

Political Participation and Democratic Culture in Nigeria: A Case Study of Nigeria

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Abstract: One of the greatest challenges facing modern societies is participating actively in Nigeria politics. This is because of the nature of political socialization and orientation which was given to Nigeria by their colonial Lord or Masters during colonial era, which became part of their political culture and character formation. Also since the post colonial era, no effective maximum or devoted effort has been made to put a check or improve political culture of Nigerian society. This is because the political culture of a state to a large extent determines the level of political participation cum democratic culture of Nigerian state. Through political culture, political socialization and more importantly political participation and developmental culture is dependent in the existence of a modern state that can protect the right to its citizen and extract duties from them. Because of the colonial torture made by sub cultural values, allegiance and consciousness of a weekly associated grouping instead of national ideas that should sustain it as one indivisible political entity inherent in our political thinking and behaviors. The cause of our political culture was critically examined. The theoretical framework employed for this research were behavioral approach which focuses attention on the study of individual political behavior, primary and secondary sources of data which include personal behaviors, text books, newspaper and journals. It was found from this research that ethnic sentiment in our political process stood as Nigerian political culture and which hinders political development. As a result, ethnic consciousness should be shunned to enable us cast our vote to credible politicians that will foster political and socio-economic development in our nation.

Key words: Political participation • Democracy • Culture • Socialization and Orientation

INTRODUCTION

Political participation and democratic culture in Nigeria as a concept is one that ridden with grievances and fear of isolation hence the struggle for central power by different ethnic groups [1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6]. This struggle negatively affects electoral activities in the area of malpractice like Thuggery, rigging and other political electoral violence, which is replete in party politics in Nigeria. Democratic culture of any country to a large extent determines their political participation [7, 8, 9 and 8]. Thus the development culture is dependent in the existence of a modern state that can protect the right of its citizens and extract duties from them [9, 10, 11 and 12]. A culture of democracy must reflect the norms and values that place a premium on the freedom of individuals from state abuse and infringement of right by the law as well as providing opportunity for all citizens to have equal access to the material and cultural resources that guarantee their basic livelihood

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[13, 14, 15, 16 and 17]. The essence of democracy is that citizens must be able to show their views through unrestrained debates from the lower level and smallest units and that there should be active citizen participation in government and the governed [5].

Objectives of the Study: This study examined and measured the negative of party politics and its effect in political participation in Nigeria. This study will therefore focus attention on political participation as a concept of its importance, political culture and socialization as a key democratic culture.

Method of Data Collection: The collection of data used in writing this research were gathered from the information in library section of the department of political science, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, as well as political science department library of University of Nigeria Nsukka, newspapers, journals, articles and also frequent inquiries through the internet and lecture notes etc.

Method of Data Analysis: This research employed the descriptive method of data analysis. This method was built upon interference on social science research where generalization from abstraction is made on the subject of the study. The descriptive method of this research itself was built on the subject which dwelt largely on documentation of events rather than on statistical analysis of issues.

Hypothesis: On the basis of our framework of analysis, I propose the following hypothesis of this study.

- Political participation in Nigeria has not legally been effected positively by the democratic culture of society.
- The end of military rule has not necessarily led to the end of human rights violation in Nigeria.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Primary Sources: This information was obtained through fieldwork and interviews through the use of questionnaires that were randomly sampled, but conducted within the scope of the study. The sample size of the study was one hundred (100) respondents. The purpose of adopting an imperial design was to ensure reliability and availability of the study.

Secondary Sources: This information was sourced from the library section of the Department of Political Science, University of Nigeria Nsukka, (UNN). As well as Political Science Departmental Library of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Newspapers, Textbooks, Journals articles and also frequent inquiring through the internet and lecture notes.

The Meaning and Nature of Political Participation Concept: The term political participation is referred to as those political activities of citizens, either as individuals or group intended or designed to influence the political process [6]. It is the actual involvement of the citizenry to influence directly or indirectly the ways and method of governance or more specifically the output or outcomes of the political process, thus Ikelegbe sees political participation firstly as political activity [9]. The activity is directed as selecting rules influencing the decisions of government and the ways government governs, thirdly, characters of political participation is that, it is voluntary. Political participation refers to the voluntary activities by which members of a political community share in leadership selection and policy formation. Alakpi posits that political apathy, which refers to a state of withdrawal from or in different political action or activities [1].

According to Dr Mrs. Okafor political participation are activities of the citizens aimed at influencing the political processes, such participation could be either in an individual or group basis [15]. Milbrath and goal put it that political participation are those activities or actions by private individuals by which they seek to influence and support the government and politics. They went further to add that political participation observed in an individual can be seen as a

result of different reasons or influenced by different factors. Political participation could be refer to those voluntary activities by which members of a society have a share in the selection of rulers and directly or indirectly have a role in the formation of public policy.

