
AN EVALUATION OF POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT PATTERN OF UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper evaluated the political engagement of university undergraduates in Kwara State, Nigeria. The research design used was descriptive survey method. The population for this study consisted of all the university undergraduates in Kwara State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 100 undergraduates from each study level that is 200 to 400 level, totaling 300 undergraduates selected for the study. A researcher-designed questionnaire was used to elicit information on Political Engagement Pattern of the university undergraduates. The demographic data of the respondents were described using percentages, while cumulative means was used to answer research question 1. Hypotheses were tested using the t-test and ANOVA Statistical tools. Findings revealed that political engagement pattern of university undergraduates in Kwara State, Nigeria was high. It also revealed a significant difference in the political engagement of university undergraduates in Kwara State, Nigeria based on gender and level of study. Based on the findings of this study it was recommended that the politicians and the government should explain to the young people the importance of involvement in politics.

Keywords: political engagement, university undergraduates, gender, level of study

Introduction

The main goal of Civic Education in Nigeria is to inculcate in the Nigeria citizens moral values. However, it is obvious that many youths are found with nonchalant attitude towards political participation, political socialization and citizenship education. Perhaps the youths are lacking the main objective of Civic Education. As regards the teaching and learning of Civic Education, it is assumed that the nation is facing this problem purposely because the subject contents were not effectively taught with the right awareness. When it comes to the young generation, numerous studies such as Mindich, (2005); Wattenberg, (2007); Bauerlein, (2008) suggest that, by traditional measures, they are less engaged in politics (in terms of voting, contributing money, volunteering time, or showing up to a protest meeting) than older citizens.

The main justification for teaching Civic Education, according to Azebamwam (2010), derives from the very nature of our nascent and fledgling democracy. For democracy to survive, there is a need for active, informed and responsible citizens who are willing and able to take responsibility for themselves and their communities and contribute to the political process. In addition, Civic Education is meant to address a wide variety of political and governance issues, such as corruption, civic apathy, and post- conflict reconciliation, election and its accompany challenges, human rights and duties. Furthermore, it addresses important social issues like domestic violence, drug abuse and HIV/AIDS (Rietbergen-McCracken, 2005). Soule (2001) has argued that the primary correlates of low political participation are high levels of 1) government frustration, 2) social and political distrust, and 3) emphasis on wealth and financial security all of which have steadily increased among America's youth over the past several decades. These same correlates are in many ways addressed by the practical, campus-based programs of politically-centered civic engagement through which students develop dialogue skills (Mayhew & King, 2008), collaborative problem-solving (Hurtado, 2009), and diversity training (Diaz & Gilchrist, 2010; Stitzlein, 2010), all three of which are relevant to mending social and political distrust. Additionally, students' learning and community engagement through action-based research and

democratic participation, including forms of activism (Peters, Merrill, Cotter & Ragland, 2002; Cunningham & McKinney, 2010; Harriger, 2010).

According to Burns, Schlozman and Verba (2001), political engagement refers to the set of political attitudes that motivates people to engage in political activity. This means that my definition of political engagement is much broader than what Zukin, Scott, Mollz, Krista, Michael and Delli (2006) call cognitive engagement (participation by paying attention to politics and public affair) by including political interest, knowledge, and efficacy in its operationalization.

Many studies had been carried out within and outside Nigeria, to look into the political engagement pattern of either the whole society or the students. Barrett and Brunton-Smith (2009) studied political and civic engagement and participation: towards an integrative perspective. Also, Mutiullah (2015) investigated the impact of political socialization on 2015 general election and found that political socialization through effective citizenship education in Nigeria is the panacea to free, fair, peaceful and credible election as shown by the post-election studies, and thus recommends how this could be realized in Nigeria.

Arising from the previous discussion, none of the researchers focused on political engagement among university undergraduates. This indeed made the researcher to focus on the political engagement pattern of university undergraduates in Kwara State, purposely because of that belief that undergraduates are actively involved in political process in order to enhance university undergraduates' participation in political settings.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to find out the political engagement pattern among university undergraduates in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study would examine:

1. The difference in political engagement of university undergraduates in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, based on gender.

2. The difference in political engagement pattern of university undergraduates in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, based on level of study.

Research Questions

1. What is the political engagement pattern of university undergraduates in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the political engagement of university undergraduates in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, based on gender?

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the political engagement pattern of university undergraduates in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, based on level of study?

