AN ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECT OF THE ACTIVE AND PASSIVE POLITICAL BEHAVIOR OF CITIZENS ON GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

LAMBE EMMANUEL OYEWOLE, *emmanuel.lambe60@gmail.com*
HASSAN SEYID ISHOLA, *seyid.hassan@kwasu.edu.ng*
BASHIR OLADIMEJI ABDULRAZAQ, *oladimejiokoh@gmail.com*
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE, KWARA STATE UNIVERSITY, ILORIN, NIGERIA

KEYWORDS
Democracy, Governance, Virtue, System of Government, Civic Engagement

ABSTRACT
Democratic elections are fundamental to the functioning of democratic systems, providing citizens with the opportunity to participate in political decision-making processes. However, in third world countries, the extent and nature of political participation vary widely, influenced by a range of socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors. This research aims to provide insights into the phenomenon of active and passive thinking in democratic elections, highlighting its implications for democratic governance and development. Using the quantitative and primary methods of research and the research drawing on a synthesis of existing literature and empirical studies, the research explores the factors influencing political participation and electoral behavior among citizens in these contexts. Socio-economic, cultural, institutional, and informational factors are analyzed to understand the prevalence of active and passive thinking in democratic elections, with implications for democratic governance and development outcomes. The research found out that, Nigeria democracy is unique to western democracy therefore results to varying outcomes. The research recommends that, INEC in collaboration with the National Assembly needs to reconfigure campaigns to ensure tribalism and identity are eliminated during elections. There is urgent need to foster inclusivity and social cohesion by addressing underlying socio-economic disparities and promoting equal opportunities for all citizens. Encourage participation of marginalized groups in decision-making processes and ensure their representation in political institutions.

Introduction:

The global landscape witnesses a complex interplay of ideologies and practices, with Africa, particularly Nigeria, striving to reconcile indigenous values with Western paradigms in politics and economics. Despite adopting democratic principles from the train of democracy, Nigeria grapples with persistent challenges hindering the consolidation of its democratic institutions (Ambali, 2019). Nigeria,

like many African nations, has embraced Western democratic ideals, reflecting a desire for political stability and economic growth. This adoption is evident in the establishment of democratic structures and the promotion of free-market principles (Birch, 2015). However, the mere adoption of these values does not guarantee their seamless integration into the socio-political fabric of the nation.

Nigeria's democratic journey is marked by impediments stemming from multifaceted factors, including identity politics, vested interests, and the dichotomy between passive and active voter engagement. In the constitutional development of Nigeria, it was noted that the British found an already established political system in Nigeria which made it adopt the indirect rule system. The already established political system, had an already established political culture, because they go together. The Mirage of this, still influences Nigeria political system till today. The poliitical culture of Nigeria is influenced by ethnic and religious identities which often overshadow political discourse, leading to polarization and fragmentation (Bratton & Mattes, 2016). Furthermore, the prevalence of patronage politics undermines the democratic process, perpetuating a cycle of corruption and nepotism (Osaghae, 2013).

One perplexing aspect of Nigeria's democratic landscape is the role of active and passive thinking among its populace. Scholars and policymakers alike are confronted with the question of why some citizens engage actively in democratic processes while others remain apathetic or susceptible to manipulation. This phenomenon reflects deeper socio-cultural dynamics and historical legacies that shape individual perceptions of democracy and civic responsibility (Diamond, 2008).

