



Political Participation and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria; an Exploration of Fourth Republic

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Abstract

Political Participation And Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria with a particular emphasis on Nigeria's fourth republic. The availability of participation opportunities and the concomitant enabling process and institutional pre-requisites, allied with positive political orientations to the political system, make it possible for citizens to choose their leaders at elections and also influence the public policy process, and ultimately, the longevity of the democratic system of government. The theoretical framework used was structural functionalism and research design used in the study was expos facto design and content analysis was used to evaluate the topic under discussion in line with each objectives. The study recommends among other things that, strong political mobilization can help in debasing rigging and other electoral vices in the system.

Keywords: *Political Parties, Democracy, Democratic Consolidation, Fourth-Republic, Nigeria.*

Introduction

Democracy is a bargain between the government and the governed. This bargain is made up of two parts – the government's legitimacy that is, claim of obedience to its laws as well as doing

what the citizens want it to do. The second part is the arrangement that regulates this bargain of legitimacy in the competitive political election. The essence of the bargain is to ensure

participation in policy making. This participation is the fundamental meaning of democracy. Democracy and political participation are two concepts that are interwoven; none can exist in the absence of the other. The process of establishing a democratic system requires the full participation of the people. This participation may be direct or indirect and must be by the citizens. Participation refers to the different ways in which the public express opinions and ideally exert influence on political, economic, management and other social decisions. For a well-informed participation to occur, a radical transparency though not sufficient, is necessary. It is argued that people most affected by a decision should have the most say while those less affected should have less say. Participation has its objectives from the administrative perspective, to motivate the people and public support building activities. For the citizens, it facilitates useful information exchange regarding local conditions. It enables individuals and groups to influence agency decision in a representative manner etc. Political participation is that activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action.

Anchoring on platforms offered by political parties, citizens make demands on the state, support specific policy positions, and participate in public policy making and implementation. Political parties therefore provide the vital linkage between citizens and the state, governors and the governed, and elites and the masses (Lawson 1980). The nature, behavior and performance of political parties and the nature of party relations with other parties, groups, and even the state have consequences for the nature of governance, integration, stability and security (Ikelegbe, 2013:7).

Statement of Problem

Political parties are traditionally the most significant intermediary organization in democratic societies. Students of political science have commonly associated them with democracy itself (Orji, 2013:1). Political parties, as “makers” of democracy, have been so romanticized that scholars claim that neither democracy nor democratic societies are thinkable without them (Omotola 2009). In other words, the existence of vibrant political parties is a sine qua non for democratic consolidation in any polity (Dode, 2010). It is patently ironic that political parties largely pursue (and profess) democracy outside the gates and resist it within the gates (Ibeanu, 2013:1). Competitive party and electoral politics is expected to deepen and consolidate the democratic transition, which the country embarked upon in May 1999 (Jinadu, 2013:2). Well- functioning political parties are essential

for the success of electoral democracy and overall political development of Nigeria (Adetula and Adeyi, 2013:3).

Objective of the study

1. To find out the extent to which Political Participation has enhance political process in Nigeria.
2. To evaluate political mobilization as a major attribute to effective democratic culture in Nigeria.
3. To examine the role of civil societies and democratic governance in Nigeria

Research questions

1. Does Political Participation enhance political processes in Nigeria?
2. Does political mobilization enhance effective democratic culture in Nigeria?
3. Did civil societies engender democratic governance in Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses:

1. Political Participation has enhanced political processes in Nigeria.
2. Political mobilization has enhanced effective democratic culture in Nigeria.
3. Civil society has not engendered democratic governance in Nigeria.

Scope of the study

The paper is actually prepared to analyze critically and profound a solution to the problem of democracy and political participation in Nigeria between 1999 and 2010.

