

**UNDERGRADUATES' AWARENESS OF NIGERIAN'S POLITICAL
DEVELOPMENTS AND THEIR PARTICIPATION IN STUDENTS'
UNIONISM**

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Abstract

This paper investigates undergraduates' awareness of political developments in Nigeria and their participation in students' unionism. To better understand the contemporary roles of political developments in Nigeria and campus unionism, students' views were sampled from the Faculties of Law and Education out of the 15 available faculties. These two faculties were sampled because the faculty of law is regarded as a faculty that develops in students the rudiments of politics, and the faculty of education, being a mother of all faculties, is also expected to develop political skills in students which enhance their political participation, hence, the need to find out which of the faculty produces students that participate in campus politics better. Simple random sampling technique was used to sample 275 students on the basis of gender. A questionnaire, titled, "undergraduates' Awareness of Political Developments and Political Participation" was developed

based on the crux of the study. The validity of the instrument was ascertained and its reliability was determined using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Simple Percentage and Chi-Square were employed to test the research questions and the generated hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed, among others, that undergraduates did not possess adequate knowledge of political developments. It also revealed that faculties were strong and positive predictors of students' participation in Nigeria; faculty was a strong and positive predictors of students' participation in campus others, that female undergraduates needed to be sensitized towards developing interest in campus politics as this will shape their interest in politics at the macro level.

Key words: Political Participation, political developments, Gender, Students' political awareness.

Introduction

Political and constitutional developments in Nigeria are best understood within a three-dimensional perspective which assumes that every democratic nation passes through three main phases of developments: Aguda (1985) explained that political and constitutional experience and developments in Nigeria took a modern and new departure from 1951. Therefore, it suffices to say that the Nigerian constitution of 1951 was “ an epoch-making constitutions”, despite all the delays experienced under/ by the British rule. Notwithstanding, Nigeria has experienced considerable progress in political and constitutional developments since her independence (in 1960) in the areas of constitutional-making process; political and constitutional doctrines; concepts and conventions; human rights; citizenship question; national census; minority questions.; accountability; transition to civil rule of 1979 and

1999; the election of Executive President; the Fourth Republic; problems and challenges of different phases.

Nigeria's founding believed in a systematic and planned approach to developments. They understand that without a plan, the State lose its ability to control the economy and achieve its political goals (Ojameruaye, 201). Therefore, two years after independence, they came up with a comprehensive six-year development plan (1962-1968). In addition to the national developments, each region also had its own development plans for that period. However, the military intervention of 1966 affected the implementation of the plans, but also imbibed the rudiments of development planning. This was why the then head of state, General Yakubu Gowon launched the second national developments plan (1970-1974) immediately after the civil war (1967-1970) and the Third National Developments Plan (1975-1980), before his administration was toppled in 1975 which ushered in General Murital as the new military regime. They also made some changes to the plan by implementing it before General Obasanjo handed over power to Alhaji Sheu Shagari on October 1, 1979. President shagari implemented the last year of the plan and launched the fourth National Development Plans (1981-1985). Alhaji Shagari was overthrown on December 31, 1985 which brought in General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida in, who installed himself as the first Military President in Nigeria. He abandoned the National Development Plan and replaced it with a three-year Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) which was supported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. This marked the beginning of economic retrogression of the nation. This situation continued under General Sanni Abacha, because General Bababgida was frustrated to "step aside" from power of August, 1993. But, General Sanni Abacha also launched his own programme called "Vision 2020". General Abacha died in office on June 8, 1998.

His successor, General Abdulsalam Abubakar endorsed the “Vision 2020” but focused more on political transition to civil rule. He had hardly implemented the Vision 2020 before handing over power to Chief Olusegun Aremu Obasanjo on May 29, 1999 as an Executive President. This marked the rejuvenation of democratic rule in Nigeria.