In analyzing the dynamics of active and passive thinking in Nigeria's democratic landscape, scholars and policymakers has often emphasize the influence of tribalism, level of education, and religion in the influence of the political culture. Tribal affiliations play a significant role in shaping political allegiances and perceptions of democracy, as individuals often prioritize loyalty to their ethnic group over broader national interests (Suberu, 2001). This phenomenon contributes to the fragmentation of the political landscape and impedes efforts towards national cohesion and inclusivity. Furthermore, the level of education attained by individuals has been identified as a crucial determinant of political participation and engagement. Higher levels of education are associated with increased political awareness, critical thinking skills, and a deeper understanding of democratic principles (Adebanwi, 2016). Conversely, limited access to quality education has been seen to exacerbate voter apathy and susceptibility to manipulation by political elites, propagating cycles of ignorance and disenfranchisement. Religion, is also a factor which has been seen to exert a profound influence on Nigeria's democratic processes, with religious identities often intersecting with political affiliations and agendas. Religious leaders wield significant influence over their followers, leveraging religious rhetoric to sway public opinion and mobilize support for particular candidates or policies (Ekeh, 1997). This dynamic not only exacerbates divisions along religious lines but also complicates efforts to promote secular governance and protect the rights of religious minorities. So, the interplay between tribalism, level of education, and religion shapes the active and passive thinking of Nigeria's populace in relation to democracy, this reality therefore serves as a factor that differentiates western society's democracies and Africa democracies.

Statement of the problem

The stagnation of Nigeria's democracy (Rufai, 2023), marked by its inability to progress beyond tentative steps, perpetuates a cycle of underdevelopment that pervades other sectors of the country. While political leadership plays a central role in driving development initiatives, on the part of the citizens, the underlying factors of passive and active thinking stresses the critical importance of democratic engagement in selecting capable leaders and fostering a conducive environment for development.

The completion of a democratic process hinges on the active participation of citizens in choosing representatives who will champion their interests and implement policies that drives socio-economic progress (Economic Commission for Africa, 2012). However, pervasive voter apathy and the continuous susceptibility of voters to manipulation hinder the selection of competent leaders capable of steering the nation towards sustainable development. This lack of quality civic engagement diminishes the accountability of elected officials and perpetuates a culture of

impunity, where political leaders prioritize personal gain over the public good (Adeniran, 2016).

Moreover, the prevalence of identity politics and patronage networks in Nigeria's democracy further exacerbates the challenge of selecting leaders based on merit rather than affiliations. The issue of tribal loyalties and patron-client relationships has most of the time dictated electoral outcomes, sidelining qualified candidates and perpetuating a cycle of mediocrity in governance (Suberu, 2001). Consequently, the failure of Nigeria's democracy to transcend its nascent stage has far-reaching implications on the country's overall development trajectory. This in turn stifles efforts to address pressing socio-economic challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and infrastructure deficits (World Bank, 2018).

Research Objectives

The research aims to examine the impact of active and passive thinking on democratic backwardness in the context of democratic elections.

The specific objective are to:

1. Investigate the concept of active thinking in democratic elections and its relationship to democratic backwardness.
2. Explore the concept of passive thinking in democratic elections and its impact on democratic backwardness.
3. Examine the factors that contribute to active thinking among voters in democratic elections.
4. Analyze the factors that contribute to passive thinking among voters in democratic elections.
5. Assess the effects of active and passive thinking on the overall democratic process and its implications for democratic backwardness.

Methodology

The research carried out the study of the objective through the use of primary research method using quantitative data. A close ended questionnaire is employed to serve as instruments of data collection, which is structured on a five-point Likert-type scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), undecided (U), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD). Nominal values would be assigned to the options as follows:

Strongly agree	-	5
Agree	-	4
Undecided	-	3
Disagree	-	2
Strongly disagree	-	1

The results of the study were analyzed using excel data analysis.

Theoretical framework

Modernization theory

Modernization Theory posits that economic development and social progress are contingent upon the adoption of modern institutions, including democracy, education, and rational decision-making processes (Parsons, 1951). In the context of Nigeria, the theory elucidates how the failure of democratic institutions to consolidate and function effectively impedes the nation's modernization efforts.

According to Modernization Theory, the transition from traditional to modern societies requires the establishment of democratic governance structures that promote political participation, accountability, and the rule of law (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). However, Nigeria's democratic journey has been marred by challenges such as voter apathy, identity politics, and corruption, which hinder the consolidation of democratic norms and values.

Moreover, Modernization Theory emphasizes the role of education in facilitating socio-economic development by equipping individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary for modernization (Tilly, 1990). In the Nigerian context, limited access to quality education exacerbates voter ignorance and susceptibility to manipulation, thereby undermining the democratic process and impeding efforts towards development.

