

Assessment of Political Participation and Democratic Governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

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ABSTRACT

Generally, this study examined the state of political participation and democratic governance in Nigeria's fourth republic. It relied mainly on descriptive qualitative research approach and secondary sources of data such as journal articles, books, reports from political parties amongst other works from scholars on politics, democracy and governance in the fourth republic. The study equally adopted the liberal democratic theory as its framework of analysis. The emerged result revealed that political participation and democratic governance in the fourth republic had not been in the favor of the populace. It further revealed negative indices against the system such as political and electoral violence, corruption, weak institutions of democracy, godfatherism, poor provision of positive leadership, poverty, inequalities, political intolerance, manipulation of electoral processes, blatant act of impunity, lawlessness, selfish interest and militarization. They have led to lack of trust on the political leaders, and by implication, remains a huge challenge against popular participation, democratic governance and consolidation. These ills are in sharp contrast with the tenets of the liberal democratic theory. Based on the above revelations, therefore, the study believes that it is pertinent that the political leadership must not only practice what is obtainable in the fourth republic constitution but must equally adhere to the doctrines of a liberal democratic system. The political system and the electoral processes must be violent

free to encourage popular participation and consolidation of democracy. The citizens must also endeavor to hold their leaders accountable.

Keywords: Democratic governance, fourth republic, liberal democratic theory, Nigeria, political participation

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INTRODUCTION

In contemporary democracies, the significance of political participation of citizens in the affairs of their state cannot be overstretched. As Isma'ila (2016) and Fayemi (1998, 2000) noted, one of the aftermaths of 'the Cold War Era' between America and the Soviet Union was the extensive spread of democratic governance in various African countries including Nigeria. The era, as observed by Oke (2010), gave a wide acceptance to democracy as one of the best forms of governance. This wide acceptance is built on the premise that democratic governance grants opportunity for citizens' participation in the governance of their country, which is encouraged through a fair election in which they choose their representatives and leaders in the society (Falade, 2014; Nwebo, 2018; Oke, 2010). Democracy guarantees citizens political participation, transparency, accountability, respect for human rights, the rule of law and governing the people based on democratic ethos, which are the hallmarks of a democratic governance.

While political participation of citizens in the affairs of their political system regardless of their gender, remains *sine qua non* (Arowolo & Aluko, 2012), and as an embodiment of democracy. Isma'ila (2016) observed that democracy and governance were interconnected, distinctly unique as different variables, but also highly relevant in any political system. For instance, democracy involves a constitutional rule which permits the citizens to elect representatives amongst themselves to

execute responsibilities that have to do with their welfare, allocation of resources and values effectively. While governance from the view of the World Bank, involves the way in which state's powers are practiced in the management of a nation's social and economic resources for better development (Oke, 2010). Building on the above, therefore, democratic governance involves putting into practice those democratic ethics within a political system for the realization of a better life in the society (Isma'ila & Othman, 2016; Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2011). As political participation remains one of the vital ingredients of democratic governance (Arowolo & Aluko, 2010), development and stability of any democratic system lies in the genuine participation and awareness of the people in both political and civic matters (Falade, 2014). Consolidating on the above, Appadorai (2004) advanced that democracy demanded from the citizens a certain degree of character, ability, rational conduct and strong participation in the affairs of their state. The above scholarly views reveal the essence of citizens participation in the democratic affairs of their political system.

With respect to Nigeria, the return of democratic governance in May 1999 which ushered in the Fourth Republic, brought a high hope among the citizens. Nigerians saw the return as a great relieve and as an end to the authoritarian military government in the country. They believed it was an opportunity to actively participate in the affairs of the state to engender new political programs and good governance (Yusuf, 2018). As noted by Yagboyaju (2011) and Yusuf (2018),

the return of democratic governance in 1999 came with great expectations. These expectations, however, have not been met as the political system is yet to show any clear sign of good governance. It has been overheated with many challenges such as corruption, insecurity, electoral malpractices, and ethno-religious violence (Adeosun, 2014). Political participation as an ingredient of democratic governance is being discouraged by violence, love for power, greed, thuggery, assassination, election rigging and resulting to citizens' political apathy (Falade, 2014; Ojo, 2013). The above ills are in sharp contrast with the hallmarks of a democratic government and will only create room for further political apathy.