In order to realize the goals of the country’s founding fathers, there are many challenges along the line which could be categorically described among others to be power sharing; federalism; elections; governance; security; corruption etc. Nigeria’s developments can be structured into three parts: history, challenges and prospects, that is, the dialectics of the developments of Nigeria since 1914, the year of amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates and the analysis of both negative and positive traits of Nigeria’s developments (Yima, 2010). Emmanuel (2011) noted that power sharing at the federal level among the major ethnic groups and regions of Nigeria has been a thorny issue since independence. He also pointed out that Nigeria’s founding fathers adopted true federalism as reflected in the 1960 and 1963 constitutions, but this was truncated by military coup in 1966 in which Nigeria experienced significant erosion in the concept of federalism as evidenced by the concentrated of fiscal power at the federal level. From the foregoing it is very significant for Nigerian students to be familiar with all the events and trends of political development in Nigeria. This can only be achieved through education.

Education is largely designed, among other things, to develop character and mental power, develop a sense of belonging and bring about active participation in community affairs. Education is also described as the total process of human learning through which knowledge is imparted, human faculties trained and skills developed. This is the rationale behind education as being one of the variables for

predicting political participation. Political education is defined as the process in which political attitudes and behaviours are germinated and formed (Hamed, Helmiandzulhan, 2001). According to Adelabu and Akinsolu (2009), education has implanted in the students the seeds of knowledge which continues to germinate as they develop from primary school to the University, and by the time they are in the University, the college becomes a predominant model and the central instrument of their political education.

Politics and education are inter-related and inter-dependent concepts. Many educators believe that education is a sure way to national development. There are different views about the word 'politics'. It could be seen as a systematic way by which a group of people come together to participate in the development of the generality of the people in their locality. Therefore, schooling is one form through which political education is provided. Indeed, individuals with higher levels of schooling are more likely, than their less educated peers, to: pay greater attention to and express deep interest in politics, follow the news, possess political information and knowledge and express a high sense of civic duty, (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980). To better understand the contemporary role of education as a predictor of political participation of Nigerian undergraduates, it is important to find out if they are aware of political developments in Nigeria and see the level at which they are exposed to campus politics as well as gender consideration in political participation.

According to Lopez and Beatriz (2000), gender is not just a static concept that serves for describing realities and differences between men and women. It entails a strong political and ideological transforming component. It is an emerging view that, taking soci-cultural construction of gender and their different relative evaluation as a starting point, it searches for transformation to earn more balanced

relations and equality between genders. The gender transforming perspective is deduced from the definition of the concept of gender itself and gender relations. Gender means what socio and cultural collective representations interpret as being socially a male or a female. Gender relations means the social relations established depending on the gender of the person, which creates differences in rights, obligations and reciprocal responsibilities for males and females. Adelabu and Akinsolu (2009) in their findings on political education among Nigerian University students revealed that the male students are more politically socialized than their female counterparts.

Differences between men and women and the relationship between them have been described in gender studies which have revealed inequalities existing in all human societies between men and women, as well as the causes of these inequalities. Furthermore, theories on gender relations have gone beyond simple theories and they suggested social and political projects focused on equity, presenting their vision of an egalitarian society and means to get there. However, among the factors responsible for low participation of women in Nigeria's politics as pointed out by Farzan, (2005); Agbalajobi 2009 and Akiyode-Afolabi, (2013) includes gender roles; male domination of politics, women perception of politics as a dirty game, lack of financial backing as politics is heavily monetized, illiteracy and limited access to education, lack of confidence for some women, religious doctrines and so on. This may be the reason why Akiyode-Afolabi (2013) submitted that women are less politically interested, informed and efficacious than men.

It is also significant to note that, the nature of student's unionism, prior to independence, was maintain to resist colonialism in which the Nigerian Students joined their counterparts in West Africa to form West African Students Union

(WASU under the leadership of a Nigerian (Solanke, 1942). The Nigerian Students are also conversant with International politics,. For instance, the Nigerian Students in partnership with some organizations supported Nigerian and South African blacks against the apartheid regime of South African and the killing in Soweto, just like some students in the United States used their consuming powers as a political tactics on campus, a strategy successfully employed in the civil rights movement in the 1960s and in efforts to end apartheid in South Africa in the 1980s (Adelabu and Akinsohi, 2009).