Application of the theory

Modernization Theory is a very important theory in explaining the role of quality citizen participation in driving overall development initiatives and fostering societal progress (Huntington, 1968). However, Nigeria's political landscape is characterized by a deficiency of visionary leadership, as entrenched interests and patronage networks often dictate electoral outcomes, sidelining competent candidates and perpetuating a cycle of underdevelopment. Thus, Modernization Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the challenges facing Nigeria's democracy and their implications for development. By highlighting the interplay between democratic consolidation, education, and leadership, the theory elucidates the multifaceted nature of Nigeria's developmental predicament.

Literature Review

Concept of Active and passive thinking in Democratic elections in Third World Countries

In democratic elections in third world countries, the concepts of active and passive thinking play a significant role in shaping electoral outcomes and political participation among citizens as this separate the two groups of thinking in electoral process. Active thinking refers to the mindset and behavior of individuals who actively engage in the electoral process by exercising their right to vote, participating in political campaigns, and advocating for their preferred candidates or parties. These individuals are informed about political issues, aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens, and motivated to make a difference through their participation in democratic elections. Passive thinking, on the other hand, characterizes individuals who exhibit disengagement or apathy towards the electoral process. These individuals may choose not to vote, refrain from participating in political activities, or express indifference towards the political system and its outcomes. Passive thinkers may feel disillusioned with the political process, perceive their vote as inconsequential, or lack trust in political institutions and leaders.

Causative factors that influence active and passive thinking in Nigeria elections

1. Socio-economic factors: Poverty, lack of access to education, and economic marginalization can limit individuals' ability and motivation to participate actively in the electoral process, leading to passive thinking among disadvantaged populations. Thus, individuals who are spiteful in this manner are therefore easily manipulated into passive thinking and while others care less of the political process.

2. Political culture: Cultural norms, traditions, and historical legacies shape perceptions of democracy and political engagement. In some cases, ingrained attitudes towards authority, patronage, and clientelism may contribute to passive thinking and discourage active participation in democratic elections.

3. Electoral integrity: Perceptions of electoral fraud, irregularities, and manipulation can undermine trust in the electoral process and deter citizens from participating actively in elections. Lack of confidence in the fairness and transparency of elections may lead to passive thinking among voters.

4. Governance and accountability: Weak democratic institutions, corruption, and lack of political accountability can erode citizens' confidence in the political system and discourage active engagement in democratic elections. In the absence of effective governance, citizens may feel powerless to effect meaningful change through their participation in elections.

5. Media and information dissemination: Access to impartial and accurate information about political candidates, parties, and issues is essential for informed decision-making in democratic elections. Limited access to independent media and censorship may contribute to passive thinking among citizens who lack access to diverse sources of information.

Concept of Political Culture

This concept refers to the shared values, beliefs, and attitudes that shape individuals' perceptions of politics and government (Almond & Verba, 1963). In Nigeria, deep-seated cultural factors such as tribalism and religious affiliations

influence political behavior, undermining the consolidation of democratic norms and hindering development efforts. Political culture plays a crucial role in shaping the phenomenon of active and passive thinking within Nigeria's democratic landscape. Political culture refers to the collective values, beliefs, and attitudes that influence individuals' perceptions of politics and government (Almond & Verba, 1963). In the context of Nigeria, the country's diverse political culture is deeply intertwined with historical legacies, socio-economic disparities, and ethno-religious identities, all of which contribute to variations in levels of political engagement and participation.

Active thinking in Nigerian political culture manifests among citizens who actively engage in democratic processes, such as voting, advocacy, and civic activism. These individuals often demonstrate a strong commitment to democratic principles, such as accountability, transparency, and the rule of law. They may participate in political rallies, join civil society organizations, or engage in grassroots mobilization efforts to advocate for social change and hold political leaders accountable. Passive thinking, on the other hand, characterizes individuals who exhibit disengagement or apathy towards politics and governance. This may stem from a variety of factors, including disillusionment with the political system, distrust in government institutions, or a perception of futility in political participation. Passive thinkers may abstain from voting, refrain from political discussions, or express resignation towards the possibility of meaningful political change.

