
LAGOS RESIDENTS' POLITICAL PARTICIPATION:
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CONSOLIDATION OF
SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the level of political participation of Lagos residents as a factor for sustainable democracy in Nigeria. The study adopted the survey research design. A sample size of 1,094 respondents was selected among the multi-ethnic residents in Lagos through the incidental sampling technique. The sample was drawn from ten local government areas covering the two highest populated administrative divisions of the state. A self developed questionnaire was used for data collection. Three research questions were answered and only one hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, percentage and the chi-square statistic. The findings of the study showed that there is political apathy among Lagos residents; civil and public servants in the metropolitan city of Lagos do participate actively in politics and that gender affects political participation by the residents. Based on the findings, it was recommended that women should be motivated by giving them more political appointment while civil servants

should be allowed to serve in the capacity of political appointees in public offices due to their wealth of management experience.

Keywords: Political participation, voting, political activeness, political awareness, sustainable democracy, Lagos residents

Introduction

Political participation is one of the fundamental principles in democracy. It allows equal opportunity for men and women to develop their individual capacity and make their presence felt. Political participation involves those voluntary activities such as holding public and party offices, attending election campaigns, voting and exposing oneself to political stimuli (Agbaje & Adigun, 1999). Subscribing to this, Okolie (2005) describes the phrase as freedom of expression, association, right to free flow of communication, right to influence decision process and the right to social justice, health services, better working condition and opportunity for franchise. Citizens' participation in politics gives credence to the political system.

Northon, (2005) however, looks at political participation as a variety of ways in which people try to exercise influence over the political process. These encompass situations in which an individual, acting singly or through groups, attempts to influence decision-making process or the manner in which power may be distributed and the principles by which it may be exercised in a particular society. Participation involves taking part in an event or activity. In this study, political participation refers to the process through which people's activities and events influence the electoral process either directly or indirectly. Evidences, (e.g. Aiyede, 2006; Egbunam, 2019; Iloh, Nwoko & Okolie, 2009 & Ubi & Ubianne, 2015) have shown however, that many Nigerians register during registration exercises to secure voters' cards; they however prefer to keep the cards for other purposes rather than for voting during elections Political participation in Nigeria has also been observed to be lopsided being positively skewed towards men folks. Women's participation and access to formal political power structures vary not only in Nigeria,

but across countries. The structural and functional constraints faced by women are shaped by social and political relations in the society. Observations and empirical evidences revealed that a number of factors have contributed to the second fiddle role played by women in political activities in Nigeria. Some of these factors are identified as a function of natural status of women, while others are man-made deliberately designed by their male counterparts to further confine them to sedentary activities.

The factors responsible for women's passive political participation include ideological factors, political factors, cultural practices, high cost of elections and other assundry factors. Patriarchy, a system of male dominance, is an ideological factor that shapes women's participation in politics. Aiyede (2006) defines patriarchy as a familial-social, ideological and political system in which men by force, divert pressure or through ritual, tradition, law and language, customs etiquette, education and division of labour, determine what roles women shall or shall not play in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male.

Among the political factors militating against women is the discrimination in occupying political positions. Most political parties have a male perspective on issues of national importance that easily dwarfs the opinions of women. What is more, women are usually not elected into important party positions owing to party structures which tilt towards men. Crucial meetings are held at odd hours, which conflict with women's family interests and domestic responsibilities (Egbunam, 2019).

A number of barriers are imposed culturally on women via cultural practices. Nigerian society is permeated by patriarchy where women are expected to conform and confine themselves to male dominance and female subservice. Women are seen to belong to the home, to be incapable of making sound decisions and therefore, unbecoming of women to expose themselves in public for political activities such as campaign rallies. Men often find it incredible and impracticable to see their wives participating in politics (Iloh, Nwoko & Okolie, 2009).

Although high cost of election equally affects men but more pronounced on Nigerian women. The high cost of financing political

parties and campaigns is a big obstacle to women political participation. The minimum cost of gubernatorial elections could elicit a critical question that: Which political party would nominate a woman for that post considering her very small contributions to party finance and formation? (Ubi & Ubianne, 2015).