These activities typically include voting, seeking information, discussing and propelling, attending meeting, contributing financially and communication with representative on the view, that active form of participation include formal enrolment in a party, canvassing and registering voters speed writing and working in campaigns and also competing for public and party offices. Political participation as an ingredient of every polity whether large or small whether the society is an oligarchy or democracy someone must make political decision and appoint, uphold and move leaders. In the ultimate analysis, political participation means a process of influencing the authoritative allocation of values for a society, which may not take place through governmental decision. Political participation can be analyzed from both the broader and narrower angles. In its broad conception we are interested in a variety of way in which citizens participate in relation to varied issued. In particular we do not limit our concern to citizen's participation in electoral process through voting and campaigns. It is because political participation does not take place only during election time, nor is participation at election time, the most effective way of major means of the citizen's control over government officials, they are rather blunt instrument of control. For an individual or for a particular group of citizens the most important political activities may be those in the period between, when citizen try to influence government decision in relation of specific problem that concern them. Political participation in modern democratic society like Nigeria should have well-established legal opportunities for political activities [9]. They include the right to vote in meaningful election. The right to associate with political parties and other politically relevant groups, the right to petition government and the general auxiliary right of freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of press. Participation when and if effectively have a particular crucial relation to all other social and political goals. It represents a process by which goals. Choosing priorities and deciding the process of the goal attainment. It not only communicates the need and desire of the citizen to the government; but also has other more direct benefits. Participation has also been viewed as an educational device through which civic virtues are learnt. Thus, Ikelegbe points that, where the scope and intensity of voluntary participation is high, inputs into the highly participatory citizenry could vote out such government because alienated and resort to non- conventional models of participation. Political participation is underscored by the values which most political system, regime and ideologies place on it. In any liberal democracy wide spread participation is a prized value.

Types of Political Participation: Ikelegbe argued that political participation is classified into election related and non-election related [9]. Election related political participation involved the electoral process or activities which provided enormous opportunities for political participation to great number of the citizenry, electoral participation involves registration voting campaign meeting, party meeting, party funding and contest for elective office. In this view electoral relation effectively been carried out. Non election related participatory activities include contacting political leaders, expressing politics, opinion and demands, community development activities. In a political society some individual involvement in political matters are autonomous while in others it could be induced. Politics in many developing nation like Nigeria is usually mobilized or induced. In other society, political participation is usually autonomous. Autonomous participation refers to those action or activities that are generated by the actors themselves, which aimed to influence governmental action and authoritative allocation of values. Induced or mobilized participation are those activities or actions that are initiated by a different person or group of persons than the actors, which are aimed at influencing decisions of government. Alternatively, induced or mobilized participation are those activities that are initiated outside the person or group of persons that would actually act in order to influence government decisions.

Determination of Political Participation:

- The psychological characteristics of individual
- The socio-economic characteristics of individual

The socio-economic characteristics of an individual assumption is that the better off economically and socially a man is the more likely he will possess the skills, opportunities and motivation necessary for an active movement in the political process in the society. It has been observed that participation tends to be higher among the best-educated members of the higher occupational and income groups, the middle aged, the dominant ethnic and religions group, men (as compared to women), urban dwellers and members of the voluntary association. Education offers high and reliable correlation with participation-party because it helps develop a sense of civic duty, political competence, interest and responsibility as well as personality traits of self confidence, articulateness and dominance. The educational institutions themselves serve as the setting in which the skills of participation are acquired.

Political participation is purely determined by education, because political participation is closely related but conceptually different. Some people who have very little schooling are never knowledgeable about politics. Having said that, the point being made is that educated people generally have politically relevant knowledge and skills, they are more conscious and interested in politics and have opinion on issue and public officials, more importantly, they have more confidence in their ability to participate or influence decision making. In many cases, poverty effect political participation. Among poor people in many countries, it creates a sort of apathy to politics. But if people are pre-occupied with meeting their basic needs, of shelter and clothing, it is difficult to expect them to organize effectively for political action. In the view of Davis, he asserted that, the person who must concentrate all his energy merely on staying alive is in no passively with politics, policy decision or their implementation [10].

Social and economic factors are fundamental to political participation, socio-economic variables account for differences in political activities formed in the following assumption that “the higher of a person’s social state, the more likely he will be an active participant. In political life, people in the upper class tend to be more interested and involved in public affairs than the middle and lower class individuals on the other hand, people in the lower class tend to be more apathetic to political activities. Though it does not mean that poor people are politically different and rich persons are politically active. To see why social status and politics are related in the foregoing manner, let us consider the components of a person social class. Conventional class position is determined by factors such as income, education, occupation and place of residence among others. Each of these factors effects a person’s political participation. For instance, the higher a person’s income, the more likely he will be interested and involve in politics. Having money, for instance, usually gives a person free time, bags of information in the form of magazines and newspapers, broader ones experience through participation in organization and club accords status and runoff offices. Raynolds supplied the requisites for an active political life and why lower class people participate less than upper class. Social status of people determines the process in which political participation took place, thus their states facilities social and political interaction.