The concept of political culture helps to elucidate why certain segments of Nigeria's population exhibit varying degrees of active and passive thinking. Historical experiences, such as colonialism and post-independence struggles, have shaped perceptions of government legitimacy and trust in political institutions (Joseph, 1987). Moreover, socio-economic factors, such as poverty, inequality, and lack of access to education, influence individuals' ability and willingness to engage in political processes (Adebanwi, 2014). Ethno-religious diversity also plays a significant role in shaping political attitudes and behaviors within Nigeria. Identity-based politics often exacerbate divisions along ethnic and religious lines, influencing voter preferences and electoral outcomes (Suberu, 2001). This fragmentation of political culture can contribute to the proliferation of passive thinking among marginalized groups who feel excluded from the political mainstream.

Concept of Democratic Governance

Democratic governance encompasses the institutions, processes, and principles that underpin democratic systems, including free and fair elections, the rule of law, and respect for human rights (Diamond & Morlino, 2005). Nigeria's struggle to consolidate democratic governance is evident in challenges such as electoral fraud, corruption, and weak institutional capacity, which impede development progress. Democratic governance is a system of government characterized by principles such as accountability, transparency, rule of law, respect for human rights, and popular participation in decision-making processes. It encompasses the institutions, mechanisms, and practices through which power is exercised, citizens are represented, and public policies are formulated and implemented.

Thus, democratic governance is essential for promoting stability, legitimacy, and responsiveness in government, as well as fostering inclusive and sustainable development. It requires continuous efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, uphold democratic values, and engage citizens in the democratic process.

Features of Democratic Governance

1. Presence and practice of Rule of Law Democratic governance is founded on the principle of rule of law, which ensures that all individuals and institutions, including government officials, are subject to and accountable under the law. This helps prevent arbitrary exercise of power and promotes legal certainty and fairness.

2. Accountability and transparency: Democratic governance requires that those in power are accountable to the people they serve. This includes mechanisms for holding government officials, elected representatives, and public institutions accountable for their actions, decisions, and use of public resources. Transparency entails openness and accessibility of government information, processes, and decision-making. It allows citizens to

access information about government activities, promotes public scrutiny, and helps prevent corruption and abuse of power.

3. Citizen Participation and inclusiveness: In democratic governance, citizens have the right to participate in political processes and decision-making. This includes voting in elections, engaging in public debate, joining civil society organizations, and advocating for their interests and concerns. Democratic governance respects and values diversity, ensuring that different viewpoints, interests, and identities are represented and included in decision-making processes. It promotes tolerance, dialogue, and compromise among competing interests.

4. Free and Fair Elections: Elections are a fundamental aspect of democratic governance, providing citizens with the opportunity to choose their leaders through free and fair electoral processes. This includes safeguards to ensure electoral integrity, such as voter registration, independent electoral commissions, and mechanisms for addressing electoral disputes.

Concept of Civic Engagement

Civic engagement refers to the active participation of citizens in public affairs, including voting, advocacy, and community organizing (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). In Nigeria, low levels of civic engagement contribute to voter apathy and political disengagement, hampering efforts to hold leaders accountable and drive development initiatives. Active thinking in democratic processes is often associated with high levels of civic engagement. Individuals who actively participate in civic life demonstrate a strong commitment to democratic principles and values. They may engage in activities such as voting in elections, attending community meetings, joining advocacy groups, or volunteering for political campaigns. These individuals are actively involved in shaping public opinion, influencing policy decisions, and holding elected officials accountable for their actions. Passive thinking, on the other hand, is often linked to low levels of civic engagement. Individuals who exhibit passive thinking may feel disengaged or apathetic towards politics and civic affairs. They may refrain from participating in electoral processes, abstain from political discussions, or express resignation towards the possibility of meaningful political change. Passive thinkers may perceive themselves as powerless to effect change or may lack interest in the political process due to disillusionment or distrust in government institutions.