Other impediments preventing women from actively participating in politics and government include patriarchal dominance in political parties, god-fatherism, indigeneship, intra-party rigging, political violence, roguery and high level of intimidation which women hardly involve themselves in (Ubi & Ubianne, 2015).

For democracy to be sustainable however, it should allow every citizen to participate in the political processes and represent their interest and concerns. Democracy is dependent on the participation and representation of all citizens in democratic institutions and processes. Democracy, in line with the above submission, is defined as a form of government in which people choose leaders by voting. Sustainable development goals address democracy most prominently in goal 16 of the 2030 agenda, which addresses democracy directly by calling for inclusive participation by societies and institutions at all levels (Cardenilo, 2017).

According to Cardenilo (2017), Banki-moon in 2016 asserts that “democratic principles run through the national agenda like a golden thread, from universal access to public goods, health care and education, as well as providing safe places to live and decent work opportunities for all. These are attributes of sustainable democracy. It further ensures that no voice should be left unheard, no one should be left behind and no one should be subjected to any form of exclusionary rhetoric”. This is political inclusiveness. It is the idea that every citizen, regardless of class age, gender, sexual orientation, ability, group and culture, ethnic or religious background should have an equal right and opportunity to engage in and contribute to the functioning of these institutions and processes.

It is however note worthy to mention that democratic institutions and processes face some challenges and difficulties in connecting the needs and aspirations of citizens with accountable

and representative political institutions. However, some democratic institutions and processes are often mistrusted by the citizenry which lead to political apathy. This is because they think their voices will not matter or have no influence on how political institutions will act.

Secondly, inequality of opportunities in politics persists worldwide. Not all citizens in the society are represented in policy discussions and may thus feel marginalized. For instance, women, who constitute over 50% of the world's population, continue to be under-represented as voters, political leaders and elected officials (Cardenilo, 2017).

Finally, in some cases, free access to political institutions is restricted or scarcely realized because the framework or modalities for inclusive citizens' involvement and engagement in politics are not being encouraged. These challenges pose hindrances to sustainable democracy across countries of the world.

Lagos as a city possesses some unique features. It is the major economic nerve centre of Nigeria and the rest of the West African sub-region. Most industries and business enterprises in Nigeria have their headquarters in Lagos. The chance of building ones career and rising to the pinnacle of one's chosen profession is higher in Lagos than any other city in Nigeria or West Africa. The Lagos State Government estimates the population of Lagos at 17.5 million, which was disputed by the Nigerian Government and found to be unreliable by the National Population Commission of Nigeria, which put the population at over 21 million in 2016 (worldpopulationreview.com). This includes people of all economic strata with high demand for both consumer and industrial goods. Today, Lagos has a very diverse population due to heavy migration from other parts of Nigeria and surrounding countries. There are more than 250 ethnic groups represented in Lagos, including the Hausa, Igbo, and Fulani. Small minorities of American, British, East Indian, Chinese, white Zimbabwean, Greek, Syrian, Lebanese and Japanese are also present in the city.

Lagos is Nigeria's largest city and one of the largest in sub-Saharan Africa. Lagos is infamous for being Nigeria's most exclusive city to live in. The metropolis is characterised with dense

population, busy streets and massive traffic jam. Lagos is a world-class destination. It is Nigeria's most amazing city that has wonderful beaches, skyscrapers, amazing parks, best entertainment options, most job opportunities and so much more. Lagos has everything to offer everybody. The city prides itself in its unique experiences and matchless vibes. Living in Lagos is much better than living anywhere else in Nigeria. If one has products to sell or services to render and if making profit is one of the motives, Lagos is the city to live in (worldpopulationreview.com). These and many more are the attracting factors that draw people across Nigeria and the West African sub region to Lagos aside the current insecurity situations that are ravaging the region. This heterogeneous nature of Lagos justifies its choice as a representative sample for the whole country.

Purpose of the Study

The study aims to:

1. find out the level of political awareness and participation of Lagos residents.
2. investigate the level of Lagos State Civil and Public Servants' participation in political activities.
3. compare the level of political participation between male and female residents in Lagos State.
4. identify factors influencing political participation of Lagos residents.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for the study:

1. What is the level of political participation among Lagos residents?
2. What is the level of political participation among Lagos civil and public servants?
3. Is there any gender effect on political participation by Lagos residents?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis tested in the study is:

Ho1: There is no gender effect on political participation by Lagos residents.

Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The target population consisted of all adult citizens of electoral age in Nigeria. One Thousand and Ninety-four (1,094) respondents were selected from the multi-ethnic population in Lagos State through the incidental sampling technique from the two divisions (Badagry and Ikeja) perceived as the highest populated of all the five administrative and political divisions in the State. A questionnaire titled Questionnaire on Political Participation and Voting Activeness for Sustainable Democracy (PPVASD) was used to collect information for the study. The face and content validity of the research instrument were determined by some colleagues in the Faculty of Education, Lagos State University. The reliability coefficient was 0.77 established through the split half reliability test and calculated with the Pearson Product Moment Correlation formula. Collected data was analysed with percentages, frequency counts and the chi square statistic formula.

Results

Research Question 1

The research question one says "What is the level of political participation among Lagos residents?" The data in table one provides answer to the question.

Table 1: Political Participation by Lagos Residents

S/N	Items	SA %	A %	D %	SD %	Total%
1.	I am a card carrying member of a political party	(109)	(236)	(509)	(240)	(1094)
		9.96	21.57	46.53	21.94	100
2.	I do attend political meetings in my ward	(141)	(169)	(667)	(117)	(1094)
		12.89	16.11	60.94	10.69	100
3.	I participate in politics to gain some benefits	(64)	(266)	(425)	(339)	(1094)
		5.85	24.31	38.85	30.99	100
4.	I always vote during elections in the state	(179)	(296)	(419)	(200)	(1094)
		16.36	27.06	38.3	18.28	100
5.	I do vote and care a lot about the outcome of the elections that I participated in	(109)	(236)	(509)	(240)	(1094)
		9.96	21.57	46.53	21.29	100
	Total	(602)	(1203)	(2529)	(1136)	(5470)
		11.01	21.99	46.23	20.77	100

Table 1 shows the level of political participation of Lagos residents. There is an indication that majority of the residents do not always participate in political activities such as party membership (31.53%); attendance of political meetings (29%); voting during elections (43.42%) and caring for outcome of elections (31.53%). These showed a partial involvement in the political affairs of the state. The analysis gave the total positive responses to the stated items as 33.0% while the total negative response was 67.0%. This is political apathy on the part of Lagos residents.

Research Question 2

What is the level of political participation among Lagos state civil and public servants?

Table 2: Political Participation by Lagos State Civil and Public Servants

S/N	Statement	SA%	A%	D%	SD%	Total%
1.	Public and civil servants do vote during elections	(240) 21.29	(509) 46.53	(236) 21.57	(109) 9.96	(1094) 100
2.	Civil and public servants are allowed to participate in politics	(549) 50.18	(428) 39.12	(88) 8.04	(29) 2.65	(1094) 100
	Total	(789) 36.06	(937) 42.82	(324) 14.81	(138) 6.31	(2188) 100

Table 2 gives the respondents' position on public and civil servants' participation in elections. A total of 78.88% indicated that these set of workers do participate during elections and in politics while the total negative response was 21.12% indicating that this set of people do participate in electoral processes appropriately in Lagos. Therefore, Lagos civil servants do participate actively in politics.

Research Question 3

Is there any gender effect on political participation by Lagos residents?

Table 3: Gender Effect on Political Participation by Lagos Residents

S/N	Item	Yes%		No%		Total%
		Male	Female	Male	Female	
		(621) 56.76	(473) 43.24	(621) 56.76	(473) 43.24	1094100
1.	I am a card carrying member of a political party	(197) 18.01	(148) 13.53	(422) 38.57	(327) 29.89	1094100
2.	I do attend political meetings in my ward	(168) 15.36	(142) 12.98	(453) 41.41	(331) 30.26	1094100
3.	I always vote during elections	(264) 24.13	(211) 19.29	(388) 35.47	(231) 21.12	1094100
	Total	(629) 19.17	501 15.27	1263 38.48	889 27.09	3282 100

Table 3 shows a comparison of the level of participation in politics by male and female residents in Lagos State. The female respondents formed 43.24% while male respondents were 56.76%. Their responses gave a total of 15.27% participation for females and 19.17% participation for males (a total of 34.44%). Their non participation yielded 27.09% and 38.48% for male and female respondents respectively giving a total of 65.57%. The test of the hypothesis on the gender effect is given in table 4.

