

# Community Participation and Democratic Governance in Osun State Nigeria

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## Abstract

The paper investigated the impact of community participation on democratic governance in Osun State. Primary and secondary data were utilized for this study. Primary data were collected through the administration of questionnaire and conduct of in-depth interviews. As revealed by the pilot study conducted in the three selected LG As, the study population of 2,357 comprised executive members of the two dominant political parties in the State: APC and PDP (120), traditional chiefs (56), executive members of community development associations (428), executive members of civil society organizations (219), and members of semi-formal organizations (1,534) of the three selected LGAs in State. Purposive sampling was used to select a sample fraction of 20%, making 472 respondents, for questionnaire administration. In addition, six selected stakeholders were interviewed. Secondary data were obtained from books, academic journals, official documents, newspapers, magazines and the Internet. Data collected were analyzed using percentages and chi square. The study revealed that there was low community participation in the governance of the State. The results also showed that there was a significant impact of community participation on

democratic governance in Osun State from 1999 to 2015 ( $X^2 = 29.8$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The study concluded that there was an established nexus between community participation and democratic governance in Osun State, Nigeria. It was recommended that government should provide more platforms such as town hall meetings that will encourage increased participation of the people at the community level in the governance of the State. There should be an empowerment bill that has provisions in the code for mandatory public hearing and consultation, sanctioning local officials who potently violate the participatory provisions of the code, and increasing substantive representation of civil society in local government units.

Key words: Community, Democracy, Governance, Participation, Public and Value

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### Introduction and problem in context

A functional democracy needs an informed citizenry and empowered media, popular participation in policy making, a responsive state, and governing processes that are open, transparent and inclusive to all legitimate interests. Improving relationships between citizens and their government means working simultaneously on state responsiveness and effectiveness, citizen empowerment, and the accountability of elected officials. State alone cannot solve societal problems or provide the remedies for democracy's deficits—this also requires citizen action. A meaningful democracy must strengthen civic voices, demonstrate responsive governance systems, and promote the interest of all its citizens.

There has been an international trend toward increased involvement of the public in the affairs and decisions of policy-setting bodies. In the United Kingdom, for example, this trend has become apparent in both national and local government in domains as diverse as transport planning, the environment and health care (Owens, 2000; Martin & Boaz, 2000; Bickerstaff & Walker, 2001). In parallel with the increased drive for public participation are a growing number of processes/techniques which shall be collectively termed *mechanisms*—for enabling involvement. The very existence of a variety of mechanisms implies uncertainty as to how one should *best* enact involvement. Put another way, if involvement were a simple, bounded, and well-understood process, then one particular mechanism might suffice to enable it to be effectively achieved (and research would be best directed toward finding this); but involvement as widely understood can take many forms, in many different situations, with many different types of participants, requirements, and aims for which different mechanisms may be required to maximize effectiveness (Rowe and Frewer, 2004).

Participation of people in democratic governance at all the different levels of governance was recognized by the African National Congress (ANC) in its policy document, the Reconstruction and Development Programmes (RDP), in 1994. The RDP purports that democracy requires that all rural people have access to power and the right to exercise their power will ensure that all people participate in the process of reconstructing the country (ANC, 1994). Also, the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs is protected in many human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and

Political Rights (ICCPR), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and the Arab Charter on Human Rights (ACHR). This can be referenced, respectively, in Article 21 of UDHR, Article 25 of ICCPR, Article 13 of ACHPR, and Article 24 of ACHR. The African Union (AU) adopted the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance during the 8th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government convened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 30 January 2007. The contents of the Charter provide an unprecedented support to the universally accepted principles and pillars of democracy and reaffirm the centrality of democratic governance for sustainable development, stability and security in Africa.

The direct involvement of ordinary people in the design, implementation and evaluation of planning, governance and overall development programmes at local or grassroots level, has become an integral part of democratic practice in recent years (Williams, 2004). However, it would seem that most community participation exercises in Nigeria are largely spectator politics, where ordinary people have mostly become endorsees of pre-designed planning programmes. Informed discussions and rational debates on the merits and demerits of specific planning programmes are literally non-existent, even though "community participation" features as a key component of planning programmes at local level.

There is general argument that most African governance systems are illegitimate; not responsive to the need of their citizens, not committed to providing public welfare; and not competent to create an enabling policy environment for productive activities and for ensuring the participation of the people (Olu-Adeyemi, 2012). Additionally, previous researchers have studied Governance of Nigeria's villages and cities through indigenous institutions (Olowu and Erero, 1997); and Participation of Citizens in Rural and Urban Governance: A Situational Analysis of Nigeria 2011-2014 (Ikegwuoha and Ifeanyi, 2015). There is lacuna with respect to the establishment of the nexus between community participation and democratic governance; hence this study sought to investigate the effect of community participation and democratic governance in Osun State from 1999 to 2015. It has been hypothesized that community participation has no significant impact on democratic governance in Osun State. The study stands to prove it right or wrong.