A historical window into the Nigerian states indicates that youths have been vanguards in many aspects of the national life. The creation of Nigeria was to a large extent the work of the youth as can be traced to the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) formed in 1923 and National Council of Nigeria and the Camerouns (NCNC) in 1944 (Micejal and Inyang, 2016). Young men and women in Nigeria are increasingly acting politically in tertiary institutions like Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education (United Nations, 2014). Both formal and Informal engagements in politics can be seen as political participation, both are beneficial to democracy and should be supported (UNDP 2013).

Political participation means taking active part in decision making that impacts on the generality of the citizenry of a particular locality. It can also be seen as any activity aimed at influencing the structure of government, the appointment of leaders and policies they execute. These activities can have the goal of supporting the existing structures and politics or changing them. They include active and passive actions, collective for individuals, legal or illegal, support or pressure actions by which one or several persons try to influence the type of government that may lead a society. (Conway, 2000). Tackling political participation with a gender –transforming perspective involves considering females

who have transformed into women as responsible individuals, capable of taking decision and who are indispensable for their society's democratization process. This approach aims at pointing out the causes of inequalities between male and female within their contexts and at finding more sustainable ways of eliminating the barriers preventing women participation in politics. Political participation in politics makes the government more democratic. Citizens' participation in politics is also a ways of ensuring a peaceful change of government and maintaining peace and stability within the political system. The citizenry is also aware in politics. Also, citizens participations in politics guarantee personal liberty and individual developments.

Yusuf (2005) discovered in his finding on the influence of Social Studies education on students' opinion on political participation and democratic reforms in Nigeria, that, a significant difference was observed in the opinion of Social Studies and non- Social Studies students about political participation. Political participation can also be referred to as any activity which aims at influencing the structure of government, the appointment and election of representatives and leaders with the policies they execute. The activities can have the aim of supporting the existing system and politics or aim at changing them.

However, political participation takes difference forms. Nigerian students who have attained the age of eighteen (18) and above are eligible to take part in the following political participation forms:

- i. Becoming members of political parties;
- ii. Voting during elections/casting votes for candidates of political parties of their choice during elections.

- iii. Writing of articles on politics and canvassing with people or making phone calls.
- iv. Taking part in political campaign, rallies and meetings.
- V, Taking part in protest activities.

In order to participate in politics, it has been argued that young people must experience positive political socialization, build civic skills, be mobilized through formal and informal network. (Bennett, 1991; Lake Snell Perry and Associates, 2002; and Terrace Group 1991). Many researchers have documented the relationship between schooling and turnout. Thus, spending time on a college campus has been correlated with higher levels of almost all the variables that predict voting. These include:

- a. Political Resources: These are political sophistication, knowledge about politics, political skills and broader understanding of political life (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980).
- b. Psychological Resources: These are those things that motivate the appreciation of democratic governance and develop democratic values. (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993).
- c. Social Resources: These have to do with having the opportunity to spend time with other college students and joining organizations that increase participation in civic life. (Carbonaro, 1999; Kirlin, 2003)

The University system began during the colonial era and the period of the Nationalists. During this period, most University students developed the tradition of activism and a radical progressive political culture which has been in existence and still relevant till date. Ironically, this students' activism has always been

referred to as “students unrest”. Whatever name is being called, several factors have been responsible for the so-called students unrest. Internal factors range from dissatisfaction with university policies, rules and regulations (Ojo, 1995). Other reasons are lack of communication and consultation between students and authorities in a variety of matters. External factors have to do with Nigerian students being conversant with and reacting to national and international policies of government and issues. An example is the annulment of June 12 election of 1993. It is also evidence that Nigerian students were always instrumental to protest against increase in petroleum products when they found that the prices of transport fares had been increased. Internationally, in 1959 the Nigerian students demonstrated against the Anglo-Nigeria Defence pact, until the pact was abrogated. Micheal and Inyang (2015) submitted that undergraduates do participate in politics and are aware of the various means of participating in politics.

The foregoing is an indication that Nigerian undergraduates like other students of higher institutions in the developed world have a great potential to be politically involved. Thus, it cannot be ruled out that higher education has being a platform which offered the students better opportunities and enabling environment for this political participation. It is, therefore, not an overstatement to conclude that Nigerian students has, at one time or the other, been involved in local, national and international politics owing to the general awareness created by the university environment. It is against this background that this study is focused on examining students’ level of awareness of Nigeria’s political developments and student’s political participation.