There is a high debate over the significance of political participation in the democratic governance across the world and Nigeria inclusive (Oni & Joshua, 2012). Previous related academic works have also been written in this regard, but dearth of information is still in manifest (Michels, 2011). Some of these previous studies include democratic stability and political participation (Edosa, 2014), political participation and good governance (Arowolo & Aluko, 2012), democracy and women participation in Nigeria (Leke, 2015), amongst other scholars like Wilson (2013), Loader et al. (2014), Ujomu and Olatunji (2014), and Collin (2015). Despite the above scholarly works, dearth of information still exists as none is found to concentrate primarily on the state of political participation and democratic governance in the Nigeria's fourth republic. This study,

therefore, intended to fill this gap created by previous related studies. To be specific, the study aimed to generally understand the state of citizens' political participation and democratic governance in the fourth republic in Nigeria, as this would build to the body of available literatures, enlighten the citizens and the political institutions in the country. In order to achieve the above objective, the paper is organized as thus, the introduction, literature review, methods and materials, theoretical framework, results and discussion, and finally, conclusion and recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous related studies on this topic such as Nigerian politics in the fourth republic, stability of democracy in Nigeria, good governance under the fourth republic, national and state level elections, women and youth's participation in elections amongst others have been reviewed. However, few studies appear to exist on political participation and democratic governance in Nigeria's fourth republic in general. This study would, therefore, take the advantage of the shortage in literature to review existing materials on the pursuit subject. Building on the above, therefore, Salisu and Avidime (2016) researched on democratic governance in the fourth republic. They concluded that while moderate gains existed under the fourth republic, the woes and pains that had befallen the country since the inception of democratic governance in 1999 were overwhelming. They argued that the character of the state, the pattern of politics

and the weakness of the political leadership to afford responsible leadership had dented the ability of the system to offer goods and services to the populace. These had in turn constrained popular political participation in state affairs, reinforced a great sense of marginalization and alienation in the minds of many citizens.

Allying with the above, Oke (2010) observed that democratic governance was built on popular participation and consent of the people. However, since the return of democracy in 1999, the prolonged interference of the military into Nigerian politics permeated the political system and as such, had made it difficult to practice the basic tenets of a democratic governance. As he noted further, the shift from military authoritarianism to civilian rule instead of being democratic, political intolerance and violence existed as the hallmark of politics and this had obstructed citizen's value in electoral participation and legitimacy of the government. On the same note, Yagboyaju (2011) explained that the return of democratic governance in the fourth republic started with great expectations and high hope. After several years of democratic practice, however, no evidence of good governance and consolidation of democracy. The rule of law is abused, elections are subverted, political parties amongst other public institutions are manipulated. Not only is democratic governance threatened, but also the citizens and their corporate existence.

Falade (2014) narrowed his study on the extent of citizens' involvement in political

activities in Ondo state. The result showed that 57% of the sampled population were less involved in political activities. Only 30% of males and 13% females were found to be active participants, while about 53% lacked confidence in their politicians. The result also counted gender as a force against citizens' effective political participation. According to Falade (2014), political participation in Nigeria is very low as several Nigerians are not dedicated to the political activities. He further explained the failure of the political system to encourage mass participation through quality democratic practice and this was as a result of the culture of political violence, manipulation, sentiment, intimidation, ignorance, deception, corruption, political apathy and the continues marginalization of women.

Discussing about women marginalization in political participation in Nigeria, however, Uwa et al. (2018), found that over the years, marginalization had affected women's political participation in Nigeria due to certain social, religious and cultural factors. These had led to a low level of interest, knowledge and taking part in political events in the country by women. As they further explained, notwithstanding the hard efforts of governments and non-state actors following the Beijing World Conference declaration on women involvement in political positions through a 30% affirmative action and the 35% recommended by the National Gender Policy (NGP), women were still marginalized. This is against the popular saying that the sustenance of democratic

governance lies in the participation of all citizens in the political processes of their society.

