess them. The concern here is the possibility of determining which individual possesses the required qualities that are likely to impact positively on people's well-being. This is the individual differences as it relates to perceiving and interpretation of the quality of candidate. Two, existing measures on perceived quality of candidate were developed in the western democracies and do not possess Nigeria value, taste and preference and thereby making its use inadequate. Thirdly, electing candidates into political offices were previously done through the platform of political parties, but the emergence of independent candidacy as additional avenue has changed the narratives. Therefore, integrating the platform of independent candidacy requires the availability of a measure through which the general population can evaluate the attributes of the candidate in the course of making voting decision. These shortcomings of individual differences, validity deficiency as well as the absence of measuring instrument in Nigeria motivated this study; to develop and validate a generic and culturally relevant psychometric enabled scale that will measure the qualities of candidate for elective offices.

Statistical analysis in this study revealed that perceived quality of candidate scale is a valid measure of perceived quality of candidate in a general population. Validity was established through the use of content approached mechanism involving experts who were required to rate the appropriateness of each item on the scale (Nunnally, 1978; Cronbach, 1971). All the items included in the scale had at least 80% agreement of the expert which is in line with the assertion of Yu (2005) that content validity is established by content experts and evidence is obtained by seeking for agreement in judgments. In an attempt to differentiate face validity from content validity, the author noted that it takes just one expert to establish it while content validity involves a panel of experts. In this connection, the present scale becomes obvious as a good and valid measure of quality of candidate.

In terms of the scale reliability which is the consistency of measures, analysis shows that the 13 items yielded Alpha coefficient of 0.86 and a Standardized Item Alpha of 0.88 with McDonald Omega's test of .88 which confirms the appropriateness of the exploratory factor analysis. Guttman split-half coefficient was 0.76 and correlation between forms stood at 0.69. Equal-length Spearman-Brown coefficient was .77 and Alpha for part 1 and 2 were .96 and .69 respectively. These psychometric properties clearly revealed that this scale is a very reliable

measure of quality of candidate. This is in line with the position of American Foundational Research Association (1985) that a reliable measure should demonstrate form equivalence and internal consistency. Hence, this scale is not prone to random fluctuation; rather it will yield invariable responses across time and situations. The statistical analysis of the items showed KMO measure of .83 and Bartlett's test of ($\chi^2(78) = 13,618, p < .001$) respectively which invariably confirmed the adequacy of the sampling and the suitability of the data for factor analysis.

From the analysis, three factors emerged covering a range of human attributes, values, orientations and expectations. This is a clear confirmation of the findings of Miller & Shanks (1995) that voter evaluates the personal characteristics of candidate by way of forming image of the personal qualities and abilities of the candidate and such perception exerts considerable influence on their choice of vote. Interestingly, the study of Valgardsson et al (2024) reported that the attributes of competence, integrity and authenticity are what make people perceived politicians to be trustworthy. Similarly, Michael (2023) reported that perceived quality of candidates covers three domains (accountability, trust and authenticity) which are inherent in political office holder as they have obligation to their supporters and the public service that they lead. Although, no deliberate effort was made in this study to analyse along the pattern of the positions of previous studies, this finding revealed that perceived quality of candidate is a global phenomenon that is having three components, though, these differences are in the area of factor labeling which can be linked to culture, orientation and values as highlighted in the objective of the study.

The factor loadings indicate that compassion (factor 1) had the highest loading thereby accounting for the largest percentage variance. This suggests that individual with compassion has the inherent tendency of understanding the plight of people and taking action to reverse it. This supports the views of previous studies which posit compassion as benevolent emotional response towards other individual with pathetic conditions and the desires to alleviate such sufferings (Singer & Klimecki, 2014; Sinclair et al, 2017c; Gilbert, 2019). Compassion connotes recognizing the feelings, plight of others and taking action to alleviate it. The use of this concept in factor 1 and its application as attributes for measuring quality of candidates presupposed its benefits to self and others. It is reported to promote better mental and physical well-being in adults and younger adult respectively (Ellen, et al 2021).

Closely following compassion on factor loading is Respect, which shows that good interpersonal relationship between leaders and followers is important in the perception of quality of candidate. Again, one can find collaboration for this in the work of Rudolph, et al (2020) that respect is a contingent behaviour influenced by personal-context interaction.

