

# Controlling Youths Participation in Politics in Sokoto State: A Constructive Inclusiveness for Good Governance in Nigeria

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**Abstract**—Political participation involves voluntary and deliberate efforts by the members of a political system to determine the kinds of political institution and individuals that will govern them and equally influence the mobilization and allocation of the available societal resources. Over the years, youths in Nigeria participate actively in political party rallies and voting to elect their leaders and representatives in governance. This paper examines categories and nature of participation in politics as well as factors that drive youths into politics in Sokoto State. A survey conducted, through focus group discussions, interviews and questionnaire, in the six sampled Local Government of Sokoto State identifies three category of political participation; namely, active, moderate and apathetic participation. The findings reveal that 63.57% of respondents are apathetic to politics in the State and unemployed youth constitutes 34.74% of the entire responses. The paper establishes that lack of attainment of need (63.22%) is one of the reasons that make youths engage into participatory activities that encourage political thuggery and manipulation of electoral outcomes. The paper recommends that youths should be engaged into positive rational participatory activities that ensure inclusiveness and promotion of good governance in Nigeria. It is hoped that this will enlighten youths and policy implementers on the constructive strategies in controlling youths' negative participation in politics in Nigeria.

**Keywords**—Democracy, Governance, Inclusiveness, Participation and Politics.

## I. INTRODUCTION

TODAY, Nigerian state is experiencing a versatile socio-political problems, which can be basically traced not only to the diversity of the country's population, but also to the way and manner the population demonstrates its political participation in the polity. Since independence in 1960, the tasks of national integration and youth's participation in politics have been tempestuous in Nigeria. Thus, participatory grievances had resulted into numerous political instabilities and disconnects of youths in the allocation of the available resources in the country. Starting from the thirty-month-long destructive Civil War (1970–76), to the environmental struggles and insurgency by youths in the Niger Delta Oil Producing region, to a more recent uprising by Boko Haram terrorist elements in the North-Eastern Nigeria, series of state instability and insecurity were caused by youth disconnects and improper political participation. The participatory trend has also induced in the country's socio-political arena

centripetal attitudes of ethnic and religious indifferences, ethnic militia agitations, manipulation by elites and economic uncertainties and depression. However, in Sokoto State, many of the youth groups have been placed in vulnerable position due to problem of unemployment or under-employment. The youths are used by the political class for fraudulent and thuggery practice in their selfish political pursuit. This has raised concern by the parents and some policy makers for the government to take account of the impact of policies on various groups within the polity to ensure constructive inclusiveness for good governance and well-being of the entire society. It is against this background that the paper examines categories and nature of youth's participation in politics in Sokoto State; analyzes factors that drive youths into politics in Sokoto State; and provide constructive strategies for controlling youth's participation in politics in Nigeria.

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this paper is to suggest strategies that will ensure control of youth in political participation in Sokoto state for inclusive and good governance in Nigeria. However, the paper has the following specific objectives:

1. To investigate the categories and nature of youths participation in politics in Sokoto State.
2. To examine factors that drive youths into politics in Sokoto State.
3. To provide constructive strategies for controlling youths participation in politics.

## III. METHODOLOGY

The research used both primary and secondary methods of data collection. For the primary sources, focus group discussion, questionnaire and interview were adopted as instrument for retrieving information from youth groups and political and opinion leaders. In the course of the research, various textbooks, journal, newspapers, and other publications by government and non-governmental organization and institutions were consulted as secondary sources. The research used stratified random sampling to select six Local Governments out of the entire twenty-three Local Governments population of Sokoto State. In each Local Government one hundred questionnaires were distributed making a total number of six hundred questionnaire for the entire population. In the Sampling, two local governments were selected each from the three senatorial districts of the

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state; the sampled local governments are Tambuwal and Bodinga Local Government (from Sokoto West Senatorial district), Sokoto South and Wamakko (from central district) and Sabon Birni and Gada (from the Eastern district).

In the process of data analysis, both the qualitative and quantitative methods are adopted. The qualitative method entails description of the content obtained from textbook, journals and other publications to review and determine the nature and level of political participation among the youth of Sokoto State. Equally, the use of quantitative analysis is seen necessary as it allows for the descriptive statistical analysis using frequencies and percentages in presenting the findings of the research.