Test of Hypothesis

H_{01} : There is no gender effect on political participation by Lagosians.

Table 4: Gender Effect on Political Participation by Lagosians

	Value	df	Sig. (2sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	27.838 ^a	9	.001
Likelihood Ratio	19.964	9	.018
Linear -by-linear Association	.068	1	.794
N of Valid Cases	1094		

Table 4 presents the analysis of data on effect of gender on political participation of the respondents. The analysis indicates that there was a significant effect of gender on political participation of the respondents ($P < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no gender effect on political participation of Lagosians is not upheld.

Discussion

From the findings of the study, it could be deduced that Lagosians do not fully participate in politics and related political activities as expected (table 1). Political participation transcends voting. It ranges from party membership, voting in elections, attending rallies, campaigns, party meetings and other functions. The stance of Lagosians here may be influenced by Agbaje & Adigun's (1999) idea that political participation is a voluntary affair.

The characteristics of Lagos being the most heterogeneous and most populated state in the federation do not reflect in the partial political partisanship and voting patterns in the state. For instance, in the governorship and presidential elections of 2015, the total vote cast was 1,477,869 and 1,443,686 respectively. In 2019, it was 977,476 for the governor and 1,089,567 for the president while the figure for total registered voters in 2019, was 6,570,291 out of the population size of 17.5 million people (Samson, 2019). This trend depicts political apathy among Lagos residents and consequently, the whole federation. This was also evident in the 2019 presidential elections in which out of the total registered voters of 82,344,107 nationwide, only 34.75% (i.e. 28,614,190) took part in the elections (Wikipedia). Political participation, especially voting during elections enables one to contribute to and influence the selection of representatives in government. It will enable one to effect his desired change of a non performing government rather than unnecessary grumbles and complaints after elections.

Though, gender should not be a barrier to political participation, it was found out by the study that the few Lagos residents that participate in politics are mostly men (table 3). As it has been noted, political participation in Nigeria, particularly in Lagos, is lopsided being positively skewed towards male folks. Women participation in politics has been noted by Ilo, Nwoko & Okolie (2009, to be affected by factors such as patriarchal ideology, political parties' perceptions, cultural practices, high cost of elections etc.

The advocate for engaging more women in political power will be a mirage if they do not participate fully in politics like their men counterparts to justify their demands because it is a matter of one reaping where he/she sows. Every facet of the women populace such as market women, civil and public female servants, artisans, and female students of voting age should be adequately aware of, participate and exercise their fundamental rights in this regard. Hence, every individual, (both male and female) must be ready to fully participate in this our nascent political dispensation to ensure its consolidation and sustainability.

Conclusions

Based on the findings from the study, it could be concluded that political participation among Lagos residents does not reflect the dense population of Lagos State. There are more male politicians in Lagos State than females hence, political participation by women needs to be more encouraged. It is also noteworthy that civil and public servants also have significant roles to play in Nigerian politics. As also evident in the study, the political behavior of Lagos residents is a reflection of the political behavior of Nigerians in general. However, to sustain our nascent democracy, political participation by all and sundry is essential.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following are recommended:

Political parties are enjoined to create enabling environment whereby people with high intelligence, integrity and pedigree will be interested in participating in partisan politics irrespective of gender as against the patronage of hooligans, touts and thugs that scare some away from politics. Since the accruing benefits in women's participation in politics cannot be underestimated, impediments like discrimination, derogatory ideological factors and cultures and other detrimental factors should be eliminated in our polity likewise, women's representation in government should be improved as a way of encouraging them.

Since civil and public servants are allowed to participate in politics, senior civil and public servants should also be appointed into political positions having undergone series of training on managerial competence to afford them opportunities to contribute meaningfully to the development of the nation based on the wealth of experience garnered in the course of their career and as incentive for their political activities.

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