Factor 3 is labeled experience which has to do with the knowledge people acquired in the course of interaction with

various aspects of life. Such experience enables individual to gain insight into present situation and be able to make better decisions. People that have more experience are more likely to make better decision to be able to meet the aspirations of the people. This holistic approach tends to influence how people adjudge quality of candidate and find support in the work of Ehren & Rashad (2014) that experience about interaction towards life leads to the acquisition of experience that enable people to make informed decision.

The present study has shown that this scale is a valid measure of perceived quality of candidate as a psychological construct. This can be useful in social setting to identify the candidate with required quality that can effectively assume leadership position, especially political offices that required people choosing their preferred candidate-voting. More importantly, this study has shown that a culturally relevant generic quality of candidate measure is possible which has been developed and validated for the Nigerian population, putting into consideration local contents and values.

Meanwhile, it is suggested that this study should be seen as a first time effort that can be improved upon. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation with divergent cultural orientations and values and as such efforts should be made towards standardizing this measure to enable inter-ethnic comparison and enhance generalizability.

REFERENCES

- [1]. American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association and National Council on Measurement in Education. (1985). Standard for Educational and Psychological Testing. Washington, D.C: Authors.
- [2]. Barbaranelli, C., Capara, G., Vecchione, M., & Frole, C. (2006). Voter personality traits in Presidential elections. *Personal Individual Differences*, 42, 1199-1208.
- [3]. Brunnerova, O. (2019). It's getting personal: Personalization of political campaigns in four Prague districts during the 2018 Czech senate elections. *Polit Central Europe*, 15, 279-308
- [4]. Carnes, N., & Lupu, N. (2016). Do voters dislike working class and working-class candidates? Voters biases and the descriptive under representation of the working class? *American Political Science Review*. 110(4), 833-844.
- [5]. Cronbach, L. (1971). Test validation. In R.L. Thorndike (Ed). *Educational Measurement* (2Eds). Washington, D.C: American Council on Education
- [6]. Ehren, L., & Rashad, Y. (2014). Education or Experience. The potentiality in yielding the best productivity at the working environment. *British Journal of Economics, Management and Trade*, 4(9), 1434-1440.
- [7]. Ellen, E., Tushara, G., Marina, R., Tsung, C., Rebecca, D., Jinyuan, L., Yin, M., Martin, P., Michael, T., & Dilip, V. (2021). Compassion towards other and self-compassion predicts medical and physical wellbeing: A 5-year longitudinal study of 1090 community dwelling adult across the life span. *Transl Psychiatry*, 11-397.
- [8]. Filipe, F., Barbara, S., Daniella, S., Periera, M., Renato, A., Pedro, M., Anna, O., Carlos, J., & Patricia, T. (2023). We vote for the person, not the policies: A systematic review of how personality traits influence voting behavior. *Discovery Psychology*, 3(1), 1
- [9]. Franchino, F., & Zucchini, F. (2015). Voting in a multi-dimensional space: A conjoint Analysis Employing Valence and Ideology Attributes of Candidates. *Political Science Research and Methods* 3(2), 221-241.
- [10]. Gerber, A. S., Huber, G. A., Doherty, D., Dowling, C. M., Rasa, C., & Ha, S. E. (2011). Personality traits and participation in political processes. *Journal of Politics*, 73, 692-706.
- [11]. Gilbert, P. (2019). Exploration into the nature and function of compassion. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 28, 108-114.
- [12]. Holian, D. B., & Prysby, C. L. (2012). Candidate character traits in the 2012 Presidential election. *Presidential Studies Questionnaire*, 44, 285-505.
- [13]. Jane, S. (2023). The effect of primaries on voters' evaluation of candidates' quality experimental evidence Party Politics. Doi:10.117/135406882311184627.
- [14]. Kirkland, P. A., & Coppock, A. (2017). Candidate choice without party labels: New insights for conjoined survey experiments. *Political behavior*.
- [15]. Larger, A., I & Sagarzazu, I. (2018). Bring back the party: Personalization, the media and coalition politics. *West European Politics*, 41, 472-495.
- [16]. Miller, W., & Shanks, M. (1996). *The new American Voter*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University.
- [17]. Michael, G. (2023). *Political Leadership: Discovering authenticity*. The Emerald Handbook of Authentic Leadership: UK.
- [18]. Mondak, J. J., & Huckfeldt, R. (2006). The accessibility and utility of candidate character in electoral experiment. *Journal of Experimental Political Science*, 2(2), 109-138.
- [19]. Nunnally, J. (1978). *Psychometric theory*. (2eds). New York: The McGraw-Hill.
- [20]. Okurame, D. (2002). Influence of Psychological factors and the mediatory role of informal mentoring on career outcomes of first -line managers. (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis), University of Ibadan, Ibadan.
- [21]. Olapegba, P. (2009). Influence of psychosocial factors on perceived quality of life and aggressive tendencies and the mediating role of environmental adaptation among residents of Olusosun community in Lagos State. (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis), University of Ibadan: Ibadan
- [22]. Pedhazur, E.J. (1982). *Multiple Regression in Behavioural Research: Explanatory and Prediction*. (2nd Eds). New York: Holt, Reinhart & Winston.
- [23]. Singer, T., & Klimecki, O. (2014). Empathy and compassion. *Current Biology*, 24(18), 875-878.

