

Gender, Political Participation and Democratic Governance in Rural Nigerian Communities

Olugbenga Charles Adewale¹, Olayinka Babatunde Adebogun², Timothy Ekeledirichukwu Onyejelem³, Jerry Ajeyet Gankon⁴, Muhammad Ridwan⁵

¹Department of Mass Communication, Caleb University, Imota, Lagos, Nigeria

²Department of Political Science and International Relations, Caleb University, Imota, Lagos, Nigeria

³Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State

⁴Department of Mass Communication, Ecole Supérieure Technologies Avancées et de Management (ESTAM), Cotonou Benin

⁵Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

Abstract

Issues around gender and politics have gained the attention of scholars globally. This paper explores how gender influences patterns of political participation in rural Nigerian communities. It also interrogates how residents of rural areas in Nigeria assess democratic governance. In accomplishing the objectives of this study, a mixed-method which comprises survey and focus group discussion was adopted. Findings of the study reveal that women in the rural communities participate actively in party politics regardless of the biases against them. Findings further reveal significant relationship between age ($\beta = 7.221$, $df=1$), gender ($\beta \chi^2 = 3.891$, $df=1$), marital status ($\beta = 4.758$, $df=1$) and political participation. Political engagements in rural areas are highly commoditized and have been dubbed a means of livelihood, a factor that has increased party membership in recent years. Even with this development, the study shows that choice of candidates during election is based on personal convictions and sometimes, communal needs. The study recommends that government should give unflinching support and show more commitment to the needs of the rural communities most especially by providing basic amenities and other infrastructure that are germane to having a good life. Politics should be devoid of gender biases and dispositions that are likely to dissuade women from participating actively in politics should be discouraged.

Keywords

Democratic Governance, Gender, Rural Communities, Socialization, Nigerian, Political Participation and Rural Communities



I. Introduction

Issues around gender and politics in Nigeria have gained the attention of scholars and policymakers in recent times. Okunade et al. (2023) described Nigeria as a nation contending with the intricacies of gender dynamics which is largely influenced cultural, economic, and political influences. In fact, Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) (2018) observed that political participation of women in Nigeria falls below global expectations. Even though gender role differences seem to be a natural phenomenon, perception of gender in politics can be influenced by sociocultural factors, especially in rural communities. The homogeneous nature of rural communities can strongly affect stances on gender roles in politics. Gender norms allot clear responsibilities, tasks, roles and privileges to both male and female members of society (Akanle, 2011). However, patriarchy system commonly reflected in family and community governance is inherent in the political structure of African societies (Byron, 2024). Similarly, Egbuniwe (2024)

argues that political institutions contributed to the persistent low female political participation in Nigeria. Perhaps, this is why Etim et al. (2023) in their study revealed that there was a negative relationship between democratic governance and gender equality. Even though the marginalization of women in elective political representation is not in doubt, women have excelled in other facet of political engagements like building party membership, mobilization for support, active participation during political campaigns and rallies (Ogbogu, 2012; Airaoje et al., 2023).

The rural-urban divide in political attitudes and behaviour has been receiving increasing attention in the literature (Chigbu & Antonio, 2019; García del Horno et al., 2024). Rural areas have often been labeled by the literature as abandoned areas that don't matter, thereby suggesting that residents of these communities feel sidelined by political elites (García del Horno et al., 2024). The rural areas in Nigeria have become notorious with all kinds of crime and underdevelopment. Inadequate amenities such as good roads and communication infrastructure have affected them negatively (Arisukwu et al., 2020; Rufai et al., 2021). Oduntan et al. (2023) posit that the prevalence of vote buying in Nigeria is more susceptible to the practice in rural areas. This development can be linked to the rising poverty in rural communities. Inclusive governance emphasizes the right of all citizens, irrespective of their socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity and religion, to meaningfully partake in the governance processes and policy decisions (Oni et al., 2020; Aliyu et al., 2023).

Political participation enables citizenry to be active partakers in issues that bother on community development, social change and governance. Okoro and Nwafor (2013) describe political participation as the involvement of citizens in programmes, engagements or activities that impact the selection of and/or the conducts of elected representatives. Through political participation, citizens can elect representatives across the three tiers of government to represent them for constitutionally stipulated years. Othman and Okpe (2021) observed that the growing public cynicism towards governmental institutions is because of the variance between public aspirations and policy decisions. Citizens' consultation in a democracy regardless of their gender helps to build public trust in political institutions. The people's lack of interests or apathy in elections tends to undervalue the democratic process, engender mistrust in political institutions, and enthrone unaccountable leadership (Adigun, 2020). Oyoru (2023) remarks that the involvement of citizens in the business of governance drives modern democratic thinking irrespective of gender, geographical location, social status or religion.