Statement of the Problem

This study was inspired by the belief that young people are agile and full of ideas and with expectations that they should also provide effective remedy to the enormous problem facing the society. Teaching and learning of Government as a subject in secondary school is believed to have cultivated in students of Law and Education the trend of Nigeria political development and rudiment of political participation in students' political development awareness in determining their political participation in student's unionism. Also, this study sought if there was going to be any differences in the political participation of undergraduates on the basis of gender, with a view to channeling the power of Nigerian students in a constructive manner.

Research Questions

1. What level of knowledge of Nigeria's political development is possessed by Nigerian undergraduates?
2. To what extent do Nigerian undergraduates adequately participate in campus unionism?

Research Hypotheses

HO₁: There is no significant difference between male and female undergraduate's awareness of political developments in Nigeria.

HO₂: There is no significant difference between male and female undergraduate in campus unionism.

Method

This adopts the descriptive research survey type. The population for this study comprises students of University of Ilorin, while the target population were students of Faculties of law and Education. A total of two-hundred and seventy five (275) students were randomly selected from both faculties, that is, one hundred and forty-two (142) students from the Faculty of Law and one hundred and thirty three (133) students from the Faculty of Education. They consisted of 101 (36.7%) males and 174 (63.3%) females.

A questionnaire, titled. “Undergraduates” Awareness of Political Developments and Political Participation” was developed to collect relevant data. The questionnaire consisted of ten (10) related areas of awareness of students of the political developments in Nigeria and ten items dealt with students’ political participation on campus. Experts in item analysis, measuring and evaluation and Social Studies examined the face and construct validities of the questionnaire. The instruments reliability was obtained through test-retest methods using Pearson Product Moments Correlation and a reliability index of 0.78 was established.

The researcher administered the questionnaire on the respondents with the help of other lecturers in both faculties. The two hundred and seventy-five (275) copies of the questionnaire that were distributed were returned.

Results

Research Question 1:

What level of knowledge of Nigeria’s political developments is possessed by Nigerian undergraduates?

Table 1: Percentage of level of awareness of undergraduates of university of Ilorin of Nigerian political developments.

Variable	Freq	Percentage
Awareness of Political Development	275`	69.76

Table 1 indicates that the respondents' level of awareness of Nigeria's' political development is 69.76%. This implies that the undergraduates of University of Ilorin's awareness of Nigeria's political developments is above average. This shows that undergraduates are aware of Nigerian political developments.

Research Question 2:

To what extent do Nigerian undergraduates adequately participate in campus unionism?

Table 2: Percentage level of the undergraduates of University of Ilorin political participation

Variable	Freq	Percentage
Level of Political Participation	275	57.46

Table 2 indicates that the respondents' level of undergraduates on political participation is 5.46% which is above average. This implies that the undergraduates of the University of Ilorin participate in politics.

Hypotheses Testing

HO₁: There is no significant difference in political developments awareness of the undergraduates of the university of Ilorin on the basis of gender.

In order to test this hypothesis, responses of the students to items on the questionnaire were collated. The output of the analysis reveals thus:

Table 3: Chi-Square summary of difference in political developments awareness of the undergraduates of University of Ilorin on the basis of gender

S/N	Political Developments Awareness	Freq	Male	Female	X ²	p-value	Decision
1.	Nigeria's first national anthem was composed by Lillian Jean Williams (A British Lady)	178	68	110	0.47	.49	Accepted
2.	Nigeria is divided into four geo-political zones	125	37	88	5.0	.03	Rejected
3.	The first Military Head of States in Nigeria was General Yakubu Gowon	190	66	124	1.05	1.31	Accepted
4.	Nigeria practiced parliamentary democracy during the First Republic	213	72	141	3.48	.06	Accepted
5.	The Head of State who had rules Nigeria and was later elected as a Civilian President was General Olusegun Obasanjo	244	88	156	0.41	.52	Accepted
6.	One of the perpetual problems facing Nigeria since independence is corruption	236	83	153	1.74	.19	Accepted
7.	The administrative Capital of Nigeria is Abuja	235	85	150	0.22	.64	Accepted
8.	The Federal Legislative Houses In Nigeria are jointly referred to as the Congress	122	42	80	0.50	.48	Accepted
9.	One of the renowned Nigeria's founding fathers was Sir Ahmadu Bello	228	83	145	.60	.81	Accepted
10.	Among the Nigeria's governors guilty of looting the state treasury was late Ibrahim Yakowa of Kaduna State	147	52	95	.25	.62	Accepted

