

UNDERGRADUATES' POLITICAL CULTURE AND INFLUENCE IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY

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Abstract

Politics on campus is an organized students' activities through which they make, preserve and amend the rules and regulations which governed their conducts. This paper assessed undergraduates' political culture and influence in Nigeria: implication for sustainable democracy. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population of the study covered all undergraduates in Kwara State. Sample for this study comprised 600 respondents from federal, state and private universities in the state were sampled through a stratified random sampling technique. The instrument was a questionnaire titled "Undergraduates' Political Culture and Influence Questionnaire (UPCIQ)" with a reliability of 0.73 coefficient. The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation for all the research questions. The findings of the study showed that the prevalent undergraduates' political culture were self-denigrating, leadership rascality and leadership irresponsibility. The prevalent political influence were rational-legal basis of authority, political power as result of social position and Charismatic basis of authority among undergraduates on the campus. Resources of political influence were legitimate power, social media as channel of information and logical reasoning. Based on these findings, it was recommended that political culture and influence of undergraduates have to be regulated by school management through students' affairs unit for fair political activities and sustainable democracy on our campuses.

Key-words: Political culture, Political influence, Resources, Undergraduates and Sustainable democracy

Introduction

Democracy is a form of government ruled by majority people in the country with the interest of the minority purposely to ensure good governance. Good governance is the manner in which power is exercised by the government to promote accountability and transparency in the formulation and implementation of public policies (Oke, 2010). Politics is a persistent pattern of human relationships within an organized human community that involves to a significant extent the interplay of power, influence and authority among political activists in the society purposely to sustain democracy. It studies the conflicts or organized dispute among the students the authoritative policy adopted and political positions available in a society as well as the means employed in the resolution of the conflict for sustainable democracy (Okunloye & Olokooba, 2017).

In all social groups, politics takes place at every level of social interaction. It exists among students' union and associations, within the family and amongst small groups of friends just as well as amongst nations in the global. Higher institutions socialize students on political education and provide them the opportunities to participate in politics in their various unions and associations on the campuses (Balogun, Olokooba & Abdulsalam, 2017). Politics is an all-pervading influence on human existence or relation. Through politics, students modify the political behaviour of other students to attain social position. This does bring about students to conflict among the students. It is also the politics that provides conflict management or resolution mechanisms which prevent the use of instruments of physical violence among the students. The participation of the students in politics is fundamental to the relevance and survival of democracy in the country. An

inclusive democracy is the one that gives students opportunity to participate in political activities in the schools. To sustain democracy depends on the maintenance of public confidence and political groups in the fairness of its procedures which have to be practised by the students in the school politics (Mike, 2016). This is an important culture of political system.

Political culture is a pattern of values, beliefs and attitudes of people in the political system regarding the affairs of the state. In the higher institutions, it is pattern of beliefs and attitudes of students to political activities on campus. It regulates the political activities and relationships in the system. It ensures healthy level of political systems by bringing appreciable order into the system. It is the pattern of orientations to political objects such as parties, government, the constitution, expressed in beliefs symbols and values (Heywood, 2007). Political socialization is the process of transmitting political culture from one generation to another. The agencies of political socialization include the family, school, peer groups, pressure groups, political parties, mass media agencies, and specialized government agencies like the Directorate of Mass Mobilization and National Orientation Agency among others (Okunloye & Olokooba, 2017). Political culture of a nation has a great influence on sharing and shaping of power, political practices between the government and the governed in the country. Nigeria political culture is characterized with self-denigration, bordering on corporate damage, national euthanasia, political corruption, electoral malfeasance, electioneering hooliganisms, ethnic bigotry, elite coldness, leadership irresponsibility and rascality, godfatherism, national cabalism and mentality of winner-take-all (Rosemary, Agbionu & Ezenwlie, 2014; Okeke, 2017). Types of political culture of a nation affect its political practices. Nigeria is a rich nation, it has all potentials for greatness, it is a nation blessed with vast natural and human resources, but its political culture and corrupt attitudes of the leaders have forestalled its match to greatness and sustainable development (Rosemary, et al. 2014). This does not only affect the practices of the government but also

the educational institutions especially students' political practices. Political culture determines political influence in a political system.