Over the years, political participation in Nigeria has been affected by a number of factors. Corruption has affected democratic governance and its drawbacks include; poor budget implementation and performance, diversion of resources, depletion of public treasury and electoral malpractices, among others (Abdulrasheed, 2021; Nebeife et al., 2021; Adigun, 2022; & Oyoru, 2023). While Bisong and Asira (2020) and Nebeife, et al. (2021) submit that the prevailing political culture in Nigeria is not amenable to both democracy and political progress of the polity, Ashindorbe and Danjibo (2022) and Oduntan et al. (2023) argue that some developments in the polity indicate that the electoral process in Nigeria is on the right track to attaining transparency, fairness and integrity (Aondover et al., 2022). This study intends to investigate these two perspectives from the point of view of rural residents. According to Oyewole and Shola-Omotola (2022), democracy debatably allows people to choose their representatives in government, but it does not guarantee them good governance. Perhaps, this is because since the advent of

democracy, Nigerians appear dissatisfied with the patterns of development in their country. Across political dispensations, government has been rated poorly based on the resultant effect of their actions and inaction (Folarin, 2020; Azoro, 2021). Before the 2015 general election, opposition parties identified poor economy, insecurity, corruption and most importantly, the need for a messiah. Conversely, these problems are very much present in the polity in a somewhat graver dimension.

1.2 Problem Statement

Politics drives the society beyond electoral engagements and related activities. It is one of the premises on which other societal realities are built. Despite the negative narratives that define Nigerian politics, political consciousness of the people has increased. Through social media, citizens can share personal views on issues that bother on political candidates, government policies, societal expectations, campaigns, among others, without restrictions. While this development appears revolutionary, residents of rural areas may relatively enjoy this access due to the technological deficit that characterizes their environment (Adeleke, 2012; Ogbo, Brown & Sicker, 2017). Another pressing issue in the Nigerian space is the influence of gender in the allotment of roles in politics. Many scholars agreed to the marginalization of women in politics (Aluko & Ajani, 2006; Arowolo & Aluko, 2010). According to Byron (2024) gender equality is one of the foundations for the sustainability of any given society. Over the years, laws and policies have not been able to effect a drastic change to the spate of gender inequality in Nigerian politics (Chitongo & Ojogiwa, 2021). Beyond marginalization, this study interrogates how gender influences roles played by individuals who reside and engage in politics in rural communities. The following research questions were set for this study:

1. Assess the extent to which rural residents in Oyo State participate in politics?
2. To what extent does gender determine people's stances on political activities and engagements in rural areas?
3. To what extent residents of rural areas assess democratic governance?

The study also posits this null hypothesis:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between personal characteristics of the respondents and approach to political participation

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Gender and Political Participation

Gender inequality and women's political underrepresentation in Nigeria have been pervasive over the years (Awofeso & Odeyemi, 2014). Political participation appears to be highly gendered in Nigeria because of male dominance in elective positions (Arowolo & Aluko, 2010). Women through the societal socialization process, found that they are not expected to participate in politics or aspire to public positions of responsibility (Aluko & Ajani, 2006). Many women advocacy groups have emerged to speak against the acclaimed marginalization. For instance, women are seen not to be influential in politics because they are presumed to be in charge of familial and culinary tasks (Hile et al., 2023; Aondover et al., 2025).

Historically, Nigerian women have participated in governance since the pre-colonial period. Some were rulers; others were public officials with established offices and powers in their communities and jurisdictions (Mojubaolu et al., 2013). Their idea of women taking back seats in politics may not necessarily be an African practice as being touted. Women have been kept outside the public domain of politics as most political

thinkers and philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, John Locke, Thomas Hobbes and Hegel opined that woman fit only for domestic roles in the private sphere. They maintained that there was no place for women in politics because they are more suitable for caring roles as mothers and wives (Aluko & Ajani, 2006). The non-Africanness of these philosophers suggests that gender marginalization in politics is not exclusively an African practice (Msughter, 2019).

Aside cultural impediments, Akinyode-Afolabi and Arogundade cited in Aluko and Ajani (2006) cited violent nature of politics as another reason why women avoid politics. Politics as a tumultuous venture may not be a global practice, but in Nigeria it is characterised by violence, a situation which females should not be disposed to (Vitalis et al., 2025). This is why they are usually alienated from mainstream politics. Arowolo and Aluko (2010), in a study on women and political participation in Nigeria concluded that women face immense resistance from participating in politics most especially because of traditional and cultural reasons. At the family front, majority of the male respondents objects the participation of their wives in politics (Msughter, 2024). The study discovered that a lot of female respondents believed that political participation would inhibit familial responsibilities. The present role played by women's groups at the grassroots level may not be adequate in encouraging more women's participation in politics and in influencing economic development (Orisadare, 2019; Itiafa & Msughter, 2022).

2.2 Dimensions of Political Participation in Rural Areas

Several studies have linked the increase in political participation, most especially voting, to increased awareness of democratic principles (Obani & Odalonu, 2019; Omotayo & Adekunle, 2021; Okaiyeto et al., 2021). Despite this leap, some segments of the society do not participate in politics due to personal psychological concerns and collective memory of past electoral activities. In survey research on how mass media affects political awareness and behavior, Udende (2011) discovered that a good number of Nigerians are exposed to political issues. This reflected in the amount of political information they consume from the mass media on daily basis. To this end, respondents know most of the presidential aspirants' personality, but only a few know their manifestoes.

Creation of local government systems stems from the need to facilitate development at the grassroots (Yar'Adua et al., 2023). However, Onyekachi (2016) posits that there are structural flaws in local government reorganization in Nigeria and this is affecting grass root democratic development. Absence of elective principle, insufficient ground for community participation, non-projection of democratic ideals, single-tier multipurpose local government system, appointment of the management team, among others, have eroded the political sovereignty of the people to choose their leaders. Olaniyi (2017) observed that the importance of local government election in Nigeria is usually played down by many governors in the political landscape of their respective states because of the fear of playing into the hands of their political rivals; and SIECs are only independent in name and not in practice (Msughter & Pate, 2021; Idris & Msughter, 2022).