## Literature Review

### Community-wide participation

The United Nations (1981) sees community participation as the creation of opportunities to enable all members of a community to actively contribute to and influence the development process and to share equitably in the fruits of development. Community participation is a complex mechanism, and in effect there is no single blue print. Hence, each area is characterized by different dynamics and demographics. This view is held whilst taking cognizance of the fact that development does not occur successfully if beneficiaries are not part and parcel of the process of planning and implementation of the process. The methods of community participation play a crucial role in terms of meaningful participation (Nekwaya, 2007). Community participation is rooted in democratic approaches to public policy, community planning and development, which assume that people have a right to make decisions that affect their lives. In short, a community that gives up the ability to make its own decisions loses some essential humanity. Citizen participation must be understood in relation to local and regional patterns of power and powerlessness, that is, individual and collective experiences of influence, acquiescence, privilege, or exclusion based on membership in dominant or disenfranchised groups.

Oakley and Marsden (1984), state that there are two main vehicles for implementing this notion of participation; (1) community development programmes which were aimed at preparing the rural population collaborate with government development plans and (2) the establishment of formal organizations (cooperatives, farmers association, etc.) which were to provide the structure through which the rural people could have some contact with, and voice in, development programmes. Burkey (1993) provides the evidence which suggests that only a few achieved any meaningful participation and benefit by means. Oakley and Marsden (1984) assert that this strategy has not resulted in meaningful participation of the community in rural development. In fact it is the strategy which has resulted in the current situation failing to confront the issue of the lack of meaningful community participation in rural development. Thus, community participation is an indispensable element of democratic governance, such that, meaningful and functional democracy depends solely on the participation of the people at the rural community.

Public participation is an end in itself, and is the unavoidable sequence of the process of empowering and liberating the community to understand the process of development (Oakley and Marsden, 1984). Kumar (2002) agrees that community participation as an end is self- mobilizing where the local people themselves are in total command. There is no doubt that meaningful participation is about achieving power: which is the power to influence the decisions that affect one's livelihood. Community participation is viewed as an end if it becomes a long-term process, the purpose of which is to develop and strengthen the capabilities of people in order to participate directly in development initiatives (Kumar, 2002). This comparative analysis will be presented briefly below:

**Table 1:1** Comparative Analysis: Participation as a means or an end

	Participation as a means	Participation as an end
1	Implies the use of participation to achieve some <i>predetermined goal or objective</i>	Attempts to empower people to take part <i>in their own development</i>
2	Attempts to utilize existing resources in order to achieve the objective of the project/programmes	Ensures increased role of people in Development initiatives
3	Common in government programmes, specifically for mobilizing community to improve efficiency of delivery system	More favored by Non- Governmental Organizations than by government
4	Stresses the achievement of the objective rather <i>than the act of participation itself</i>	Focuses on improving the ability of the people to <i>participate rather than just</i> achieve predetermined projects objectives
5	Participation take a more passive form	It is relatively more active and dynamic

**Source:** Kumar (2002)

Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn on the fact that meaningful participation of the rural poor in development is concerned with direct access to the resources necessary for development, and some active involvement and influence in the decisions affecting those resources (Burkey, 2000). The meaningful participation to community development implies the ability positively to influence the course of events.

### **The Concept of Governance**

Like most concepts of its kind, the concept of governance due to its complex weaving of "economic, political and social aspects of a Nation" (Shehu, 1999), has not been amenable to easy or simplistic definition. In other words, the concept has not been an exception to the volatility and eclecticism for which the disciplines in the Social Sciences have been globally noted whenever it comes to the

conceptualization of core issues. This explains Esman's (1997) claim that "no two political scientists would agree on what the concept of governance is or what it means". In fact, as Hyden (1999) once noted, "only few authors (have) define(d) it (governance) with a view to serving analytical purpose" hence, "governance as a concept has not been extensively used (or defined) in the political literature until very recently when it gained currency" (Nkom and Sorkaa, 1996).