Literature Review

Concept of Democracy

The term democracy is derived from two Greek words: demos which mean people and kratos which means rule. Literarily, democracy means ‘rule by the people’ Appadorai (2004) described democracy as a system of government under which the people exercise the governing power either directly or through representatives periodically elected by them. In the ancient states, direct democracy was possible because all adult members of the community could easily take part in decision making. Population growth and expansion in political boundaries have made direct

democracy impracticable in the modern political system. This is the reason why representative democracy has replaced direct democracy in different parts of the world. Representative democracy is an indirect democracy where sovereignty is held by the people's representatives. Watter Lanqueur cited in Idowu (1998) pointed out that although the conditions of modern state make direct participation of all the people in government of the state impossible, the concept of democracy still emphasizes the rule of the people. That is, the sovereign power is indirectly exercised by the people through a system of representation. Consequently, political participation, particularly in the electoral process, is a fundamental requirement of representative democracy. This is the reason why Appadorai (2004) argued that where, on account of an atmosphere of fear and coercion, people do not feel free to discuss or vote, democracy cannot be said to exist, even though the other political rights are enjoyed by the people.

Political Participation in Nigeria

Analysis Political participation involves an active interaction between citizens and government. It is a two – way process. One party initiates and the other responds. The importance of elections cannot be doubted. At the very least, they provide the public with its clearest formal opportunity to influence the political process and also help directly or indirectly to determine who will hold government power. There was an increase in the level of participation in 2003 compared to 1999. The level of participation increased by ten (10%). Factor that could be responsible for this was the fact that Nigerians electorates doubted the sincerity of the military to relinquish power in 1999. So when they noticed that the Nigerian state had really democratized, then the level of participation increased in 2003. In 2007, there was decrease in the level of electoral participation, the level of electoral participation dropped by twelve percent (12%) in 2007. The main factor responsible for this was imposition of candidates and election rigging that was the order of the day in 2003 elections and the do or die affair syndrome injected into the polity in 2007 elections by the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP). In 2011 it further slipped down by 5.1% as a result of the fact that electorates had lost confidence in the electoral process because they thought the trend would continue. Apart from presidential elections, the level of citizen's participation in elections in Nigeria since 1999 has been on a steady decline. In 1999, 57,938,945 voters were registered those who actually voted in presidential elections were 30,280,052, representing almost sixty – percent (60%) of those on the roll. In 2003, 60.82 million were on the voters register and 42,018,735 voters cast their vote during elections. Thus about 70% of

those on the roll actually participated in the presidential poll. In 2007, 61 million, voters were registered while 35.41 million voted. In percentage terms, 58% of those who registered turned out for voting during the presidential elections. While in 2011, 73,528,040 voters were registered the presidential election results should that the average turn out of voters was put at 52.9%. (INEC: Election Review 2011).

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.

Political parties and political mobilization in Nigeria:

A major feature of the Fourth Republic is the proliferation of political parties, that primarily do not seek to contest elections, but which are in more ways limited and self-serving in roles and interests. Though the number of political parties was 30 in 2002, 33 in early 2006 and 50 in 2007, only 16 fielded candidates in the 2003 General Elections while only 26 contested the 2007 General Elections. Even the parties that contested the elections were merely “temporal machines for electoral contests” (TMG, 2003:18).

Thus the major parties, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Alliance for Democracy (AD), Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), and All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) have been plagued by deep internal crises, disorder, recurring tensions and turmoil manifested in factional fighting, expulsions and counter-expulsions, multiple executives and dual offices. There is a high level of money politics, political vagrancy, indiscipline and in-cohesion (Omotola 2009:612). Some months into the Fourth republic, with Obasanjo as President, politicians began to clamour for the registration of more parties. The federal government initially refused to register more political parties, a development that forced the unregistered associations to seek redress in court (Simbine, 2013:4).

Theoretical framework:

This work is to be anchored on the synthesis of structural-functionalism. This theory was developed by Gabriel Almond and James S. Coleman. Almond and his group contend that all political systems, regardless of their type, must perform a specific set of tasks if they are to remain in existence as a system in working order or in equilibrium. That is, as an ongoing system, these functions are: rule-making, rule application, interest articulation, interest aggregation, political communication, political socialization, and political recruitment. The emphasis of this approach was on structures of political system (this refers to those arrangements within the system which perform the function) and how best they performed certain functions.