Method

The research design used the descriptive survey method. The population for this study consisted of all the university undergraduates in Kwara State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 100 undergraduates from each study level, that is 200 Level to 400 Level. In all, 300 undergraduates were selected for this study. They consisted of 163 male and 137 female. A researcher-designed questionnaire was used to elicit information on Political Engagement Pattern of the university undergraduates. The instrument, titled, "Political Engagement Pattern Questionnaire" (PEPQ). has two sections: Section A sought participants' demographic information, while section B had 13 items that sought information on political engagement pattern of university undergraduates in Kwara State. The respondents were requested to respond to these items on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD), while scoring of the responses involved a minimum of 1 for Strongly Disagree (SD) 2 for Disagree (D) 3 for Agree (A) 4 for Strongly Agree (SA) for positive statement. The scores were reversed for negative statements on (PEPQ). The highest score any respondent could obtain in Section B which contained items on Political

Engagement Pattern Questionnaire is 52 (i.e. 4×20) while the lowest score is 13 (1×13). Therefore, the range is 39 ($52-13$). The range is divided by 2 (i.e. $39/2$) 19.5. Then, 19.5 was added to the lowest score on the PEPQ (i.e. $19.5 + 13 = 32.5$). Therefore, 32.5 was the benchmark for PEPQ. Hence, mean score between 13 and 32.4 was considered as low Political Engagement Pattern while mean score between 32.5 and 52 was considered high Political Engagement Pattern in this study. The demographic data of the respondents were described using percentages, while cumulative mean was used to answer research question 1. Research Hypotheses were tested using the t-test and ANOVA Statistical tools. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results/Findings

Research Question 1:

What is the political engagement pattern of university undergraduates in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Cumulative Mean of Political Engagement Pattern of University Undergraduates in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria

Political Engagement	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
Political Engagement	300	35.68	5.34

Table 2 indicates that 300 respondents participated in this study. Responses to items that sought information on the political engagement pattern of university undergraduates in Kwara State, Nigeria revealed that the political engagement pattern of university undergraduates in Kwara State, Nigeria was high, because the benchmark weighted mean score stood at 32.5 and their weighted mean score is 35.68, which is above the benchmark weighted mean score ($BWMS = 32.5 < WMS = 35.68$).

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the political engagement of university undergraduates in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria based on gender.

Table 2: Analysis of the Difference in the Political Engagement of University Undergraduates in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria Based on Gender

Gender	No	Mean	Std	df	Cal.t	Sig.(2-tailed)	Decision
Male	300	35.06	5.61	298	2.21	0.03	H₀₁ Rejected
Female	300	36.42	4.91				

P < 0.05

As shown on Table 2, the calculated t-value was 2.21 while its calculated significance value is 0.03 at alpha level of 0.05. On this basis, the null hypothesis one was rejected. This means that there was a significant difference in the political engagement of university undergraduates in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, based on gender. The reason was that the calculated significance value (0.03) was lower than 0.05 alpha level, ($0.03 < 0.05$). This is in favour of female university undergraduates, with a mean score of 36.42 greater than the mean score of 35.06 of female university undergraduates ($36.42 > 35.06$).

H₀₂: *There is no significant difference in the political engagement pattern of university undergraduates in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, based on level of study.*

Table 3: ANOVA Summary of Difference in the Political Engagement Pattern of University Undergraduates in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria Based on Level of Study

Source of Variance	Sum of Square	df	Mean of Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	245.220	2	122.610	4.404	0.01	H₀₂ Rejected
Within Groups	8268.060	297	27.839			
Total	8513.280	299				

p>0.05

Table 3 shows an F-value 4.404 with calculated significance 0.01 at 0.05 alpha level. Since the calculated significance 0.01 is lower than 0.05 alpha level, hypothesis two is thus rejected. This implies that there was a significant difference in the political engagement pattern of university undergraduates in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria based on level of study.

Table 4: Scheffe's post hoc Table for Political Engagement Pattern of University Undergraduates in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria based on Level of Study.

Level of Study	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05		
		1	2	3
200 Level	100	34.68		
300 Level	100		35.49	
400 Level	100			36.87

The table 4 shows the Scheffe's post hoc for Political Engagement Pattern of University Undergraduates in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria based on Level of Study and it was revealed that the three levels were significantly different: 400 Level has the highest mean score of 36.87 in subset 3, followed by 300 Level with mean score of 35.49 in subset 2, while 200 Level has the least mean score of 34.68 in subset 1.

Discussion of the Findings

Findings revealed that political engagement pattern of university undergraduates in Kwara State, Nigeria was high. This finding supports that of Daniel (2012) who found out that political engagement among University of Ottawa undergraduate students was high. Furthermore, Harry and George (2011) found out the political engagement of survey respondents: the large majority (from 61% to 85%) reported that they talk with their friends about politics or social issues, were registered to vote, and read the news online everyday or several times a week.

Furthermore, findings revealed that there was a significant difference in the political engagement of university undergraduates in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, based on gender. Another, finding revealed that there was a significant difference in the political engagement pattern of university undergraduates in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, based on level of study. This finding is in agreement with that of Daniel (2012) who found out that there was significant difference in the political engagement of university of Ottawa undergraduate students based on student's program of study and year of study.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Findings revealed that political engagement pattern of university undergraduates in Kwara State, Nigeria were high. Furthermore, findings revealed that there was a significant difference in the political engagement of university undergraduates in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, based on gender. Another, finding revealed that there was a significant difference in the political engagement pattern of university undergraduates in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, based on level of study.

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that

1. the parties, the politicians and the government should make the young people know the importance of involvement in politics.
2. Furthermore the young people should be motivated and encouraged in order to be involved in politics.
3. It will assist the young one to learn about political cultures in school which will be useful to them in the society.
4. It will also make them to socialize politically.
5. It will assist in encouraging them to participate in politics.

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