Civic engagement plays a crucial role in overcoming passive thinking and promoting active participation in democratic processes. By encouraging citizens to become informed, involved, and empowered, civic engagement helps to foster a culture of democracy and citizenship. It provides avenues for individuals to voice their concerns, advocate for their interests, and contribute to the common good.

Therefore, civic engagement is essential for promoting inclusivity and social cohesion in democratic societies. By engaging diverse segments of the population, including marginalized groups and underrepresented communities, civic engagement helps to ensure that democratic processes are representative and responsive to the needs and interests of all citizens.

Empirical Review

Voting pattern and voting behaviour are key themes in the study of political behaviour, with their foundation rooted in exploring the factors influencing electoral decisions at both individual and group levels. According to Guardado and Wantchekon (2017), the determinants of electoral choice include socio-economic and institutional factors, which offer a comprehensive framework for understanding voting trends across diverse democracies. While this broad perspective captures various influences, it does not sufficiently address how cultural or psychological factors intersect with institutional determinants to shape voting behaviour.

Similarly, Heywood (2013) emphasizes that electoral behaviour involves both long-term factors, such as party loyalty, and short-term variables like candidate charisma and economic conditions. Heywood's categorization is useful for identifying patterns across different elections. However, it overlooks how these factors interact within emerging democracies, where party allegiance often shifts due to

personal interests or political realignments. For instance, in Nigeria, party loyalty was redefined during the 2015 elections when factions from the People's Democratic Party (PDP) defected to form the All-Progressive Congress (APC), underscoring the fluidity of short-term influences in African democracies (Amao, 2023). This observation strengthens the argument that voting behaviour in developing democracies often deviates from established Western paradigms.

In their study of Ghanaian elections, Agomor and Adams (2014) differentiate between evaluative factors—such as government performance and candidate charisma—and non-evaluative factors like ethnic ties and political affiliation. They argue that issue-based campaigns, which highlight evaluative factors, enable voters to make rational decisions about candidates and policies. However, this analysis has a significant limitation. While it identifies issue-based campaigns as crucial in Ghanaian elections, it fails to consider their short-term applicability. As observed by Heywood (2013), these short-term effects might not influence voter behaviour in subsequent elections, a gap that Agomor and Adams' study does not address.

Expanding on this, Nordin (2014) argues that issue-based campaigns allow voters to assess candidates' capacity to address socio-economic challenges. Although this aligns with Agomor and Adams' findings, it raises questions about the sustainability of such campaigns in shaping long-term voting patterns. This is particularly relevant in developing democracies like Ghana, where fluctuating political and economic conditions could diminish the impact of evaluative factors over time.

In Bangladesh, Hossain et al. (2017) examined voting behaviour in local elections, identifying factors such as political ideology, candidate qualifications, and religious affiliations. Their findings indicate that political ideology and candidate qualifications were the most influential determinants, highlighting their long-term significance in shaping electoral outcomes. However, the study overlooks the possibility that other factors, such as economic conditions or social movements, could play a dominant role in subsequent elections. This omission underscores the need for a more dynamic framework that considers the fluid nature of voter priorities in local contexts.

Data analysis and Discussion

Demographic Data of the Respondents

Table 1: Analysis of the distribution of the respondent by gender

Items	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Male	13	6.7	7.1	7.1
Female	172	92.3	92.9	100.0
Total	185	99.0	100.0	

The table above shows the distribution of the respondents by gender. It is observed from the table that only 13 of our respondents are males, while 172 are females. This simply means that majority of the respondents are females. They formed almost 92.9% of the respondents.