According to Akanji (2018) the adoption of technological devices such as smart card reader machines and biometric cards encouraged participation in the 2015 general elections. In addition, broadcast of election results on live television and radio broadcast allayed fear of malpractices to a reasonable extent (Aondover et al., 2023). One of the major considerations before the Presidential and National Assembly elections was that of security and violence during the elections. Given the history of elections in the country,

many had anticipated that the elections would be chaotic and violence-ridden but that was not the case in Oyo in 2015 even though some areas witnessed violence in 2019.

Orji (2015) observed that developments after the 2015 elections showed the need for more electoral reforms. The outcome of the elections has revived underlying ethno-regional tensions in Nigeria based on perceived marginalization and nepotism. According to Olayiwola (2016) some of the issues that directed voting pattern in 2015 by Oyo residents include: restoration of peace and security in Oyo State, creation of state, salary payment, fighting corruption, fighting economic strangulation, rehabilitation of collapsed educational system at all levels, among others. Also, Ogbogu and Olaoye (2017) submit that political participation and voting behaviour serve as critical drivers of a democratic government (Msughter et al., 2022). Their study revealed that age and personal ideology were prominent in determining the voting behaviour of electorates. In addition, ideology about a candidate's charisma as well as patron-clientelistic networks of patronage influences voting behaviour.

2.3 Democratic Governance in Rural Areas

The viability and preference of democracy as a form of government above others is predicated on its promotion of popular participation. Odo (2015) identified challenges facing democratic governance to include: failure of leadership; corruption; insurgencies; insincerity of purpose; lack of political will; lack of proper vision by the political leadership; lack of accountability in governance; poverty; amongst others. These challenges are hostile to the achievement of democratic culture and good governance (Msughter et al., 2021; Yar'Adua et al., 2023).

Comparing the 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria, Ojukwu (2019) concluded that the 2019 general elections have lower democratic quality and higher credibility deficit as compared to 2015 general elections. According to Falade (2014), lack of confidence in political leaders because of corruption, culture of violence, intimidation, manipulation, sentiments, money politics, ignorance, deception, among others has created political apathy and disaffection towards democratic system of government. Singal (2014) observed that political participation, civic engagement and political trust have declined. These trends, according to him, are evident in observing proportionately fewer people voting in elections because they lack confidence in government (Owens-Ibie & Aondover, 2024). However recent activities in the Nigerian political environment have showed a relative increase the consciousness of Nigeria towards politics. This development is largely orchestrated by skepticism towards political representatives and how they treat their constituents. Simultaneously, the views of Lust-Orkar (2007) and Ihonvbere and Shaw (1989) holds sway in Nigeria that citizens are motivated to participate in politics if they feel they can derive material benefits from candidates and political parties. Nkwede (2019) observed that material inducement and party affiliation influence voter behaviour during elections in Nigeria.

Despite the challenges facing democratic governance in Nigeria, Ozohu-Suleiman (2016) notes that the good governance should be considered as work-in-progress. While this is relatively true, government through her ministries, departments and agencies, should continually work for the collective hopes and aspirations of the people. Adewale (2011) affirms that the spirited pedigree of political elites, as well as the growing political consciousness of the electorates, is undoubtedly capable of producing a lasting commitment to propelling the country towards unparalleled economic prowess.

III. Research Methods

The study adopted mixed methods which included survey and focus group discussion. It used what Ackroyd and Hughes cited in May (2001) call factual survey, which focuses on attitudes of a people towards a particular phenomenon. Focus Group Discussion (FGD), according to Adler and Clark (2011) is a special kind of research tool that uses group interaction on a topic to obtain data. The strength of focus group discussion, in the view of Newing (2011), is in providing background information and context, generating ideas and providing in-depth information on each participant's views, perspectives and motivations.

Oyo State was clustered using the existing three senatorial zones structure, and two local government areas were randomly selected from each of the zones. The registered voters from the selected six local government areas constituted the study population. Records from the database of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) showed the following voter registration details: Afijio (44,480), Ibarapa Central (50,734), Akinyele (136,764), Oriire (71,643), Ido (84,122) and Iseyin (100,560). Based on these figures, the population of study was 488,305. Taro Yamane formula was used to determine a sample size of 400 respondents and copies of the questionnaire were allotted proportionally to the respondents in selected LGAs.. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the samples of this study. Only respondents who were age 18 and above were considered for the survey.

For the FGD, two groups were created using gender as a rallying factor. The first group had 12 male participants between ages 18-65, while the second group had 14 female participants between ages 20-67. The highest educational qualification across the two groups was BSc. Eleven participants were illiterate. The FGD was conducted in Yoruba language and it focuses on the set research objectives. The session with the male lasted an hour, while the session of the female group lasted about one and a half hour.

The instruments used in probing into the research problem were questionnaire, and focus group discussion. The questionnaire designed for this study contained close-ended dichotomous questions.