The above revelations by Falade (2014) and Uwa et al. (2018) were supported by the works of Oni (2014) and Agbalajobi (2010). According to Oni (2014), indices like exploitation and gender oppression accompanied by traditional/cultural beliefs, religious doctrines, marital injunctions and the hangover of the colonial legacies negatively affect the status of women. By result, this have led to poor political participation of women folks in Nigeria at all public levels. It has equally been worsened by a rooted patriarchal structure in the body of nation's politics. While in the same vein, Agbalajobi (2010) argued that the Nigerian women occupied about half of the country's population and were known as mothers who played important roles in the society. Despite their population and designation, they are still marginalized politically. This is holding to certain factors like religion, culture, patriarchal societal structure among other traditional practices. They have become the target of political violence and downgraded. As a result, the sharp practices have led to under-representation of women in public life as they only participate in politics just to support their women folk. The ills do not represent the actual practice of a liberal democracy.

Democratic governance is seen as a platform for faster development not only in Nigeria, but Africa as a whole. Unfortunately, violence associated with elections hamper development. Electorates are dispirited from taking part in political

activities while violence succeed in making democratic governance synonymous with death trap (Okafor & Okafor, 2018). Democratic governance represents the function of the over-all participation of the citizens in political activities. But whenever it is obstructed, development in both politics and economic which represent the dividends of democratic system would be denied (Okafor & Okafor, 2018). In their study on political participation in the South-Eastern Nigeria for example, the authors revealed that 21.3% believed that true democratic governance existed in Nigeria, while only 29.9% believed in the electoral system. The rest such as 65.2% did not believe that their votes count, 69.2% disbelieved in the electoral process, 69.5% observed electoral violence, while 56% withdrew their support for democratic governance due to political violence during elections.

Corroborating with the above, Ogbonnaya et al. (2012) also found out that religious crises, intra and inter-ethnic conflicts, electoral malpractices, weak democratic institutions, insecurity and corruption had confronted the success of democratic governance in Nigeria since 1999. Also, the pattern of political culture in Nigeria, poor political interests of electorates and joined with the non-integrative pattern of political participation continued to threaten democratic governance in the fourth republic. Just as the elites need the citizens, however, the citizens equally need the elites to promote political participation and democratic governance in Nigeria (Omodia, 2011).

According to Ogbonnaya et al. (2012), as they concluded, democratic governance generally, is characterized by a defined and definite principles which includes, political participation, respect to citizens' rights, observance to the rule of law and the protection of lives and property. But the inadequate and weakness of political institutions remain the greatest obstacles of democratic institutions in Nigeria. State institutions have failed to provide security to life and property to the people, the electoral processes are too weak, high rate of corruption and political violence. The electoral processes are vulnerable and are easily manipulated. Public confidence in political participation is undermined by corruption and insecurity looms at large. Notwithstanding the above challenges, however, the only available gains under the fourth republic are the creation of political parties, restoration of the National Assembly with their oversight functions on the executive, even when their effectiveness remains in doubt.

In summary, the above studies revealed that political participation and democratic governance over the fourth republic had been characterized by a lot of challenges. Also, notwithstanding the reviewed pieces of literature, gap still manifests in the body of works of literature that generally discussed primarily on the state of political participation and democratic governance under the Nigeria's fourth republic. This study, therefore, fills the gap by building on the body of existing knowledge.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

This study relied on a descriptive qualitative research approach to generally examine the state of political participation and democratic governance under the Nigeria's fourth republic. According to Wright and McKeever (2000), descriptive qualitative research method represents a perfect instrument in the study of a social phenomenon that involves generating public perception about a subject of interest. The objective is to provide a significant thought and deep description to understand the phenomenon under study (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Magilvy, 2003). Relying on the above scholarly perspectives, therefore, the choice of descriptive qualitative method in this study is considered germane because of its capacity to unravel issues the way they are. Also, the study relied largely on secondary data and these involved works of literature that shared knowledge on political participation and democratic governance such as, journal articles, institutional reports from political parties and civil society organizations. Other materials included books written by scholars in the field like Fashagba et al. (2019), Isma'ila and Othman (2016), Appadorai (2004), and Falade (2014) among others. Liberal democratic theory was equally adopted to support the secondary data in the analysis.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Liberal Democratic Theory

This study adopted the liberal democratic theory as its theoretical framework of analysis. This is premised on its importance

to help in explaining democratic governance and political participation in Nigeria's fourth republic. Though, other theories such as the elitist theory of democracy, the political economy theory, pluralist theory of democracy, and the Marxist theory of democracy are equally applicable, but lack acceptable capacity to offer a comprehensive understanding on the subject matter. Important to note, Adam Smith (1774), John Stuart Mill (1892), Thomas Hobbes (1651), and Jeremy Bentham (1789) were the early founders of liberal democratic theory. This theory as noted by Vincent and Tunde (2018), enjoys a great acceptability in democracies like the U.S., Britain, France, Canada amongst other western nations. In African countries also, nations like Ghana, South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria are not left out as it describes the pattern of democracy being practiced in most of the countries.