As shown in Table 3, the chi-square calculated value of respondents' level of undergraduates' awareness of Political Developments, for all the items 1 to 10

tested at 0.05 of significance, only item 2 was rejected. This signifies that gender difference of the respondents to the item. Female undergraduates were significantly aware that Nigeria is divided into six geo-political zones compared to their male counterparts. The Chi-Square calculated value for the other items was accepted and this signifies no difference of the respondents to other items based on gender.

HO₂: There is no significant difference in political participation of undergraduates of the university of Ilorin on the basis of gender.

In order to test this hypothesis, response of the students to items on the questionnaire were collated. The output of the analysis reveals thus

Table 4: Chi-Square summary of difference in Political Participation of undergraduates of the University of Ilorin on the basis of gender

S/N	Political Awareness	Freq	Male	Female	X ²	p-value	Decision
1.	I am a card carrying member of a political party	127	49	78	35	.55	Accepted
2.	I sometimes attend political rallies in y community	111	45	66	1.17	.28	Accepted
3.	Do you agree that government should be accountable to the people	218	80	138	.00	.98	Accepted
4.	I often discuss politics with friends	168	66	102	1.22	.27	Accepted
5.	I am sometimes involved in decision making at the micro-political level	139	53	86	.24	.63	Accepted
6.	I sometimes engage in students' politics on campus	146	54	92	.00	.92	Accepted

7.	I have been a supporter of a particular political party in Nigeria	148	60	88	2.01	.16	Accepted
8.	I have been casting votes right from the time I was eligible to do so	164	64	100	.92	.34	Accepted
9.	I have been criticizing Nigeria political leaders for non performance	210	75	135	.39	.53	Accepted
10.	I have campaigned for a candidate on the campus or other election	149	54	95	.03	.86	Accepted

Results on table 4 shows political participation of undergraduates of the University of Ilorin on the basis of gender. The chi-square calculated value for undergraduates on political participation items 1 to 10 testes at significant level 0.05 are all accepted. This connotes that there is no significant difference in political participation of undergraduates on the basis of gender.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings in this study revealed that undergraduates of University of Ilorin are aware of Nigeria's political developments, because the percentage of 69.79% of the respondents to items on political developments awareness was above average. The findings agree with that of Ogu and Inyang (2015) who reported that undergraduates participating in politics, and are aware of the various means if participating in politics. The finding is also in line with that of Adelabu and Akinsolu (2009) that students are politically influenced in the University system. It was found that there is no significant difference in the political developments

awareness of undergraduates of University of Ilorin on the basis of gender, except on item 2 where the female respondents are significantly aware that Nigeria is divided into six geo-political zones, compare to their male counterparts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has established that University of Ilorin undergraduates do not adequately possess political developments knowledge but participate in politics at the campus level. Also there is no significant difference in political participation of undergraduates of the University of Ilorin on the basis of gender; this was in favour of the male respondents. Evidence has shown that student's political education was influenced by the University environment and the persistent increase in Nigeria student's activism. Students' activism persists because students felt that the majority of the citizens or their own parents are being oppressed owing to maybe poverty or lack of access to governance, and in most cases, those parents who speak out are not being heard. Students are not expected to remain passive in the face of the criminalization of the democratic process and corruption which remain the bane of the Nigerian society. At the same time, they should not indulge themselves in factional politics but uphold the new and constructive politics.

This paper should prepare the minds of Nigerian students for active participation and to forge ahead in order to key in at the macro level so that the mantle of Nigerian youths. Also female undergraduates should bear in mind that the 21st century women now stand shoulder with their male counterparts in politics and decision-taking process in Nigeria.

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