The questionnaire was structured into two parts; the first part of the questionnaire addresses demographic variables as age, sex, religion, marital status and educational qualifications. The second part addresses the core research questions. These questions formed the major part of the research work because they help in proffering answers to the research problem. They include; methods of political participation and patterns of voting during elections. Gender, educational qualification, religion, and marital status were measured at nominal level. Methods of political participation and participating during the 2015 and 2019 elections were measured at nominal level using dichotomous variable of Yes (1) and No (0). Assessment of democratic governance, Influence of gender on politics and level of political participation will be measured qualitatively using interpretative analysis. The quantitative data were analyzed using simple percentage, and were presented in mean and standard deviation while the sole hypothesis in the study was tested using Binary Logistic Regression.

IV. Results and Discussion

4.1 Methods of Political Participation

Results presented in Table 1 show the various ways respondents engage in politics and from the findings, it could be seen that majority of the respondents expression of political participation is highly reflected in voting during election (\bar{x} =1.88). This study has shown that residents of rural areas in Oyo State are actively involved in politics and this finding aligns with the result of Nkwede (2019) on political participation in rural areas. Rural people have knowledge of political happenings around them as they are conversant with public affairs and are in touch with their environment.

Majority of the respondents participate in politics by giving out space/facility for political meetings (\bar{x} = 1.82). Members of political parties meet frequently to discuss about the development of their party and how to strategize for elections. In order to do this, spaces and facilities are usually needed. Majority of the respondents, including those who do not belong to any political party said they would be willing to give out their space to politicians at no cost if they were approached. This finding further reflects the level of tolerance and understanding that people in rural areas have as politics is concerned.

Findings from this study also show that a good number of people in the rural areas are members of political parties (\bar{x} =1.42) and have been voting during elections. Older respondents said that they voted in elections prior to 1993 and were members of the defunct political parties. One of the respondents said:

I have been a member of the Progressive Party since the Awolowo days and I am still a staunch member of that family till date’.

Table 1. Methods of Political Participation

Method of Political participation	*Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Sd	Rank
Voting during elections	333	88.1	1.88	0.32	1 st
Giving out space/facility for political meetings, rallies and other engagements	310	82.0	1.82	0.38	2 nd
Member of a political party	157	41.5	1.42	0.49	3 rd
Attendance of political rallies	153	40.5	1.40	0.49	4 th
Joined crowd funding exercises for political activities	112	29.6	1.30	0.45	5 th
Joined protest against unfavourable political decision	102	27.0	1.27	0.44	6 th
Follower of political icon/activities online	31	8.2	1.08	0.27	7 th
Membership of online political group/ movement	21	5.6	1.06	0.22	8 th

Source: Field Survey, 2024; SD=Standard Deviation *=Multiple response

Political participation in the rural area of Oyo State is a reflection of the submission of Oko and Oguud (2010) that political participation takes place at three levels; the gladiatorial – involving public office holders, electoral candidates, party leaders and strategists. The transitional refers to contributors – party financier and members who attend meetings and vote and the spectatorial which are emblem carrying people, canvassers, mostly during rallies. This study shows that most of the rural dwellers belong to the transitional and spectatorial groups as members and voters. Most of them do not contribute

financially to party activities because their activities are sponsored by the party headquarters and aspirants. They rarely belong to the gladiatorial group because their representatives hardly live in the community, more so representatives who are oblivious of developments in the community are usually selected from state or local government headquarters

As identified earlier, the internet is not a popular medium in rural areas of Oyo State. Based on this, most of the respondents do not belong to any online political group (\bar{x} = 1.08) and hardly follow political icons online (\bar{x} = 1.06). Politics is practiced in real time in rural areas and that is why politicians tour political wards during campaign to familiarize with the people in the area. They are not interested in posters and media campaign as this study shows that they are not influential.

Another parameter used in measuring political participation is attendance of political rallies. This study shows that not many of the respondents do attend political rallies (\bar{x} = 1.40). One of the expectations from a card-carrying member of a political party is to attend political rallies so as to identify publicly with the party.

From the findings of this study, crowd-funding for political activities (\bar{x} = 1.30) is not popular in rural areas. Factors like poverty, political differences and awareness could be responsible for its unpopularity. Politicians in the rural areas depend on the largess from the party headquarters to run local politics. Soreh (2017) in a study on crowd-funding in Nigeria said the awareness level is low in Nigeria, even though it had been adopted by few politicians in Nigeria to meet up campaign expenses.

A large number of the respondents had never joined protest against any unfavourable decision as it relates to politics (\bar{x} = 1.27). The finding also shows that some members of political parties have not joined any protests in the past. While protests are a globally accepted way of reacting to unfavourable decisions by government, many people shy away from it because of insecurity and reactions of law enforcement agents.

4.2 Gender and Political Socialisation in Rural Areas

Research findings are replete with issues related to how gender affect political socialization, most especially in terms of voting and nomination for elective positions. This study reveals that even though females are active participants in party politics, they are still disadvantaged where perception of their role in politics is concerned. This is in tandem with the work of Arowolo and Aluko (2010) whose study on women and political participation in Nigeria concluded that women face massive resistance from participating in politics most especially from the perspective of culture and tradition.

Women vote more than men during election and they are better cheerleaders. I think most of them are just after the money from politicians. Most men do like their wives to participate in partisan politics because of the negativity therein. Women in politics have a high tendency of being promiscuous”, a male FGD participant noted.

Women in politics may appear not very responsible. Most of the women that I know in active politics are no longer living with their husbands, a female FGD participant observed.