Liberal democratic theory projects a political system that encourages private liberty, social justice, private property, majority rule, individual participation and right moral development. It supports the rights of individual citizens in a democratic system to actively participate in the political affairs of their country without reference to their race, gender and ownership of property (Kwasau, 2013; Mohammed, 2013; Oddih, 2007). It advocates a democratic system and political organization that effectively promotes good governance and the agenda of the people. This also involves a periodic credible, free and fair elections which represent one among equals, the participation of the citizens. Furthermore, the tenets of the theory are shortlisted below

as its advocacy in a real democratic system that encourages political participation of the citizens. These are:

- The rule of law
- Freedom of assembly, speech, religion and the press
- Support for pressure groups and multi-party system
- Separation of power, checks and balances
- Free participation of citizens in the political system
- Acceptance of capitalism
- Universal franchise, periodic free and fair elections
- Peaceful change of government.

According to Vincent and Tunde (2018), and Kwasau (2013), liberal democratic theory makes a projection on how a democratic political system should work. It projects a universal suffrage system that encourages citizens political participation, the right to contest and vote in elections. Applying this theory and its tenets within the Nigerian fourth republic political system that practices democracy as a governance model and a multi-party system that supposed to encourage citizens' political participation in the affairs of the state, the case is, however, in sharp contrast with the tenets of the liberal democratic theory. Noting on this, Mohammed (2013) observed that despite the existence of a multi-party system that encouraged competitiveness amongst many political parties, instead of obeying electoral laws that guided their practices, most of the politicians preferred to employ all means of political violence to manipulate

and subvert the electoral processes to their personal advantage and thereby continued to discourage citizens participation in the system. This form of practice is against the tenets of liberal democracy as citizens are discouraged from participation through electoral violence. For example, as he noted further, the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) almost rigged all the elections between 1999 to 2015 to their advantage, but in turn, the opposition parties would prefer to resort to the use of violence to overcome such electoral challenges. In the same vein, Agbo (as cited in Mohammed, 2013) noted that Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) reported that 1249 petitions were engaged before the electoral tribunals especially on the governorship, legislature and state houses of assembly elections when PDP was in power. The whole of these is against democracy as the citizens are discouraged from participation through political violence, manipulation and subversion of the electoral processes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Generally, dissecting the state of democratic governance and political participation in Nigeria's fourth republic and within the scope of liberal democratic theory cannot be overemphasized. This is because it came with a lot of positive expectations. However, as noted by Yusuf (2018), after two decades of practice, these expectations remain far from being achieved as good governance, political participation and democratic consolidation remain as a mirage in the country. For better comprehension

of the subject matter, therefore, the major results and discussions are captured in the following subheadings below as revealed by the extant pieces of literature reviewed.

Democratic Governance and Political Participation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

To comprehensively understand the state of democratic governance and political participation under Nigeria's fourth republic, it is important to note that it is over two decades of democratic practice in Nigeria judging from the re-emergence of democratization process around the globe. According to Isma'ila (2016), the period also known as the third wave era, is connected to the 1990's globalization influence and the spread of democracy across the world. Within the said period of democratization, 21 years of democratic experience has been witnessed in Nigeria without interruption from the military i.e., from 1999 to 2020. The key issue is that while the period is observed as the era of "emerging democracy", the democratic experience within the noted era can be examined and observed especially in terms of practice and consolidation in Nigeria (Yusuf, 2018). These observation and examination can be done using the tenets of liberal democratic theory. This theory in a democratic state encourages practice of the rule of law, freedom of assembly, speech, religion, freedom of press, support for pressure groups, multi-party system, participation of citizens in political affairs, universal franchise that promotes periodic

free and fair elections and peaceful change of government. Also close to the above is the indices by the Freedom House which includes, good governance, civil liberty and freedom of civil groups in the society. And lastly, the indices by the African Economic Intelligence Unit which also talks about sound electoral process, healthy political culture, organized government and political participation, political representation, effective institutions, quality service delivery and corruption free society (Isma'ila, 2016; Kwasau, 2013; Muhammed, 2013; Vincent & Tunde, 2018).