Table 2: Analysis of the respondents by age

Items	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
21 - 30	43	22.9	23.2	23.2
31 – 40	62	33.3	33.5	56.7

41-50	65	34.8	35.1	91.8
51 and above	15	8.0	8.2	100.0
Total	185	99.0	100.0	

The table shows the distribution of the respondents by age. It is shown that about 43 of the respondents are between the ages of 21 to 30 years. It is also shown that 62 (33.5%) of the respondents are between the ages of 31 to 40 years. About 65 (34.8%) of the respondents are between the ages of 41 to 50, while those who are 51 years and above are just 15.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents by educational background

Items	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Valid percent**	**Cumulative percent**
Highest qualification O.Level	21	10.9	11.4	11.4
ND/NCE	76	41.0	41.1	52.5
HND/BSC	43	23.1	23.2	75.7
Post graduate	42	22.5	22.7	98.4
Others	3	1.4	1.6	100.0
Total	185	99.0	100.0	

The table above shows the distribution of the respondents by educational background. It is shown that 21 of the respondents have O. Level, just 76 of the respondents have either ND/NCE, those who have either HND/BSC are 43. About 42 of the respondents have post graduate certificates, while just 3 of the respondents have other unidentified certificates. From the result, it can be said most of the respondents are educated.

Table 4: Analysis of the distribution of the respondent by religion

Items	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Valid percent**	**Cumulative percent**
Islam	130	69.8	70.3	70.3
Christianity	55	29.2	29.7	100.0
African Traditional Religion (ATR)	0	0	0	100.0
Total	185	99.0	100.0	

The table shows that majority of our respondents are Muslims with about 70.3 percent, followed by Christians who are about 29.7 percent.

Table 5: Frequency of Research result

S/N	Item	Mean (X)	SD	Remarks
1	How actively do you engage in discussions about political issues with your friends, family, or colleagues?	**38.1**	**0.78**	**Agree**
2	How often do you seek out different sources of information to stay informed about political events and candidates?	**4.69**	**0.41**	**Agree**
3	Do you actively participate in political rallies, campaigns, or volunteer activities during election periods?	**3.45**	**1.02**	**Agree**
4	How likely are you to research and compare the policies and track records of different political parties and candidates before voting?	**3.32**	**0.76**	**Disagree**
5	Do you regularly attend political debates or town hall meetings to hear directly from candidates?	**3.96**	**0.72**	**Agree**
6	How often do you engage in critical thinking and analysis when evaluating political promises and campaign messages?	**3.86**	**0.78**	**Disagree**
7	Are you actively involved in voter education initiatives or organizations that promote civic engagement?	**2.9**	**0.68**	**Disagree**
8	How often do you engage in discussions or debates on social media platforms about political issues and candidates?	**3.96**	**0.72**	**Agree**
9	Do you actively encourage others to participate in the electoral process and exercise their right to vote?	**2.97**	**0.68**	**Disagree**
10	How likely are you to question and challenge political decisions or policies that you disagree with?	**3.67**	**0.86**	**Agree**
	Grand mean	**3.3**		**Agree**

The standard deviation shows no differences in the opinion of the respondents. The respondents all agreed to the selected questions as seen in the table above.

Discussion

This finding offers valuable insights into how people engage with politics and make voting decisions, by shedding light on patterns that align with and differ from earlier research on voter behaviour. The first question revealed that most respondents (86) discuss politics with family and friends. This emphasizes the importance of social networks in shaping political opinions, a concept supported by Lazarsfeld et al.'s (1948) two-step flow of communication theory. However, unlike Lazarsfeld's findings, this study shows that while social interactions influence opinions, they don't necessarily lead to active participation in political activities.The second question showed that 109 respondents rely mainly on media for information about candidates, without seeking further details. This reinforces the agenda-setting role of media described by McCombs and Shaw (1972), which highlights how media shapes public priorities. Yet, it contrasts with Norris (2000), who suggests that informed voter behaviour is more typical in mature democracies. Here, the data points to a more passive reliance on media narratives, indicating a lack of deeper inquiry into political choices.

When asked about participation in rallies, campaigns, or volunteering, 146 respondents said they don't take part in such activities. This low level of involvement challenges Pateman's (1970) idea of participatory democracy, which relies on active citizen engagement. The findings align more closely with Putnam's (2000) observation of declining civic participation in modern societies, particularly during elections. Similarly, 146 respondents admitted they don't follow or evaluate candidates past actions. This challenges rational choice theories, such as Downs' (1957) model, which assumes voters make informed decisions by analyzing available information. Instead, it suggests that many voters rely on shortcuts like party loyalty or media narratives, bypassing detailed evaluations of candidates.