#### IV. DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

The word democracy is an elastic one that means different things to different people, scholars, and governments. Precisely, democracy can be referred to as a limited government [1]. Olutayo and Abisoye [2] described democracy as the free expression and determination by the people of a polity of how their society should be governed. It involves a process of electing leaders who will form a government of the people with a view to represent the interest of the entire members of the society [3]. Similarly, there are different forms of democracy as there are different conceptions of democracy; there are direct and indirect representations. This classification makes the concept of democracy synonymous with representation. There are republican or liberal and socialist democracies. This categorization determines the type of democratic ideals and institutions that are enshrined for the selection of leaders who are expected to be responsive to the electorates. Equally, it also determines avenue for a peaceful transfer of power from one government to another; thus, a peaceful political coexistence among different groups and a robust economic and social wellbeing of the society. Whatever conception or classification is considered, election is central to any democratic process.

It is worthy to note that Nigeria has, since its second republic (1979), claimed to have practiced liberal democracy modeled on the United States of American presidential system of governance. By that it means, the country should be governed through a mirror of rule of law, human rights protection, promotion of accountability, transparency, devolution of power and resources as well as facilitation of meaningful participation of citizens in policy making and distribution of the society's scarce resources. All these are usually described as principles of good governance. However, World Bank defined governance as management of a country's socio-economic resources. According to World Bank [4], for governance to be considered good it has to serve three major purposes: One, it should be a form of autonomous political regime; two, it must reflect a process through which authority is exercised in the management of a state's socio-economic resources for development; and lastly, it should possess the capacity and capability of institutions to formulate

and implement policies and discharge all necessary functions. These aspects of good governance can be confidently associated with democratic political regimes [4]. According to [5], democratic good governance is the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs at all levels, and which comprises the complex mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and group articulate their interest, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations. This definition illustrates the connections between democratic regime, good governance, and political participation. It also clearly pointed out that democracy or good governance cannot be attained without citizens or group articulation of interests and active participation. Thus, the idea of political participation was first developed in ancient Greek in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C, where the adult male citizens met together in an assembly discussed, and debated issues in policy and law enactment [6]. This ancient effort of participation demonstrates a classical trend in direct democracy. Thus, political participation in Nigeria started since the colonial time, when a number of elections had been recorded during the colonial rule that went in line with the country's constitution then. In 1914, Lord Lugard, the then governor general set up a legislative council that provided for the participation of Nigerians from different part of the protectorates for representation in governance [7].

In essence, political participation is defined by [8] as "those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and or the elections they take." Murphy and Danielson [9] viewed political participation as simplest and cheapest form manifesting in voting and as a broader and complex form where citizens can influence the choice of public officials and public policies. Milbrath [10] classified political participation into different levels from top to button rungs. There is the speculator level of participation that consists of activities such as voting, exposure to political stimuli and talking about politics. There is what is called the transitional level that constitutes attending meetings, donating money or contacting on official; then the gladiator which engages in activities such as running for office, soliciting funds, and working on a campaign. And the lower level is the button rung that consist of those who do not engage in any activity. From the foregoing it has been established that political participation is much more than voting in election. However, it involves ways by which individuals can influence the outcomes of their public policies. Conversely, Nigeria's political regimes, processes and governance, between 1983 and 1999, have been greeted with prolonged military authoritarian rule with pledges of endless transition programmes to civil rule [3]. The politics and participatory processes have made the civil society and politicians disenchanting and dejected in the hope of getting ideal democratic dividends vis-a-vis good governance. Thus, starting from 31<sup>st</sup> December the military altered Nigeria's journey to full democratization under Leadership of General Muhammadu Buhari by overthrowing the elected democratic government of President Shehu Shagari. More so, the military

regime of General Ibrahim Babangida initiated and aborted a transition programme by the annulment of June 12, 1992 Presidential election. This followed by another transition programme that was also truncated by the sudden death of General Sani Abacha, a military strong man. The coming into power of General Abdussalam Abubakar, after the death of General Abacha, sprinted at the peak of intensive pressure for a return to democratic political regime. Hence, General Abdussalam's administration planned and implemented a rushed return to democratic rule in Nigeria. In this regards, [11] argued that it was against this backdrop that politicians of all shades, a mixture of ex-military officers and business magnets in the country who are mainly "gatecrashers, moneybags, fraudsters and other opportunists" emerged and opportunistically ventured into politics. It is important to note that democracy founded under this kind of background need some constructive strategies to mend the negative participatory trend as well as provide a rational inclusive means for good governance in it.