Examining the state of democratic governance and political participation in Nigeria's fourth republic from the above indices, therefore, Yusuf (2018) observed that the fact that democratic practice returned to the country in 1999, there was less assurance for an effective democratic consolidation in Nigeria as this could be seen in many negative governmental plagues in which the country is passing through. In the same vein, Salisu and Avidime (2016) revealed that while there existed moderate gains such as the establishment of the legislature, operation of a multi-party system and the conduct of an oversight role by the legislature, the woes and pains that had visited the country since the inception of democratic governance in 1999 were overwhelming. The character of politicians and their inability to offer responsible and purposeful leadership continues to undermine the delivery of quality public services. By implication, this has led to reduction in popular trust in the state

institutions and the democratic processes. As they observed further, the ruling class paid no attention to the public aspirations. They dictated and direct public policies to satisfy their personal interests. This has affected the level of people's participation in governance against the popular advocacy in the tenets of the liberal democratic theory that encourages popular participation, protection of citizens' rights and promotion of a fair political system.

Building on the above, Oke (2010) observed that it was a common knowledge that amongst the tenets of a liberal democracy were justice, equity and fair conduct as democratic governance was based on the consent and general participation of the people in the affairs of their state. However, as he further revealed, the prolonged involvement of the military into Nigerian politics before the return of democratic governance in 1999, had permeated the political system under the fourth republic, and to the extent that the practice of the primary democratic principles became challenging for those in public positions in the country. This had resulted into bad governance and disenfranchisement of the common people under the fourth republic. According to Oke (2010), the shift in governance from military authoritarianism to democratic rule, instead of resulting into fulfilling the expectations of the masses, political intolerance and electoral violence remain the hallmark of the fourth republic. The implication is that the principles of democracy as advocated in the liberal democratic theory such as free and fair

elections, justice, equity, fairness, public participation in the political processes has been denied from been consolidated.

Also, the issue of godfatherism in the political system continues to contradict all the virtues of democratic processes through their interference in the selection of candidates for public positions. They diminish the legitimacy of the government and obstruct the electoral value of the people. They also promote political instability which results in limited participation of the people in the formulation of government policies (Oke, 2010). Other attributes against the system comprise the over politicization of impeachment, state failure to protect life and properties, disregard for the 1999 constitution, election rigging, disobedience to rule of law, press censorship and police brutality. All these are in sharp contrast to liberal democracy as they are against popular participation in democratic processes. In support of the above, Yagboyaju (2011), revealed that many years after the return of democracy in Nigeria, the democratic practice was yet to present any convincing evidence of good governance. The rule of law is not pronounced, elections are subverted, political parties amongst other institutions of democracy are manipulated by the few privileged. Democracy is not only threatened by implication, but the corporate existence of the country is equally under a threat through the activities of several government officials who see themselves as being above the law.

Political participation involves the involvement of the people in the political affairs of their state as one of the ingredients

of a democratic state and advocacy of the liberal democratic theory. But in Nigeria, politics is found to be influenced by ethnic, money and religious factors. For instance, since the independence of 1960, ethnicity and religious politics characterize electioneering practices in the country (Oke, 2010). For example, Gabriel (2011) observed that it was one of the reasons why the former deputy Senate President in the person of Albert Legogie, noted that it was obvious from the election trends of 2011 that there was a huge gulf of division between the South and the North, and between Muslims and Christians. For instance, immediately after the presidential election in 2011, election violence erupted in the dominated Muslim north and several Christians and Southerners were injured and killed as well as the destruction of several Churches. This kind of attitudes continue to discourage many citizens from participating in elections amongst other political activities in the country.

According to Falade (2014), there is poor level of political participation in the country. Several Nigerians are not dedicated to elections and other political activities and this is because the political system does not encourage popular participation. The political culture of intimidation, violence, sentiment, manipulation, ignorance, money politics, deception, corruption and apathy that have characterized the political system. In all, women are the worst marginalized through violence, domestic responsibilities, cultural issues and financial constraint which lead to political indifference and

poor participation in the political system (Agbalajobi, 2010; Oni, 2014; Uwa et al., 2018).