- [23]. Sinclair, S., Russell, L., Hack, T., Kondejewski, J., & Sowotzky, R. (2017c). Measuring compassion in healthcare: A Comprehensive and critical review. *Patient Centre Outcom Research* 10, 389-405.
- [24]. Rudolph, C., Regina, R., Katz, L., & Hannes, Z. (2020). A systematic and critical review of research on respect to leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 32(1), 1-64.
- [25]. Townsley, J., Trumm, S., & Milazzo, C. (2022). The personal touch campaign personalization in Britain. *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*. 24, 702-722.
- [26]. Valgardsson, V., Jennings, W., & Clarke, N. (2024). The good politician: Competence, Integrity and Authenticity in seven democracies. *Political Studies*,
- [27]. Vitriol, J. A, Ksiazkiewicz, A., & Farhart, C. E. (2018). Implicit candidate traits in the 2016 US Presidential election: Replicating a dual-process model of candidate evaluation. *Election Studies*, 54, 261-268.

APPENDIX

Table 1 Reliability Test

Cronbach’s Apha	Part 1	Value	.965
	No of items		7*
Correlation between forms Spearman-Brown Coefficient	Part 2	Value	.695
	No of items		6*
Guttman Split half Coefficient	Total N of items		13
	Equal Length		.626
	Unequal Length		.770
			.771
			.769

E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E6, E7, E8, E9, E10, E11, E12, E13

Table 2 Factor Analysis

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cummulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cummulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cummulative %
1	5.764	44.335	44.335	5.764	44.335	44.335	3.475	26.733	44.335
2	1.737	13.364	57.699	1.737	13.364	57.699	3.092	23.781	57.699
3	1.152	8.864	66.563	1.152	9.864	66.583	2.086	16.048	66.583
4	.892	6.682	73.424						
5	.852	6.556	79.980						
6	.555	4.269	84.249						
7	.493	3.794	88.043						

Table 3 Component Matrix of PCA for 13 Items

Perceived Quality of Candidate Item			
	1	2	3
I prefer candidate who is passionate about others.	.894		
A good candidate is someone who listens to other people’s view.	.808		
I prefer candidate who is desirous to make changes to the life of others.	.769		
One quality a good candidate should have is the ability to influence others.	.618		
Voting for candidate with very good qualities is important to me.	.612		
I cherish a candidate who is versatile about the happenings in his locality.		.785	
I prefer candidate who does not compromise integrity.		.724	
To be humble is a quality that a candidate must possess.		.721	
A good candidate should be able to motivate others.		.564	
Good quality of a candidate is that he/she must be considerate in dealing with people.		.544	
To be able to lead others, a candidate should possess the attributes of empathy.		.522	
I admire candidate who has international outlook for governance			.890
A good candidate should possess a minimum educational qualification of University first degree.			.867
Eigen value	5.764	1.737	1.152
Percentage of variance	44.335	13.364	8.864
Cumulative percentage	44.335	57.699	66.563

Varimax-Rotated factor loading (component matrix) for 13 items.

Items loaded above .46

Table 4 Perceived Quality of Candidate Scale

S/N	STATEMENT	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Voting for candidate with very good qualities is important to me.					
2.	I prefer candidate who is passionate about others.					
3.	A good candidate is someone who listens to other people's view.					
4.	To be able to lead others, a candidate should possess the attributes of empathy.					
5	I prefer candidate who is desirous to make changes to the lives of others.					
6.	One quality a good candidate should have is the ability to influence others.					
7.	Good quality of a candidate is that he/she must be considerate in dealing with people.					
8.	I prefer a candidate who does not compromise integrity.					
9.	To be humble is a quality that a candidate must possess.					
10.	I cherish a candidate who is versatile about the happenings in his locality.					
11.	A good candidate should be able to motivate others.					
12.	A good candidate should possess a minimum educational qualification of University first degree					
13.	I admire candidate who has international outlook for governance.					