#### V. POLITICS OF INCLUSIVENESS AND THE RATIONAL CHOICE

A number of theories contend to explain how best to craft strategies for political participation. Kavanagh [12] identifies, at least, five different theories or analytical models for interpreting the Participatory behaviour of people (i.e. voting decision). These include: one, Structural Participation model which sees political participation as being structured or determined by a host of factors over which are external to individual voters and therefore to a great extent outside of their immediate control. Two, Sociological model which analyses voting decision on the basis of voter's political preferences that are determined by such social characteristics as his/her socio-economic status, education or residence. Three, Aggregate Statistical Model which relates aggregate votes to general features of an area, be it a constituency, housing estate, or region. Four, there is Socio-psychological model that interprets the voting decisions as the amount of the voter's psychological predispositions or attitudes. All these models were criticized for their determinism and reductionism to their respective areas. And lastly, there is the Rational Choice model which this paper attempt to use in the analysis of strategies to be used for inclusiveness in good governance.

The Rational Choice model relies on assumptions that make deduction about the instrumental and cost-effective behaviour of a person participating in politics. According to this model, individuals should participate in politics based on the calculations of gains and losses they would derive, with a view to "maximize gains" and "minimize losses." The model's assumptions include voters' calculations about the cost of voting, the probability that their vote would affect electoral output and the policies they set to influence. The model has been criticized on the fact of economic deterministic and on the voters' reliance on shortcuts interests such as traditional ideology, ethnicity or party identification in making decisions instead of emphasizing on parties or policies overall societal concern. Perhaps, because of this, many participants in politics are seen to behave non-rationally. Still, the model is relevant

in explaining the basis of youth participation in politics and in recommending strategies for ensuring control of youth in political participation in Sokoto state for inclusive and good governance in Nigeria.

#### VI. CATEGORY AND EXTENT OF YOUTH POLITICAL

Table I identifies three categories of respondents concerning participation in politics in Sokoto state – active with 10.33%, moderate (Participating) with 18.56% and apathetic (Not Participating) with 63.57%. Active level of participation signifies, in addition to voting during election, attending meetings, donating money or contacting on party officials. Participating means moderate activities such as voting, exposure to political stimuli and talking about politics as well as taking part in rallies and campaign. The apathetic constitutes those who do not take part in any activity. Table I shows that 63.57% of the respondents demonstrate apathy towards voting and political activities in Sokoto state. This has confirmed what Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) noted with regard to 2011 general election that only 35% of the 70 million registered Nigerians participated in the election [13]. Okeke [13] attributes the apathy to lack of transparent election, election violence, and politicians' non-committal to campaign promises. Similarly, Table I recognizes unemployment as the determining aspect of the extent of participation. Unemployed male youth takes the highest rank with 2.97% in active participation and 6.65% in moderate participation respectively. This may not be unconnected with not only their desire to secure higher positions and promotion in the place of work but also acquire job security with that active participation. Employed female respondents take the lowest rank in active participation while underemployed female respondents (1.27%) rank lowest in voting and other political activities. This illustrates the consequence of gender on political participation in Nigeria. Akande [14] pointed out that Participation of women in Nigerian politics is mostly limited to membership of women's wing political parties, clapping, dancing, and cooking for the men at political rallies.

#### VII. REASONS FOR YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Table II indicates that respondents take money so important with 18.38%, which constitute the highest in the identified reasons for participation in politics. A focus group discussion conducted in the sample area establishes that politicians have been reported to buying up votes at the rate of Ten Thousand Naira (#10,000.00). This has contributed to the irrational participation of youth in politics and this is proved by the level of responses on the need for capital project with 9.10% and for employment with 11.55% ranking lower than the need for money.