While the functions are the observed consequences which make for the adaptation or readjustment of a given system, functions deal ultimately with objective consequences, but they may be perceived as objective processes or results from various point view and for various purposes.

Area of the study

Nigeria is a Federal Republic comprising of thirty- Six states and a Federal Capital Territory, Abuja with an estimated population figure of over 200 million people (World meter, 2022). The country is located in the West of Africa and shares land borders with four countries including the Republic of Benin in the west, Chad and Cameroon in the east, and Niger in the north. Its coast in the south lies on the Gulf of Guinea on the Atlantic Ocean. Nigeria has three major ethnic groups called Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. In terms of religion the country has two dominant religions – Islam and Christianity.

Design of the study

The research design implored for this study is Descriptive survey design. The survey covered political participation and democratic consolidation in Nigeria's fourth republic.

Population of the study

The study population comprise of both male and female members of the community. A total of 170 respondents were interviewed, a simple random sampling method was used to select target respondents from the population.

Sample size and Sample technique

The sample size was drawn from the total population of 309,633. A sample size of 170 (one hundred and seventy) was drawn, 120 were males and 50 were females within the age bracket of 18 years and above.

Instrument for data collection

The instrument used for the data collection was questionnaire.

Method of Data Collection and Distribution

Data used in this paper comprise both primary and secondary data, observation and interview.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sampling procedure the researcher uses here is the non-probability sampling procedure.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Question 1: **Do you think political participation enhances political process in Nigeria?**

Table 1: Respondents opinion on political participation enhances political process in Nigeria.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agree	11	6.8
Disagree	3	2.0
Strongly Agree	143	86.5
Strongly Disagree	0	0

No idea/Do not Know	8	4.7
Total	165	100.00

Source: field survey, 2022

From the table 1 above, it was asked if political participation enhances political process in Nigeria. Out of the 165 respondents 11 or 6.8% agreed to the statement made, 3 or 2% of them disagree on that, 143 or 86.5% strongly agree to the statement, none disagreed to that statement while 8 or 4.7% says they had no idea on what the issue was all about. From the analysis we found out that majority of them strongly agree that political participation enhances political process in Nigeria.

Question 2: Does participation promote democratic consolidation in Nigeria?

Table 2: Respondents opinion on whether participation promote democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	159	96.6
No	1	0.7
Do not know	5	2.7
Total	165	100

Source: field survey, 2022

In the table above following the response gathered 159 or 96.6% of the respondents show that participation promote democratic consolidation in Nigeria by indicating ‘yes’ to the question, only 1 or 0.7% says ‘no’ to the question while 5 or 2.7% indicated having no idea of what is happening. This shows that participation promote democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Question 3: Is it true that participation increases as consolidations became enhanced?

Table 3: Respondents opinion on whether participation increases as consolidations became enhanced.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agree	81	49.3
Disagree	20	12.2
Strongly Agree	53	31.8
Strongly Disagree	0	0

Do not know	11	6.7
Total	165	100.0

Source: field survey, 2022

Table 3 above indicates that 81 or 49.3% agree that participation increases as consolidations became enhanced, 20 or 12.2% disagree, 53 or 31.8% strongly agree, 11 or 6.7% says they do not know about the issue while non of them strongly disagree on that.

Question 4: Which of these promote political participation and consolidations?

Table 4: Opinion of the respondents on the social vices caused by unemployment.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Campaign	0	0
Rally	0	0
Posters	0	0
Billboards	0	0
All of the above	165	100
Total	165	100

Source: field survey, 2022

All the respondents in table 13 indicated that crime, prostitution, kidnapping and frustration are majorly caused by unemployment by indicating 165 responses or 100%.

Question 5: How many times do your representatives visit their constituencies since 2015?