Psychological Factor: Character of individual’s participation survives by virtue of its capacity to provide for those who are engaged in it. Political observers have variously attributed man’s political activities to his need to power competition, achievements, affiliation, aggression, money, prestige, status, recognitions, approval, manipulation sympathy and responsibility. In addition to active versus passive distinction, participation may be classified in terms of its goals i.e, instrumental political activities are primarily oriented towards concrete goals such as party victory, enhancement of one’s own state, influence or income on the other hand consummator rather than an instrumental act for those who are careless about the outcome of election. Milbrath agreed that personality tracts, which particularly influenced by social learning (such as positively associated with political participation). It is possible to distinguish participant from non-participants by such cognitive variable as belief in an individual’s own adequately and in the amenability of the social order to change. Thus the psychological variables accounted for political participation by individual in the society in psychological characteristics determined the level of participation.

Level of Political Participations in Nigeria: In Nigeria because of the nature of political system, only a few proportions gave attention to or display interest while majority are indifferent none opining and not interested. Most of them may participate only in election, lapsing into activity in believing in election mostly because of non-proper education of the

people politically and also lack of critical information on political issues not reached to the people and therefore little or no interest in many issues, only few proportion gives attention to or display interest while larger majority are apathy to political participation.

Thus, majority of the citizenry are not effectively represented in terms of the contribution of their aspirations, demands, preference and orientations. For instance, one would believe that if people start writing on newspapers and commenting on radio asking their representatives like governors, senators members of house and others what they are doing to and how are they representing them. It is importance to rate that there will be a change and the response to the people demand will be higher.

Consequently, government may not be responsive to the preferences of the majority of the citizenry, particularly the poor disadvantaged lower social status and young women etc. Although, public may tend to unduly favour the rich and the middle class.

Political Culture, Socialization and Political Participation as a Major Attribute to Effective Democratic Culture in Nigeria: The state comprises of the government, territory and citizenry are the most important component and it contributes the state social context. The citizen's behavior determines to a large extent the nature of the state, its survival the nature of government and the political, economic and social process in the state. The citizenry makes inputs, objections, preferences, change, information, reaction to information, values, judgment and compliances e.t.c. These inputs dispose the outputs of government. The nature of the citizen's inputs, responds and reaction is determined by the political culture, the effectiveness of political socialization agent and political participation. The political culture determines the political behavior, patterns, standard and values that the citizenry in the political process and the nature of the citizens political activities and responses. Participation is again conditional by political culture and socialization.

Political Culture: Political culture refers to attitude, beliefs, values and affections that are consciously held or implicit in a society in relation to its political process. Political culture refers to a people's dominant orientation towards politics. The orientation refers to the attitude beliefs and values held in relation to seats, structures, the political authority, major politics and issues. The way the citizens related to the state in terms of level of participation, political activities and efficiency or lyricism, level of trust or mistrust of leadership, level of compliance loyalty allegiance, patriotism etc are all elements of and are governed by the political culture. In other words, political culture determines the political culture ethos of what is acceptable, prohibited and sanctioned in a nation's political process.

Component of Political Culture: This comprises the knowledge understanding and awareness of a state development institutions, role and characteristics of individuals.

Affective Element: This is another element of political culture, it relates to feeling or orientation of people towards political system. This particularly relates to the affection, attachment, trust, administration of the state.

The Evaluative Element: This refers to the people's opinion and judgment of the political system. It also depends on standard, knowledge and orientation of the citizenry.

Types of Political Culture: Two scholars known as Almond G and Varba in their studies 1950-60 and 1980 identified three types of political culture, subject political culture and participant political culture. This classification of political culture is based on whether numbers of the society play active role in the political process or whether they play passive role [2].

Parochial political culture is characterized by disorientation from the central government and non contribution and participation of people in the political process and also unawareness of the effect of government of little or nothing they make no or little demands, contributes nothing and they are non participative.

Subject Political Culture: This is characterized by subjecting the citizenry to the government rather than participant in other words they are aware of government but do not contribute or participate because such has no consequences in terms of influence on the political process.

The Participant Political Culture: It is characterized by a citizenry that participate in political process. In other words they are politically active and efficacious.