World Bank (1989) defines governance as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of socio-economic resources for development". According to the World Bank (1993), governance has three dimensions. These dimensions which, Eyinla (1998) equally noted are: "the nature of political regimes; the exercise of authority in the management of social-economic resources and, the capacity of government to design and implement policy and to discharge its functions". These dimensions were identified and concretely elucidated by Olowu and Erero (1997) who both conceptualized governance as relating to the "rule-ruler-ruled relationship". Trevor Gordon-Somers' (1997) attempt appears like a summary:

The legitimate exercise of political, economic and administrative authority the management of a country's affairs, at all levels. It comprises the complex mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights and obligations and mediate their differences. Management of development, in terms of policy formulation, resource allocation and balancing of economic interests, is crucial". Sound governance is therefore participatory, transparent, accountable and equitable and promotes the rule of law (Trevor Gordon-Somers 1997).

Although governance has a wide range of meanings and applications, there are some key elements of governance that most scholars who use the concept tend to agree upon (Turnhout and van der Zouwen 2010). These key elements are: the increased involvement of non-state actors, the decentralization of decision making, and the emergence of new modes of steering by central authorities. These elements are used prescriptively-as ways to achieve good governance-and descriptively-as empirical manifestations of a changed political landscape and of the new methods by which societies are governed. Therefore, they can be invoked both as policy instruments to achieve democratic norms and as analytical concepts to describe governance. Speer (2012) reviews experiences of participatory governance mechanisms as a strategy for increasing

government responsiveness and improving public services. She characterizes these mechanisms as follows:

They involve citizens in decision-making over the distribution of public funds between communities and the design of public policies, as well as in monitoring and evaluating government spending. Thus they differ from community-based development schemes in which community members participate in the planning, implementation and monitoring of a particular development project within their community (Speer 2012)

Mansuri and Rao (2012) examine over 500 examples of interventions (government and NGO) which have sought to induce participation, including the World Bank's substantial effort to support participatory development. Hence their focus is on "induced" participation, not the "organic" form that the Gaventa and Barrett study reviews. Mansuri and Rao note that:

Over the past decade, the World Bank has allocated almost \$85 billion to local participatory development. Driving this massive injection of funding has been the underlying belief that involving communities in at least some aspects of project design and implementation creates a closer connection between development aid and its intended beneficiaries. Indeed, local participation is proposed as a method to achieve a variety of goals, including sharpening poverty targeting, improving service delivery, and strengthening demand for good governance (Mansuri and Rao, 2012).

It can be inferred from the entirety of the literature that opinions are diverse on the subject of community-wide participation and democratic governance. There appears to be consensus on the exigency of community participation in the governance system, and scholars also agreed that there is need for effective participation of the people in the democratic system of their community which, of course, should be result oriented and not counter-productive as in the case with Nigeria, especially, Osun State. From the review of literatures, it was revealed that majority of the studies examined focused on governance, democracy and development with little emphasis on community participation. Other than that, little attention has been given to the study of community participation and democratic governance in Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is public value theory. The concept of public value theory was first introduced in Moore's book *creating public value: strategic management in government* (1995). Since its emergence in US the public value theory has grown interest among both academics and practitioners. The fundamental assumption of public value theory is to provide services according to the public interest (Chambers, 2003). Public interest is defined as what people would 'choose if they saw clearly, thought rationally, and acted disinterestedly and benevolently' (Chambers, 2003). Thus this theory entails desired outcomes of public programmes and participation of expected beneficiaries (to see the outcome clearly) for the services when delivered by the government bodies. Bozeman argued that 'Public value theory tends to operate at the highest levels, such as philosophical treatises about the public interest, or at the operational level, focusing on specific desired programme outcomes'. This theory induces public institutions to recognize public value of resources, goods, and services and to think the arrangement under what 'is the public best served' (Chambers, 2003). The public value theory articulated that public officials and representatives should include people in making decisions for service delivery, and thus the theory pursues the implementation of good governance with people as the central element of both the approaches. Hence, this study adopts this theory to conceptualize community participation and democratic governance.

### **Methodology**

Primary and secondary data were utilized for this study. Primary data were collected through the administration of questionnaire and conduct of in-depth interviews. Multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for this study. At the first stage, one Local Government Area was randomly selected from each senatorial district of Osun State, making a total of three LGAs in the State. At the second stage, political parties, traditional chiefs, executive members of civil society organizations (CSOs) and executive members of community development associations were purposively selected in each of the three selected LGAs. The choice of these targeted groups was based on their vantage positions to provide relevant information on the level of community participation in the governance process of the State. As revealed by the pilot study conducted in the three LGAs,



the study population (2,357) comprised executive members of the two dominant political parties in the State: APC and PDP (120), traditional chiefs (56), executive members of CDAs (428), executive members of civil society organizations (219), and members of semi-formal organizations (1,534) of the three selected LGAs in Osun State. A sample fraction of 20%, making 472 respondents, was selected for questionnaire administration. In addition, six selected stakeholders on community participation and governance were interviewed. Data collected were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean value and chi square.