Perhaps, one of the reasons for this is captured in the submission of Orisadare (2019) that the present role played by women’s groups at the grassroots may not be adequate in encouraging more women participation. While majority of the female respondents said they will support their husbands if they seek elective posts, majority of the men declined.

A male participant during the FGD noted:

Women do not have the ruggedness associated to Nigerian politics especially where violence is concerned. Women think and act immediately, while men will give an issue series of thoughts before acting. Women are expected to step aside because they cannot handle difficult moments in politics.

Another male participant added:

Politics is a dirty game. I stopped voting many years ago because of the way it is practiced here. It is dirty, very dirty. If I don't participate, my wife and children will definitely not participate too.

The female respondents also identified some of the biases against women in politics as need to manage the home, women in politics are promiscuous, fetish, successful women in politics are egoistic and would not respect their husbands, women in politics cannot stand violence and women are after money. All these perceptions emanate from the wrong conceptions people have about politics.

There should not be restrictions because male and female have equal rights; however, society has placed some restrictions on the women. Men do not like to support their wives because they think their ego would be inflated. Men believe they will lose their wives to another man because they feel insecure, a female FGD participant lamented.

The study also shows that women do not have confidence in themselves where political leadership is concerned, a finding supported by Orisadare (2019) whose study concluded that most women in political groups do not have political agenda but rather prefer patronage and in some cases appointments. The few men who agreed to support their wives to engage in active politics were concerned about the gains that are likely to emanate from it. This is because most of the families in the rural areas who participate in politics do so essentially for domestic and personal needs. This aligned with the findings of Oni and Samuel (2012) that rural women's participation in politics is driven by multiple responsibilities and lack of financial resources.

4.3 Assessment of Democratic Governance by Residents of Rural Areas

Even though democracy is in its uninterrupted twenty fifth year in Nigeria without any form of military intervention, majority of the respondents have scored the democratic system of government low in Nigeria. The finding herein is in tandem with Odo (2015) and Ojukwu (2019) who argued that democracy in Nigeria is plagued by corruption, poor leadership, electoral lapses, rise of insurgency, among others. Participants during the FGD believe that government does not have the interest of the citizens at heart as many people in the rural areas are suffering and they hardly feel the presence of government. However, a few individuals think government has tried in some aspects for their community. A respondent said the community benefitted from rural electrification programme, but the transformer was stolen much later. This could be why Ozohu-Suleiman (2016) stresses that democracy should be treated as work-in-progress, leaving room for optimism regardless of the challenges.

Some respondents despite faulting government in the way democracy is practiced believe that their representatives in government are the ones shortchanging them.

Government at all levels has not been performing up to expectation and her agents are full of deceptions. Nobody in this community is satisfied with the way things are in the community. We voted another party because we wanted change. We brought in the party that was voted out when we

needed fresh air. They performed in the first year but did not do well in the second year, a participant said.

Statistics by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) shows that more polling units are in the rural areas compared to the city. Corrupt practices in leadership are not limited to the city as this findings show; it is also prevalent in rural areas despite the perceived low exposure to urban center complexities.

There are some elements within our community who are sabotaging government efforts in bringing development to our villages.

Government gives local contract to indigenes but most of them rarely deliver, a participant explained.

Democratic government appears to be enjoyed by only a few who are privileged to be in government. For lucky communities where there is government presence in terms of project allocation, the projects are not usually allotted based on merit thereby leading to the total collapse of the project or communal war.

The federal government approved a borehole for our ward. The engineer came to choose to best site for the project and that site happened to be the base of the opposition party to the government in power. Because of this, members of the ruling party in that community protested and the project was relocated to another place. Attempts to get water from the new site proved abortive and the project is abandoned till date, a participant explained.

Many rural dwellers because of failed expectations from government over the years have joined active politics. Ten out the families interviewed are into active politics, while almost half of the survey respondents belonged to different political parties. Majority of the participants during the focus group discussion too were members of various political parties. This shows that people in rural areas are active in politics; however most of them do so for personal and in some cases, community gains.

A participant said:

In my family, we identify with different political groups in the interest of the family. Whoever wins in his or her party brings the dividends back home for the benefit of all". Another respondent explained:

"People are suffering. For us here, we are alive by the grace of God. Even some of us in active politics are being shortchanged.. When they bring job slots from Ibadan or Abuja, the ward leaders share it among themselves.

This study has shown that democracy is highly commoditized in rural areas. This is evidential in the way rural people are treated most especially because poverty has made them vulnerable to the excesses of the ruling class. The ruling class was described as "autocratic" by one of the respondents because according to her, they do what is pleasing to them. The presence of government appears absent in most of the sectors in rural areas and the key problem responsible for this is poor representation. Based on these findings it could be said that democratic governance is very poor in the rural communities and people do not trust the government. This finding is supported by Falade (2014) who also found out that Nigerians do not have trust and confidence in their political leaders. It is a widely held view that most political leaders are selfish and not responsive to the needs of the citizens.