Responses to the fifth question show a mix of behaviours: while some attend town hall meetings or rallies, others only follow snippets on mass media. This reflects the dual nature of political engagement today, where traditional face-to-face activities coexist with media-driven interactions. This aligns with Castells' (2012) view of a networked society, where media plays a central role in political conversations but often at the cost of physical engagement. Interestingly, 136 respondents reported critically analyzing government policies, despite low participation in other political activities. This suggests that while voters might avoid traditional forms of engagement, they still reflect on governance issues. This finding aligns with Inglehart's (1997) theory of post-materialism, where voters prioritize intellectual engagement over physical participation in politics.

The seventh and eighth questions reveal minimal involvement in online voter education and debates, with only 92 respondents participating actively. This challenges the idea that digital platforms democratize political engagement, as suggested by Shirky (2011). Instead, it highlights either a lack of access to or interest in leveraging online tools for meaningful discussions, particularly in developing democracies.

Lastly, while many respondents critique government policies in social settings, these criticisms rarely lead to organized political action. This reflects a gap between private dissatisfaction and public activism, echoing Verba et al.'s (1995) civic voluntarism model, which highlights the importance of resources, networks, and motivation for sustained engagement. These findings challenge traditional theories like Almond and Verba's (1963) civic culture theory, which assumes a direct connection between political awareness and active participation. Instead, they reveal a more complex picture of voter behaviour, where political engagement is often selective and passive. While respondents show some level of critical thinking about governance, their low physical and digital participation suggests a disconnect from formal political processes.

Conclusion

Democracy in its practices are flawed and susceptible to manipulation and easily deviated just like other systems (Aristotle, Plato, Hobbes and Alexander Tytler). Among other scholars, these scholars believed there was no perfect system of government as all depended on the virtue and quality of the people and the system. Traces of prebendalism, aristocracy and elitism can be seen in Nigeria's democratic system and this shows there's a fault in the democratic health and system of the country. Moreover, Socrates's skepticism towards democracy, as

depicted by Plato, centers on the idea that without knowledgeable and virtuous individuals, democracy could lead to populism and demagoguery.

Therefore, the entrenchment of passive and active thinking within Nigeria's democratic landscape presents a significant obstacle to sustainable political development. As the leadership is the pivotal organ for steering the country towards development. Expounding on the works of Alexander Tytler, a pure democracy was a "chimera" or a "utopian theory"—it never existed, and never could exist because a democracy relied on the virtue of its citizens to function properly. This shows that active citizen participation and participation devoid of ethnographic and religious identities are needed for political development. Basically, without a quality citizenry, a country's democracy devolves into a worse form of government. Active citizen engagement and the selection of competent leaders are crucial in overcoming impediments to democratic consolidation, paving the way for inclusive and equitable development in Nigeria.

Recommendation

Based on the discourse on the democratic challenge of civic engagement befalling Nigeria and their implications for development, the research recommends:

1. **Strengthen Civic Education:** the INEC being the electoral umpire, needs to implement comprehensive civic education programs aimed at increasing political awareness, promoting democratic values, and fostering active citizenship among the populace. These programs should target diverse segments of the population, including youth, women, indigent and marginalized communities on the need for quality engagement in Politics.

2. **Enhance Democratic Institutions:** there is adequate need to invest in building strong and independent democratic institutions, including electoral commissions, judiciary, and anti-corruption agencies. Ensure their capacity to uphold the rule of law, protect human rights, and facilitate free and fair electoral processes. This is one major area in Nigeria political system that needs adequate attention.

3. **Foster Political Accountability:** The National assembly needs to implement measures to enhance transparency, accountability, and integrity in governance. This includes strengthening anti-corruption mechanisms, enforcing compliance with financial disclosure requirements, and promoting ethical conduct among public officials.

5. **Promote Inclusive Governance:** there is urgent need to foster inclusivity and social cohesion by addressing underlying socio-economic disparities and promoting equal opportunities for all citizens. Encourage participation of marginalized groups in decision-making processes and ensure their representation in political institutions.