Table 5: Responses on how many times do your representatives visit their constituencies since 2019?.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
None	163	98.7
1 -3	2	1.3
4 -7	0	0
8 -10	0	0
Total	165	100.0

Source: field survey, 2022

Table 5 from the questionnaire to the respondents indicated that 163 or 98.7% of them show that elected representatives have not been visiting their constituencies since after the 2015 election, 2 or 1.3% respondents show that 1 to 3 times they normally visits while none of the respondents show any knowledge about elected representatives visits to their constituencies.

Question 6: Do you think democratic consolidation are achievable through participation by electorate?

Table 6: Opinion on democratic consolidation are achievable through participation by electorate?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Achievable	23	14.2
Not achievable	104	62.8
Unpredictable	38	23.0
Total	165	100.0

Source: field survey, 2022

Table 6 shows 23 or 14.2% out of the 165 respondents agreed that democratic consolidation are achievable through participation by electorate, 104 or 62.8% of them showed negative attitude towards the question by indicating that it is not achievable while the remaining 38 or 23% says that it is unpredictable following the trend.

Question 7: Have the electorate been active in democratic process and consolidations?

Table 7: Responses on whether the electorate been active in democratic process and consolidations.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	9	5.4
No	128	77.7
Don't know	28	16.9
Total	165	100.0

Source: field survey, 2022

In the above table, 9 or 5.4% of the respondents show that the electorate been active in democratic process and consolidations,128 or 77.7% say that it is not possible

by indicating “no” to the question while 28 or 16.9% of them show no idea of the issue at stake. This shows the potentiality for democratic process and consolidations.

Question 8: Does democracy and political participation has any merit/advantage on the lives of the electorate in the country?

Table 8: Opinion on democracy and political participation has any merit/advantage on the lives of the electorate in the country.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	0	0
No	156	94.6
Undecided	9	5.4
Total	156	100.0

Source: field survey, 2022

From table 8 analysis has shown that out of 165 respondents 156 or 94.6% indicated the option ‘NO’ showing that democracy has little if any merit/advantage on the lives of individuals or the state at large, non showed any affirmation while 9 or 5.4% of the respondents have no decision to make concerning the advantage of democracy to their lives.

Question 9: Which class/category of people does democracy benefit most in the society?

Table 9: Opinion on the class/category of people does democracy benefit most in the society.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Politicians	96	58.1
Youths	12	7.4
Civil servants	57	34.5
Total	165	100.0

Source: field survey, 2022

From observation, table 9 above shows that 96 or 58.1% of the respondents affirms that politicians benefit most in the society, 12 or 7.4% of them says that it is the youths where as 57 or 34.5% sided the category of civil servant as the beneficiary.

Question 10: What Is the Major Cause of poor democratic participations and consolidations?

Table 10: Opinions on the Major Cause of poor democratic participations and consolidations.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Illiteracy	7	4
Overpopulation	10	6
Apathy	2	1.4
Corruption	5	3
Political leaning	1	0.6
All of the above	140	85
Total	165	100.0

Source: field survey, 2022

From the table above and the opinion of the respondents 7 or 4% of the respondents are of the opinion that illiteracy is the major cause of poor participations, 10 persons or 6% say that it is caused by overpopulation, 2 or 1.4% say affirm that poor participation is due to apathy, 1 or 0.6% supported the issue of political leaning of individuals while 140 of the respondents or 85% concluded that it is caused by the above mentioned variables.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, representative democracy is all about the emergence of political leaders through election and the relevance of political participation is that it is viewed as a source of interaction with the government as it serves as a platform for citizens to perform their civic duties or political obligations. Citizens who exercise their rights for instance by voting in elections are likely to be more satisfied with their membership of the state, and their own role in it.

Recommendations

- i. The paper recommends that active participation of all the eligible citizens will provide general recruitment process for all citizens.
- ii. That strong political mobilization can help in debasing the overall strategic framework of Primitive Accumulation of Votes (PAV) otherwise known as rigging.
- iii. Strengthening civil society is therefore imperative so that they can improve upon the current poor existing structures of CSO.

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