4.4 Test of significant relationship between personal characteristic of the respondents and the method of political participation

Hypothesis one which stated that there is no significant relationship between the personal characteristics of the respondents and method of political participation was tested using binary logistic regression and the result presented in Table 3. The logistic model was statistically significant at 1% level ($\beta = 15.364$, p-value = 0.009). The model explained 5.5% (pseudo R^2) of the variance in the method of political participation and correctly classified 61.9% cases. Findings further reveal significant relationship between age ($\beta = 7.221$, df=1), gender ($\beta \chi^2 = 3.891$, df=1), marital status ($\beta = 4.758$, df=1) and method of political participation. This implies that the respondents' age, gender and marital status influenced the method of political participation in the study area. This result is in line with the findings of Ogbogu and Olaoye (2017) who reported that age of the respondents had influence on their political participation.

Religion appears not significant as the study shows that political decision making is not influenced by religion. It could be argued based on the finding of this study that political decision is mostly driven by personal convictions. This aligns with the submissions Udende (2011), Onapajo (2016), and Ogbogu & Olaoye (2017) on how personal convictions about contestants and individual needs determine political alignment. Education qualification of the respondents does not affect their political socialization because the knowledge people have about politics are mostly acquired informally.

Table 3. Test of significant relationship between personal characteristic of the respondents and their method of political participation

Variables	β	S.E	Wald	Df	p-value	Decision
Age	-0.028	0.010	7.221	1	0.007	S
Gender	-0.435	0.221	3.891	1	0.049	S
Religion	0.227	0.216	1.102	1	0.294	NS
Marital status	0.647	0.296	4.758	1	0.029	S
Educational level	0.264	0.247	1.143	1	0.285	NS
Constant	0.172	0.798	0.047	1	0.829	NS
Log Likelihood	494.857					
R^2	0.054					
Chi-square	15.364					
Overall percentage	61.9					
Df	5					
P value	0.009					

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Note:

NS=Not Significant

S=Significant

Df=Degree of freedom

Significant at 0.05 level

V. Conclusion

1. Residents of rural areas are politically conscious and they engage in basic political activities like voting, joining political parties, attending rallies and giving out space and other facilities for political activities. They hardly practice violent politics because they see themselves as members of a family.
2. Gender, age and marital status play a significant role in determining people's stances on political activities and engagements in rural areas. Women in the rural communities participate actively in party politics regardless of the societal biases against them. Married women find political participation more challenging because of security concerns, familial responsibilities and perceived susceptibility in dealing with the excesses of men in politics.
3. Politics in the rural areas is highly commoditized because of poverty, a factor that has made the people vulnerable to some excesses of the ruling class as it reflects in vote buying. Even with this development, their choice of candidates during election sometimes is based on personal convictions, expectations and needs.
4. There is strong disaffection between residents of rural areas and their representatives in government because of perceived neglect and poor representation. There is a high infrastructural deficit across sectors and this has caused the rural dwellers to rate government low where democratic governance is concerned.

Recommendations

Politics should be devoid of gender biases and dispositions that are likely to dissuade women from participating actively in politics should be discouraged. Residents of rural areas need reorientation on the essence of politics. Politicking has been reduced to a means of survival and if this trend continues it will further worsen the current situation. Government through her agencies, non-governmental organisations, media, educational institutions and other stakeholders should lead the orientation effort in their spheres of influence. In addition, there is the need for political education at the grassroots and this can be achieved by having constant public symposiums, campaigns, house-to-house sensitization and researches that are geared towards creating the ideal mindset needed for politicking.

Government should give unflinching support and show more commitment to the needs of the rural communities most especially by providing basic amenities and other infrastructure that are germane to having a good life. A regime that wants to achieve right political culture and deepen democracy must put the people first, consult them and give them that sense of belonging.

References

- Abdulasheed, A. (2021). Corruption and Democratic Governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Myths and Reality. *Fudma Journal of Management Science*, 4(1).
- Adeleke, R. (2021). Digital divide in Nigeria: The role of regional differentials. *African Journal of Science, Technology, Innovation and Development*, 13(3), 333-346.
- Adewale, A. R. (2011). The political, economic and social dynamics of Nigeria: A synopsis. *AISA Policy Briefing*, (39).
- Adigun, O. W. (2020). The factors determining voter turnouts in presidential elections in Nigeria: Multivariate correlation analysis of the 2019 presidential election. *Open political science*, 3(1), 11-33.