Table III shows that majority of the respondents, constituting 63.22%, do not attain what they desired for in their participation. It is only 9.98% attained their needs in the participation. This also shows the connection and congruency between lack of attainment of need (63.22%) and political apathy (63.57%) of Nigerian citizens toward politics. This also

demonstrates one of several reasons responsible for youth engagement into electoral fraud, manipulations, and other electoral malfeasances.

TABLE I  
CATEGORY AND EXTENT OF YOUTH PARTICIPATING IN POLITICS IN SOKOTO STATE

S/N	Category of Youth	Actively Participating		Participating		Not Participating		No Response		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Employed Male	10	1.75	17	2.97	62	10.85	6	1.05	94	16.46
2	Employed Female	6	1.05	13	2.27	37	6.47	7	1.22	63	11.03
3	Unemployed Male	17	2.97	38	6.65	122	21.36	10	1.75	187	32.74
4	Unemployed Female	8	1.40	15	2.62	53	9.28	8	1.40	83	14.53
5	Underemployed Male	11	1.92	14	2.45	51	8.93	5	0.87	81	14.18
6	Underemployed Female	7	1.22	9	1.57	38	6.65	7	1.22	61	10.68
	Total	59	10.33	106	18.56	363	63.57	43	7.53	571	100

TABLE II  
REASONS FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS IN SOKOTO STATE

S/N	Reason for Participation	Male		Female		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Need for Money	61	10.68	44	7.70	105	18.38
2	Need for Capital Project	37	6.47	15	2.62	52	9.10
3	Need for Employment	43	7.53	23	4.02	66	11.55
4	Party Support	61	10.68	34	5.95	95	16.63
5	Peer group Influence	67	11.73	34	5.95	101	17.68
6	Other	20	3.50	17	2.97	37	6.47
7	Don't Know	70	12.25	45	7.88	115	20.14
	Total	359	62.87	212	37.12	571	100

TABLE III  
ATTAINMENT OF THE FOCUS NEEDS OF YOUTH BY THEIR PARTICIPATION

S/N	Level of Attainment	Frequency	Percentage
1	Highly attained	57	9.98
2	Partially attained	107	18.73
3	Not attained	361	63.22
4	Don't know	41	7.18
	Total	571	100

### VIII. CONCLUSION

The attempt in the paper has been to find out categories, extent and reasons for youth political participation in Nigeria with the hope of suggesting strategies for controlling their participation for inclusive good governance in Nigeria. A survey conducted in the sampled Local Government of Sokoto State identifies three category of political participation; namely, active, moderate and apathetic participation. The findings reveal that 63.57% of respondents are apathetic to politics in the State and unemployed youth constitutes 34.74% of the entire responses. The paper establishes that lack of attainment of need (63.22%) and political apathy (63.57%) are some of the reason that make youths engage into electoral fraud, manipulations and other electoral malfeasances.

### IX. CONSTRUCTIVE STRATEGIES FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

Democratic good governance means the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs at all levels. It also comprises the complex mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and group articulate their

interest, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations. Governance and politics in Nigeria comprises politicians of all shades that is – a mixture of ex-military officers and business magnets in the country who are mainly “gatecrashers, moneybags and fraudsters. It is important to note that governance and politics in the country require some constructive strategies to mend the negative participatory trend as well as provide a rational inclusive means for good governance in it. This rational approach should take into considerations and address the issue of unemployment, political apathy, and electoral frauds. In fact, the use of Card Reader for Verification Voters has helped a lot in 2015 general election; indeed, this is a commendable rational approach, therefore, more rational measures should be taken by the INEC in future. The issue of women participation is also critical as there is need for elaborate and intensive rational political education in order to improve their participation. Rational political education entails enlightening the youths on the assumptions that make deductions about the instrumental and cost-effective behaviour of participating in politics. Thus, Nigerian youth should participate in politics based on the calculations of long term gains and losses they would drive, with a view to “maximize gains” and “minimize

losses;” instead of superficial and short term gains such as needs for money, party or peer group supports.

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