### Data Presentation

**Table 1:2 Impact of Community Participation on Democratic Governance in the Study Area**

S/ N	ITEMS	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		N= 382	
		F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	$\bar{X}$	Remark
1	More transparency in decision making and contracting	37	9.69	245	64.14	55	14.40	45	11.78	2.72	Agree
2	Heightened community confidence and competence	56	14.7	206	53.93	55	14.40	65	17.02	2.66	Agree
3	High level of citizen satisfaction	87	22.8	195	51.05	55	14.40	45	11.78	2.85	Agree
4	More effective and efficient use of resources	50	13.1	199	52.09	75	19.63	58	15.18	2.63	Agree
5	Better quality infrastructure and better sustainability	65	17.0	180	47.12	75	19.63	62	16.23	2.65	Agree
6	It makes government accountable to the people	82	21.5	248	64.92	32	8.38	20	5.24	3.03	Agree
7	Participation takes "up-front" time (although saves time later by avoiding mistakes)	76	19.9	270	70.68	16	4.19	20	5.24	3.05	Agree
8	It tackles people's disengagement from politics and the democratic process	82	21.5	285	74.61	10	2.62	5	1.31	3.16	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2015

NB:  $f$  = Frequency

% = Percentage

$\div$  = Mean value

N = Total Number of Respondents

**Test of Hypothesis**

The statistical tool used in the analysis of the data is Chi-square. The level of significance used in the analysis is 5% (i.e. 0.05). The decision rule is of two-fold: i. when the calculated greater than table, we reject the  $H_0$  and accept  $H_1$ ; and ii. When the calculated less than  $x^2$  table, we accept the  $H_0$  and reject  $H_1$ . The hypothesis is as follows:  $H_0$ : Community participation has no significant effect on democratic governance in Osun State.

To achieve this, the data generated in Table 1.2 were summarized and compartmentalized into two categories: agreement and disagreement, thereby forming the observed frequency for this inferential test. As shown in Table 1.3, an average of 32.9% of the respondents strongly agreed with the nine assertions, just as another 37.8% agreed ordinarily with the variables, making a total of 70.7% agreement level. On the other hand, an average of 21.6% ordinarily disagreed just as another 7.7% strongly disagreed with the variables, making a total of 29.3%. Hence, these two (2) categories form the observed frequency for this test of hypothesis.

**Table 1.3: The Impact of Community Participation on Democratic Governance in the Study Area. (Summary)**

S/N	ITEMS	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N=382
		%	%	%	%	%
1	More transparency in decision making and contracting	9.69	64.14	14.40	11.78	100.00
2	Heightened community confidence and competence	14.7	53.93	14.40	17.02	100.00
3	High level of citizen satisfaction	22.8	51.05	14.40	11.78	100.00
4	More effective and efficient use of resources	13.1	52.09	19.63	15.18	100.00
5	Better quality infrastructure and better sustainability	17	47.12	19.63	16.23	100.00
6	It makes government accountable to the people	21.5	64.92	8.38	5.24	100.00
7	Participation takes "up-front" time (although saves time later by avoiding mistakes)	19.9	70.68	4.19	5.24	100.00
8	It tackles people's disengagement from politics and the democratic process	21.5	74.61	2.62	1.31	100.00
	Average	17.5	59.82	12.2	10.5	100.00
	Observed Frequency	77.3		22.68		100

**Source:** Statistically generated from Table 1.3

Using chi-square test to test the Hypothesis stated above:

Chi-Square ( $\chi^2_{\text{calculated}}$ ) is given as

$$\sum \frac{[e_i(o_i - e_i)^2]}{e_i}$$

Where  $o_i$  is the observed frequency and  $e_i$  is the expected frequency

**Table 1.4: Chi-square Table**

Response	Observed Frequency ( $o_i$ )	Expected Freq ( $e_i$ )	$(o_i - e_i)^2$	$\frac{(o_i - e_i)^2}{e_i}$
Strongly Agree/Agree	77.32	50	746.38	14.9
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	22.68	50	746.38	14.9
Total	100.0	100.0		29.8

**Source:** Statistically generated from table 1.4

$\chi^2_{\text{calculated}} = 29.8$

Degree of freedom = 2 - 1 = 1

at 5% significance level = 3.84

Since  $t_{\text{tab}} > t_{\text{calculated}}$ , we reject  $H_0$  and accept its alternative  $H_1$ .

Therefore, reject the  $H_0$  and accept the  $H_1$ . Thus, this study concluded that community participation has significant impact on democratic governance in Osun State.