- Aina, O. I. (2012). Two halves make a whole: Gender at the crossroads of the Nigerian development agenda
- Airaoje, O. K., Obada, A. A., & Msughter, A. E. (2023). A Critical Review on Gender Based Violence in Nigeria: Media Dimension. *Humanities*, 3(2), 9-16.
- Aliyu, M. A., Msughter, A. E., & Nneka, A. Q. (2023). Comparative Study of National Development Plans in Nigeria and India: Media Dimension. *SIASAT*, 8(4), 202-212.
- Aluko, M.A.O. & Ajani, O.A. (2006). Factors militating against women participation in politics. In F.A. Oyekanmi., and O. Soyombo. (Eds.), *Society and governance: The quest for legitimacy in Nigeria*. (138-156). Department of Sociology, UNILAG.
- Aluko, O. I., & Sayuti, U. (2016). Visiting the hippopotamus: National integration issues in Nigeria. *Romanian Journal of Regional Science*. 10(1), 68-85.
- Aondover, E. M., Hile, M. M. & Yar'Adua, S. M. (2023). Ethical Issues and Insecurity in Africa: The Media Dimension. *Konfrontasi Journal: Culture, Economy and Social Changes*, 10 (2), 58-68 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33258/konfrontasi2.v10i2.272>.
- Aondover, E. M., Tosin, Y. A. N., Akin-Odukoya, O. O., Onyejelem, T. E., & Ridwan, M. (2025). Exploring the Application of Social Media in Governance in Nigeria. *SIASAT*, 10(1), 30-43.
- Aondover, P. O., Aondover, E. M., & Babele, A. M. (2022). Two nations, same technology, different outcomes: Analysis of technology application in Africa and America. *Journal of Educational Research and Review*, 1(1), 001-008.
- Arisukwu, O., Igbolekwu, C., Oye, J., Oyeyipo, E., Asamu, F., Rasak, B., & Oyekola, I. (2020). Community participation in crime prevention and control in rural Nigeria. *Heliyon*, 6(9), 1-7
- Ashindorbe, K., & Danjibo, N. (2022). Two decades of democracy in Nigeria. *Journal of African Elections*, 21(2) 168-183
- Awofeso, O. & Odeyemi, T.I. (2014). Gender and Political Participation in Nigeria: A Cultural Perspective. *Journal of Research in Peace, Gender and Development*. 4(6), 104-110.
- Azoro, C. J., Onah, C. A., & Agulefo, Q. O. (2021). Weak institutions and poor governance in Nigeria: a socio-legal perspective. *African Journal of Law, Political Research and Administration*, 4(2), 61-70.
- Bisong, P. B., & Asira, A. E. (2020). Consolidating the Gains and Reshaping the Future of Democracy in Nigeria. *PINISI Discretion Review*, 4(1), 33-42.
- Byron, I. P. (2024). Bridging the gap on gender inequality and sustaining the political participation of women in Nigeria. *African Journal of Law and Human Rights*, 8(1), 7-14
- Chigbu, U. E., & Antonio, D. (2019). Rural-urban inter-relationships in an urbanising world: the literature perspective of Nigeria. *FIG Working Week, Hanoi*, 22-26.
- Chitongo, L., & Ojogiwa, O. T. (2021). The Efficacy of Women Participation in Governance and Development: The Case of Nigeria. *Gender and Behaviour*, 19(2), 17982-17992.
- Efeurhobo, D. O., & Egbon, T. N. (2023). The challenges of democratic governance and educational development in Nigeria. *Management*, 5(2), 127-135.
- Egbuniwe, S. V. (2024). Low Women Participation in Politics: A Nigerian Assessment; 1999-2023.
- Etim, N. A., Urama, C. E., Mohammed, J., & Asa, U. A. (2023). The nexus between democratic governance and sustainable development in Nigeria. *African Journal of Economic and Sustainable Development*, 9(2), 138-154.

- Falade, D.A. (2014). Political Participation in Nigerian Democracy: A Study of Some Selected Local Government Areas in Ondo State, Nigeria. *Global Journal of Human-Social Science for Political Science*, 14(8): 16-23.
- Folarin, S. (2021). Corruption, politics and governance in Nigeria. *Nigerian politics*, 377-394.
- García del Horno, R., Rico, G., & Hernández, E. (2024). Do they feel like they don't matter? The rural-urban divide in external political efficacy. *West European Politics*, 47(7), 1447-1472.
- Hile, M. M., Msughter, A. E., & Aliyu, M. A. (2023). Secularism and Ethical Issues in Media Practice as a Bane for National Development. *SIASAT*, 8(3), 166-177.
- Idris, M. K., & Msughter, A. E. (2022). Sources of Information on National Issues among Border Communities in Yobe State, Nigeria. *ASEAN Journal of Community Engagement*, 6(1), 22-47.
- INEC and FES. (2011). Voter apathy and the 2011 Elections in Nigeria. Retrieved from <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/nigeria/08931.pdf>
- Itiafa, A. L., & Msughter, A. E. (2022). Chapter sixteen utilisation of social media for political participation amongst undergraduates of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and Bayero University, Kano. *Thoughts on*, 180.
- Lust-Orkar, E. (2007). Election under Authoritarian: Parliamentary Lesson from Jordan. *Democratization* 13 (3), 57-69.
- Meaadowcroft, J.M., and Fitzpatrick, M.A. (1988). *Theories of Family Communication in Advancing Communication Science: Merging Mass and Interpersonal Processes*. Sage.
- Mojubaolu, O.O. and Zakiya, A.S. (2007). *Women's Political Participation in Nigeria 2007 General Elections*. Book Builders.
- Msughter, A. E. (2019). Good governance and accountability: an assessment of the media's role in achieving transparency in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Africanos*, 4(7).
- Msughter, A. E. (2024). Comparative Study of Hate Speech in the 2015 and 2019 General Elections in Three Selected Newspapers in Nigeria. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 00219096231224693.
- Msughter, A. E., & Pate, H. A. (2021). National interest, freedom of expression and the Nigerian press in contemporary democratic context. *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Africanos*, 6(11).
- Msughter, A. E., Hile, M. M., & Bappa, F. S. (2022). Have you Heard What They Are Doing to Women? Media Portrayal of Female Celebrities in Nigerian Press. *Konfrontasi: Jurnal Kultural, Ekonomi dan Perubahan Sosial*, 9(2), 186-197.
- Msughter, A. E., Maradun, L. U., & Liman, A. M. (2021). Media Narratives in Reflections on Good Governance and Accountability in Nigeria. *GSJ*, 9(11).
- Nkwede, J. O. (2019). Political parties, citizen participation and voter behaviour in Africa: A study of Nigeria. *European Journal of Scientific Research*, 152(1), 83-92.
- Obani, E. F., & Odalonu, B. H. (2019). Election and voting behavior in Nigeria. *South-East COEASU Journal of Teacher Education*, 5(1), 122-131.
- Odo, L. U. (2015). Democracy, good governance, and development in Nigeria: the challenges of leadership. *IOSR-JHSS: IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 20(6), 01-09.
- Oduntan, A. A., Ademola, A. Z. E. E. Z., & Temidayo, O. L. A. D. I. P. O. (2023). Vote buying: A critical election risk factor in Nigeria. *Res Militaris*, 13(3), 2202-2211.