6. **Empower Civil Society:** Support and empower civil society organizations, media, and grassroots movements to advocate for democratic reforms, monitor government performance, and hold elected officials accountable. Protect their freedom of expression and association to ensure their independence and effectiveness.

7. **Encourage Active Civic Engagement:** Promote active citizen engagement in political processes, including voter registration, participation in elections, and advocacy for policy reforms. Encourage dialogue, debate, and collaboration among citizens to address common challenges and promote national unity.

References:

Adeniran, T. (2016). Political Corruption in Nigeria: Theoretical Perspectives and Some Explanations. African Studies Quarterly, 16(1), 39–56.

Almond, G., & Verba, S. (1963). The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations. Princeton University Press.

Alvarez, R. M. (1998). Information and elections. University of Michigan Press.

Adebanwi, W. (2014). The Paradox of Nigerian Democracy: A Comparative Analysis. African Affairs, 113(451), 481–505.

Agomor, K. & Adams, R. (2014). Determinants of voters' behaviour in Ghana.

Amao, S. (2023). Party switching in Nigerian elections: A study of PDP and APC transitions)

Bratton, M., Mattes, R., & Gyimah-Boadi, E. (2012). Public opinion, democracy, and market reform in Africa. Cambridge University Press.

Birch, S. (2015). Africa's New Democracy: Rethinking Political Regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa. Routledge.

Bratton, M., & Mattes, R. (2016). Support for Democracy in Africa: Intrinsic or Instrumental? British Journal of Political Science, 46(2), 297–320.

Burns, J. M. (1978). Leadership. Harper & Row.

Castells, M. (2012). Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age. Polity Press.

Diamond, L., & Morlino, L. (2005). Assessing the Quality of Democracy. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Diamond, L. (2008). The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies Throughout the World. Times Books.

Diener, E. (2000). Electoral behaviour and psychological underpinnings in political science.

Downs, A. (1957). An Economic Theory of Democracy. Harper & Row.

Economic Commission for Africa. (2012). Assessing Progress in Africa toward the Millennium Development Goals: Analysis of the Common African Position on the Post-2015 .

Goldman, S. (1966). Understanding electoral behaviour: The foundations of voting theory.

Guardado, J. & Wantchekon, L. (2017). Political institutions and electoral behaviour.

Huntington, S. P. (1968). Political Order in Changing Societies. Yale University Press.

Heywood, A. (2013). Politics (4th ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Hossain, M., Islam, M. R., & Ahmed, R. (2017). Voting behaviour in local elections: A study of Annadanagar Union, Bangladesh.

Inglehart, R. (1997). Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies. Princeton University Press.

Joseph, R. (1987). Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic. Cambridge University Press.

Suberu, R. T. (2001). Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria. US Institute of Peace Press.

Scott, J. C. (1972). Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia. American Political Science Review, 66(1), 91–113.

Inglehart, R., & Welzel, C. (2005). Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence. Cambridge University Press.

Osaghae, E. E. (2013). Crippled Giant: Nigeria Since Independence. Indiana University Press.

Lazarsfeld, P. F., Berelson, B., & Gaudet, H. (1948). The People's Choice: How the Voter Up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign. Columbia University Press.

McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. Public Opinion Quarterly, 36(2), 176–187.

Nordin, A. (2014). Issue-based campaigns and voter rationality.

Norris, P. (2000). A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Postindustrial Democracies. Cambridge University Press.

Pateman, C. (1970). Participation and Democratic Theory. Cambridge University Press.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community. Simon & Schuster.

Shirky, C. (2011). Cognitive Surplus: How Technology Makes Consumers into Collaborators. Penguin Press.

Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995). Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics. Harvard University Press.

Prysby, C., & Scavo, C. (1993). Voting behaviour in elections. Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Suberu, R. T. (2001). Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria. US Institute of Peace Press.

Parsons, T. (1951). The Social System. Free Press.

Tilly, C. (1990). Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1992. Blackwell.

Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995). Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics. Harvard University Press.

World Bank. (2018). Nigeria Economic Update: Investing in Human Capital. World Bank.