### Findings

This section investigated the impact of community participation on democratic governance in the State of Osun between 1999 and 2015. The Table reveals the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents on each of the investigative assertions set out to measure the impact of community participation on democratic governance and its values/responses were organized using Likert scale of measurements, such as: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). In addition, the mean value ( $\bar{x}$ ) summarizes the strength of the respondents for each of the assertions set out to achieve this objective, using a decision rule as thus: where ( $\bar{x} > 2.5$ ), more respondents agreed, and where ( $\bar{x} < 2.5$ ), more respondents disagreed.

As shown in Table 1.4 above, 37 (9.69%) strongly agreed and 245 (64.14%) agreed to the fact that community participation ensure more transparency in decision making and contracting. This is supported by the mean response ( $\bar{x} = 2.72$ ) which is above the average indicating that more respondents tend towards agreement to this fact. This shows that when people are involved in governance, transparency of the ruler is usually enhanced.

In the same vein, community participation was equally believed to be responsible for heightened community confidence in the government and competence. This position was supported favored by the majority of the respondents 262 (68.59%) with mean response of ( $\bar{x} = 2.66$ ). This indicates that when people are involved in the government, there is tendency that the community confidence in the government will be increased and the level of competence of the government will also be assured. Also, considering the satisfaction of the people, 87 (22.8%) strongly agreed and 195 (51.05%) agreed that community-wide participation facilitate high level of citizen satisfaction to the activities of the government ( $\bar{x} = 2.85$ ), while few respondents 100 (26.18%) disagreed to this position. Considering the mean response of 2.85, it can be admitted that the involvement of the beneficiaries of government action in the decision about such

action will heightened the level of satisfaction of the beneficiaries who are the citizens.

Also, Table 1.4 above revealed that majority of the respondents 249 (65.18%) agreed that community participation guarantee effective and efficient use of the resources while 133 (34.82%) disagreed. With the mean response of 2.63, it can be admitted that the involvement of the community members in the governance will ensure effective and efficient utilization of the resources. In the same vein, the majority of the respondents 245 (64.14%) agreed that community participation lead to better quality infrastructure and better sustainability, while about a half of this number 137 (35.86%) disagreed to this view. Considering the mean response of 2.65, it can be established that better quality infrastructure will be achieved through community participation in the governance. This is true considering the fact that where people participate in governance, the need and desires of the people are well identified at the initial stage and this will guarantee better infrastructural facility to the people.

Accountability is a very pronounced element of good governance according to the UNDP and other agencies. Considering this fact, the respondents were asked about the relationship between community participation and governance. The almost all the respondents 330 (86.39%) agreed that community participation heightened accountability. In the same vein, almost all the sampled respondents 367 (96.07%) agreed that community participation tackles the problem of peoples disengagement from politics and democratic process. It can therefore be claimed that community participation has significant impact on democratic governance in the study area between 1999 and 2015. Thus, the claim was further subjected to a hypothesis test using Chi-square, denoted as the hypothesis of this study.

The above findings fell in consonance with the findings of the previous studies, though in relation to different state. Joel (2001) found that the public has always been disillusioned by the lack of genuine opportunities to participate, the failure of many multi-stakeholder processes, the frequent disregard of their concerns as "emotional," the failure of government to incorporate their concerns in decisions, and the power that economic interests exert in agency decision-making. In their own remark, Dare and Olukemi (2012) noted that inclusion of citizens in the policy making arrangement is to create sense of belonging and awareness necessary for the sustainable of policy even if it is a short-term painful policy that will

provide long-term reward. This public participation model is potent enough to consolidate democracy and engender good governance. Falade (2014) submitted that the public lacks confidence in government, and government does not trust lay citizens and their representatives to make informed decisions on issues generally considered the realm of experts. Part of this distrust relates to the role of government agencies – government environmental agencies often see themselves as mediators and service providers rather than as trustees of the public interest.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The study hereby concluded that there was nexus between community-wide participation and democratic governance in Osun State within the study period. The bond between the people at the community level and political institutions has weakened in the State due to the inadequate participation of the people at the community level in the governance of the State. This low connection between the people and the government has reduced the legitimacy and trust in the government of the State between 1999 and 2015.

In respect of the findings from the study, the following recommendations were offered to help resuscitate community-wide participation in the governance of Osun State: The government should provide more fora or platforms that will encourage increased participation of the people at the community level in the governance of the State and devoid of political gain/motive. The government should also create more enlightenment opportunities to inform and create awareness for the people regarding their rights and responsibility about direct participation in government especially, on the areas affecting their livelihood.

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