Deducing from the above findings and thrusting on the tenets of a liberal democratic theory, indices from the Freedom House and the African Economist Intelligence Unit's advocacies, much is left to tell. These advocacies as earlier mentioned include popular participation of the citizens in the political activities of their country and the promotion of the rule of law. Also includes are an effective political system that consolidates democratic principles and freedom of assembly. And lastly, universal franchise that promotes a periodic free and fair elections and a peaceful change of government as projected by Vincent and Tunde (2018), Kwasau (2013), Muhammad (2013), and Isma'ila (2016). In the light of these indices, therefore, it would not be stressful to conclude from the findings that the state of political participation and democratic governance in the Nigeria's fourth republic has not been too positive. This is built on the several factors revealed to be working against the political system and have negatively affected political participation and consolidation of democratic governance. Some of these factors as revealed by Salisu and Avidime (2016), Aliu (2014), Oke (2010), Yagboyaju (2011), Falade (2014), Okafor and Okafor (2018), amongst others like Omodia (2011), Ogbonnaya et al. (2012), Oni (2014), Agbalajobi (2010) include electoral violence, the politics of godfatherism, corruption, intimidation, sentiment,

ignorance, manipulation, deception, money politics, selfish interest of leaders, and relegation of women. Just as Agaigbe (2015) noted, research carried out in respect of the 2011 general election by the Friedrich Elbert Stiffing Foundation revealed that absence of transparency, election violence, and the poor delivery of campaign promises among others led to high political apathy in the country. They are all against democratic tenets and popular participation in Nigeria.

Challenges of Democratic Governance and Political Participation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

In modern democratic societies such as Nigeria, political participation is always envisaged as a strong component of a democratic government. However, as noted by Isma'ila (2016), the fact that a non-military government has reemerged in Nigeria with a framework for a constitutional governance, democratic governance cannot be assured. In this regard, if democratic governance or consolidation cannot be assured, it equally means that political participation is threatened. As he further explained, in a democratic state, there must be respect for the tenets of democracy such as the conduct of credible elections, respect for human rights, popular participation in political affairs and peaceful change of government. In the fourth republic, therefore, he listed corruption, political and electoral violence, weak democratic institutions like the legislature, the executive, political parties as the major challenges of democratic governance and political participation in

Nigeria. These ills as shortlisted above are in sharp contrast with the doctrine of liberal democracy.

Also, the issues of selfish interest, personalized power, ethnic and religious preference have made development and human progress to remain questionable. The omission of women in politics, extreme human rights abuses, electoral violence and malpractices, constitutional challenges among other ills have remained strong in the system (Omodia, 2011; Uwa et al., 2018). In any political system where the issue of corruption and electoral violence are evident and perverse such as Nigeria, the political system cannot be economically viable, neither can the system develops enough needed affection for political participation and consolidation of democracy as the vote of the people do not count (Ogundiya, 2010).

Political participation as one of the tenets of democracy is found to be liberal and unrestrictive (Arowolo & Aluko, 2010), and it is as old as human community (Abubakar, 2012). Therefore, the importance of political participation in a democracy either primitive or civilized, is to pursue the control of power and influence decision making in the society (Arowolo & Abe, 2008; Arowolo & Aluko, 2010). However, and in Nigeria's fourth republic for instance, corruption, unfulfilled pledges and deceit by politicians have continued to play a high negative role in discouraging a good number of Nigerians from taking active part in political activities in the country. Political apathy continues to grow owing to deliberate deception

and ignorance of some political leaders (Falade, 2014). Also, the disfranchisement of women in Nigerian politics has remained disturbing and alarming (Arowolo & Aluko, 2010). By implication, the negative indices remain a huge constraint to the practice of the tenets of liberal democracy, democratic consolidation and popular participation of citizens. Following the above, therefore, it would not be wrong to say that a lot needs to be done in order to address all these challenges in the system. The people need to enjoy better participation in the politics and governance of their country, which is the essence of democracy and good governance in any presidential and constitutional democracy such as Nigeria.