Civil Political Culture: It is the combination of subject, parochial and participant political culture. It is a common knowledge that the political culture of a state emanates from several development such as the history and experiences relating to it. The nature of a nation's political culture can be determined by the degree to which the citizens are heterogeneous and homogenous. Fanaticism could accentuate parochialism and primordial values in a political system. However, new political culture could be fostered on existing culture as a result of some radical and ideological changes.

Political Socialization: This refers to the process by which the citizens acquire political orientation about the state. It is determined by the social-economical and cultural environment of the society in which the citizens lives and by their interaction of the experience and personality of the individual. Political socialization "is the process by which political culture are maintained and changed" through the performance of this functions, individuals are inducted into political culture and their orientation towards political objects one formed. In a broad sense it refers to the way the society transmit its political culture from a generation to generation. It is a lifelong process. The content of political socialization maybe transmitted deliberately or non-deliberately, directly or indirectly [9]. In order words socialization maybe through indoctrination teaching, propaganda, political communication and other deliberate effort of the state through the school, the mass media and political activities.

Political socialization also takes place through the non-formal, non-conscious, largely imperceptible and cumulative efforts of the family, peer groups, schools and work environment, community and related channels and also the political socialization process is direct when it is directly taught and learned through school, political communication and political activities.

In conclusion, political socialization is acquired through the agencies of the family, peer groups, the school and the mass media. The family plays the primary role in childhood socialization. It directly transmits values, attitudes, perception and belief to children, which are transform into political orientation. The school provides experience to authority and participative skill, which in turn makes individual political self.

Furthermore, school education increase political awareness, interest and communication, which could determine the basis of effective and evaluation orientation to the state. Other agencies of socialization are groups, political parties and govern mental agencies.

Party Politics as a Syndrome in Nigeria Democratic Culture: Party politics is simply concerned with the actualization of the aims and objectives of the parties through context and this context is election. Politics in Nigeria as a result is one that ridden with grievance and fear of isolation hence the struggle negatively affect electoral activities in the areas of malpractice like thuggery, rigging and violence, which is replete in party politics in Nigeria.

In an attempt to fully understand the party politics in Nigeria, it will be pertinent to stress that any work, write up or book that analyses, explain or attempt to excruciate on party politics in Nigeria will never be completed without a trip down to memory lane, back to the beginning is the birth of Nigeria. Before the coming of the Europeans and the British colonial rule, there existed no geographical area called Nigeria.

Historical Background of Political Participation and Democratic Culture in Nigeria: Political participation can be described in simple term as the involvement of citizen of a country into politics of their country or society. Political participation can be referred also as the getting involved or taking part in activities that has to do with politics or that

discuss the happening of the government. This means that, it is an action which citizen should involve in as it concerns their society. It has to be voluntary because it is only by participating that the government can understand the mind of the citizen and the citizen can express their will and choose who should govern as masses cannot govern, then there has to be chosen of persons or person to oversee the affairs of the citizens. How then do they express their will? The medium of expression is election, how do they carry out this action? It is by voting during election.

The 1959 federal election in Nigeria was the first nationwide general election held in Nigeria. It was conducted under a unified electoral system. Universal adult suffrage in the east west and Lagos universal adult suffrage was open to both male and female adults the north gave franchise only to male to all British subjects or British protected person of 21 years of age /who were ordinarily resident in Nigeria. At independence in 1960 the independent constitution of 1960 affected a unified electoral law for all the unit of federation. The 1960 constitution also established an electoral commission that was charged with the function of registering the names of qualified voters, the conducting of elections and counting of ballot papers after elections.

CONCLUSION

Democratic culture of any country determines their political participation. Thus the development of culture is dependent on the existence of a modern state that can protect the right of its citizen. A culture of democracy must reflect on norms and values that place a premium on the freedom of individuals.

Recommendation: There is a general agreement among Nigerians interviewed that democracy must yield dividend in order to reinforce civil society. According to a pro-democracy activities and author “democratic culture cannot thrive on empty stomach”. Democratic culture will only thrive if there is continued political education at all level of society. However the political elites need to show through concrete action and embarked in people oriented policies to enhance the development of its citizenry. These institution needs to undergo self transformation, in terms of the definition of their role, to put in place capacity building processes to enhance the democratic project. Some of the institution and policy initiative are education, media arts, civil society, political parties, religions, institution, traditional institution, human right commission, gender equality and anti corruption.

It was gathered that ethnic sentiment in our political process stood as Nigerian political culture and which hinders political development. As a result, this study recommended that ethnic consciousness should be shunned to enable us cast our vote to credible politicians that will foster political and socio-economic development in our nation.

The study rather recommended power sharing formula to enable other ethnic groups have a sense of belonging. They should be able to see themselves as one Nigeria to achieve the desired political culture in Nigeria.

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