- Ogbo, E., Brown, T., & Sicker, D. (2017). Understanding mobile service substitution and the urban-rural Digital Divide in Nigeria. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2944367>
- Ogbogu, C. O. (2012). The role of women in politics and in the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 3(18), 182-191
- Ojukwu, U. G., Mazi-Mbah, C. C. and Maduekwe, V.C. (2019). Elections and democratic consolidation: A study of 2019 general elections in Nigeria. *Direct Research Journal*. 6(4), 53-64.
- Okaiyeto, S. A. O., Oluwadele, M. S., & Bolutife, L. (2021). Youth perception on the importance of voting during elections in Nigeria. *New Media and Mass Communication*, 95, 75-80.
- Oko, U. and Oguud, F. M. (2010). The impact of political socialization on political participation – a Nigerian viewpoint. *Continental Journal of Social Sciences*. 3(2): 44 – 49.
- Okunade, B. A., Adediran, F. E., Balogun, O. D., Maduka, C. P., Adegoke, A. A., & Daraojimba, R. E. (2023). Gender policies and women's empowerment in Nigeria: an analytical review of progress and barriers. *International Journal of Applied Research in Social Sciences*, 5(10), 543-565.
- Olaniyi, J. O. (2017). State Independent Electoral Commissions and local government elections in Nigeria. *Africa's Public Service Delivery & Performance Review*, 5(1), 10.
- Omotayo, F. O., & Adekunle, O. A. (2021). Adoption and use of electronic voting system as an option towards credible elections in Nigeria. *International Journal of Development Issues*, 20(1), 38-61.
- Omotayo, F., & Folorunso, M. B. (2020). Use of social media for political participation by youths. *JeDEM-eJournal of eDemocracy and Open Government*, 12(1), 132-157.
- Onapajo, H. (2016). Politics and the Pulpit: The rise and decline of religion in Nigeria's 2015 presidential elections. *Journal of African Elections*, 15(2), 112-135.
- Oni, S., Oni, A. A., Ibietan, J., & Deinde-Adedeji, G. O. (2020). E-consultation and the quest for inclusive governance in Nigeria. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 6(1), 1-12
- Onyekachi, J. (2016). Structural defect in local government re-organization in Ebonyi State Nigeria: Implications on grass root democratic development. *Review of Public Administration and Management*, 4(2), 1-8.
- Orisadare, M. A. (2019). An assessment of the role of women group in women political participation, and economic development in Nigeria. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 4(52), 1-7
- Othman, M. F., & Okpe, V. V. (2021). Assessment of political participation and democratic governance in Nigeria's fourth republic. *Pertanika J. Soc. Sci. Humanit*, 29(1), 547-563.
- Owens-Ibie, N., & Aondover, E. M. (2024). Hate postings on social media and peace imperatives in Nigeria. *Legal challenges and political strategies in the post-truth era*.
- Oyewole, S., Shola Omotola, J. (2022). Democracy Without *Demos!*: Political Mobilisation, Public Opinion and Governance in Nigeria. In: Ibeanu, O., Okoye, I., Alumona, I.M., Aniche, E.T. (eds) *Anonymous Power*. Palgrave Macmillan, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-6058-0_13
- Oyuru, R. A. (2023). An assessment of factors responsible for low voter turnout in Nigeria: A literature review. *Kashere Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 1(1), 297-303

- Ozohu-Suleiman A. (2016). Democracy, Good Governance and Development in Nigeria. *Journal of Public Administration and Policy Research*. 8(7): 80-88.
- PLAC (2018). Women's political representation in Nigeria: Why progress is slow, what can be done to fast track it. <http://www.plalng.orf>.
- Singal, M. (2014). *Role of media in society*. Random Publications.
- Udende, P. (2011). Mass media, political awareness and voting behaviour in the Nigeria's 2011 Presidential Election. ACCE paper presented at Covenant University, 20-22nd Sept, 2011 :(493-501).
- Vitalis, P. O., Aondover, E. M., Ogunbola, O., Onyejelem, T. E., & Ridwan, M. (2025). Accessing Digital Divide and Implications in Nigeria: The Media Dimension. *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal (BIRCI-Journal)*, 8(1), 1-12.
- Yar'Adua, S. M., Msughter, A. E., & Aliyu, M. A. (2023). Original Paper Modernization, Marxist, Dependency and Alternative Theories of Development Communication: A Critical Review.
- Yar'Adua, S. M., Msughter, A. E., & Garba, S. (2023). Media and National Development in Democratic Societies. *Polit Journal Scientific Journal of Politics*, 3(3), 105-115.