Consolidation of Democratic Governance and Political Participation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

The consolidation of democratic governance and political participation in any political system, lies in the understanding of the two concepts and how they operate within the principles of a liberal democracy. We must first understand that democratic governance simply involves ruling the people within the principles of democracy which functions through the consent of the people, while political participation involves the voluntary participation of the public in the affairs of their state (Okafor & Okafor, 2018). As Omodia and Aliu (2013) noted, it was expected of any democratic society to practice and promote popular participation, constitutionalism, accountability and transparency, respect

human rights and the rule of law, and ensure integrity in the management of public resources. These values basically represent the main essence of democratic governance (Salisu & Avidime, 2016). According to Omodia and Aliu (2013), the attributes above are vital to the ability of democratic governance to ensure and fortify popular trust, social contract, state legitimacy and promote political and socio-economic development in the country that would ensure effective consolidation of democracy and political participation.

Drawing from the above, and from the dissection of the state of democratic governance and political participation in the Nigeria's fourth republic, it is understandable that the practice has not been more positive to Nigerians. Though, there may be existence of the legislature, their oversight over the executive, multi-party system, uninterrupted transitions, different citizens vying for political positions through elections as noted by Salisu and Avidime (2016), yet, the level of success relating to the practice of democratic governance in the country appear to be overshadowed by the problems of political and electoral violence, poverty, widespread of unemployment, poor industrialization, poor infrastructure, failure of security over lives and properties, weak governance institutions, illiteracy, and political corruption which continue to work against popular participation and consolidation of democratic governance in the country. The above ills were also supported by Falade (2014), Oke (2010), Okafor and Okafor (2018), amongst others.

As the tenets of the liberal democratic theory, supported by the Freedom House and the African Economic Intelligence Unit advocate that in a democracy, the state must promote civil liberty, citizens' rights, capitalism, freedom of speech, multi-party system, free and fair periodic elections build on universal franchise, freedom of pressure groups, the rule of law, separation of powers, checks and balances, corruption-free society through transparency and accountability in the management of public resources, popular participation and easy change of government, the Nigerian political system, therefore, must be reorganized in a manner that would practice and adhere to the above principles. The institutions of democracy must be consolidated to serve the interest of the people. The political processes must be violent free, and women accommodated in order to promote participation and democracy consolidated. Only then, shall we continue to discuss about good governance, popular participation and consolidation of democratic governance in the country. They must be done with all sense of responsibility to favor the public interest.

CONCLUSION

The central thrust of this article was built on the objective to generally examine and understand the state of democratic governance and political participation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic 1999. As observed from the prelude, democratic governance is envisaged as the promotion and practice of good governance, civil liberty, freedom of civil society groups,

the rule of law and the active participation of the citizens in their political system. It is simply exercising state's power in line with the tenets of democracy as also demonstrated by the liberal democratic theory. While participation is an ingredient of democratic governance which simply means the active engagement of the citizens in the political life of their country. The study relied on descriptive qualitative method of research, secondary data generated, reviewed literatures and the liberal theory of democracy. Results emerged showed that since the return of democracy in 1999, which marks the beginning of the fourth republic, the state of democratic governance and political participation has been stagnant due to various negative indices working against the system. Some of these negative indices include political and electoral violence, corruption, selfish interest of leaders and weak institutions. It also found that many Nigerians no longer have trust in their leaders, as they were revealed to be selfish to the plights of the masses. They often make promises but fail to fulfill such to the people. By implication, the nature of the political system and the character of the political leaders discourage political participation, consolidation of democratic governance, as well, against the tenets of the liberal democratic theory.

Following the above, therefore, there is need that the political leaders must practice, promote and adhere to the doctrines of the constitution, the tenets of liberal democracy, and respect the interest of the

people who gave them their consent to rule over them. The political system and the electoral processes must be made to be transparent and accountable in order to promote a just system. The citizens rather than becoming disinterested in the political system, must endeavor to hold their leaders accountable to serve their interests. They must actively participate in the political processes and ensure that selfish leaders are not allowed to have access to any public office. Through the genuine practice of the above, an effective democratic governance and political participation shall be achieved and consolidated in Nigeria. In this nature, this study would not only benefit the political institutions, public figures, citizens, researchers alike, but also adding to the body of literature in this field. Lastly, and to continue expansion of the body of knowledge in this field, further research can also be conducted in the area of women political participation in Nigeria. The extent of youth participation, and public opinion with regards to the rule of law and democratic consolidation under the current led government of the All Progressive Congress party in Nigeria.

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