Political Influence are basic concepts of politics that share the common attributes of modifying the behaviour of individuals and groups of people in the system. Students are politically socialized in the school to certain extent that they possess a wide range of political ideologies to engage in political discussion and influence political affairs and behavior of others in the school (Adelabu & Akisolu, 2009). The basic concepts of politics include power, coercion, authority and influence. Power is the capacity to change the political behaviour of others through the aid of threat or sanctions for non-conformity with the intended behaviour. It is the capacity to produce the intended political behaviour in which it is attached to other things apart from physical force. Coercion is causal relationship in which the behaviour of another person is modified with the help of physical instrument or force. The capacity to produce intended behaviour here is attached to only physical force which involves the use of instrument of destruction such as gun, cutlass etc. Influence is a process by which a person or institution induces others to do what they could not have done with the aid of logical arguments and/or their status positioning in the society (Okunloye & Olokooba, 2017).

Authority is legitimate power exercised by a person, group or an institution on their subjects or subordinates who give unquestionable obedience. The political influence are frequently used by students in their political practices. They are active in school politics and politically influence policies within their universities at one time or the others (Balogun, et al. 2017). There are different types of authority. Traditional basis of authority occurs in kingdoms and empires like in the pre-colonial African society. Rational-legal basis of authority refers to the belief of the people in the legality of position of some individuals in government who act in accordance with the legal norms of the society while charismatic basis of authority is legitimacy that is derived from devotion of the people to the exceptional qualities, heroism or

exemplary characters and other God-given attributes of some individual in the society. Some students possess two or more of bases or sources of the authority.

The political influence are exercised through the use of certain resources in political practices. One of these resources is the status position. It is a fundamental source of political influence. Students are able to control others on the account of their societal standing, family background, group affiliation, educational attainment as well as other personal qualifications and achievements. Incentives is the ability to offer positive incentives such as information, social entertainment, money, friendship or privileges that may certainly give an edge to some students over others. Disincentive is the ability to offer negative incentives by way of withholding some benefit and other unpleasant consequences and that may also enable some students on campus to be more influential and powerful than others. Social media is another resource used by students to modify the political behaviour of others. Students have their own local news carriers in form of campus journalism. Nigeria universities have produced a lot of activists that are presently influencing the political system. The present leaders who are making great impacts on political development of Nigeria were some years back students of the higher institutions (Adelabu & Akisolu, 2009; Okunloye & Olokooba, 2017).

In higher institutions in Nigeria, there are political institutions where students socialise themselves and exercise their political influence. These institutions could be found in universities, polytechnics, colleges, institutes among others. The political institutions in educational institutions including but not limited to Students' Union, Faculty Associations, Departmental Associations, Community Associations, Clubs, Societies, among others that promote their political education. Therefore, Michael and Inyang (2015) and Balogun et al. (2017) reported that undergraduates were aware of political development, interest in political activities and participate in politics at the various unions and

associations on campus. Politics is exciting on the campus because students disagree to agree. They disagree about how they should organize themselves. Who should get what? How should power and other responsibilities be shared? They also disagree on how such matters should be resolved. How should collective decisions be made? Who should have a say? How much influence should each social status have? (Heywood, 2007). It is therefore become imperative to investigate undergraduates' political culture and influence on the campus and the resources used by the political activists among the students to influence others on the campus in Nigerian universities.

Objectives of the Study

The study focused on the undergraduates' political culture and influence in Nigeria: implication for sustainable democracy. Specifically, it investigated:

- a. the prevalent political culture among undergraduates on the campus in Nigerian universities;
- b. the prevalent political influence among undergraduates on the campus in Nigerian universities; and
- c. resources of political influence used by political activists among undergraduates on the campus in Nigerian universities.

Research Questions

- a. What are the prevalent political culture among undergraduates on the campus in Nigerian universities?
- b. What are the prevalent political influence among undergraduates on the campus in Nigerian universities?
- c. What are the resources of political influence used by political activists among the undergraduates on the campus in Nigerian universities?

Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted in the study. This is necessary to be able to explain the variables in the study based on information gathered. The research was conducted in Kwara State. The population was all undergraduates in

the state. A sample of six hundred undergraduates was selected from a federal, state and private universities in the state using stratified random sampling technique. A questionnaire titled “Undergraduates’ Political Culture and Influence Questionnaire (UPCIQ)” was used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into four sections. Section A dealt with information about demographic information of the respondents while Section B contained items on political culture of undergraduates on campuses. Section C elicited information on political influence on a three-point Likert scale of Very Prevalent (3), Slightly Prevalent, (2) and Not Prevalent (1). Section D gave information on the resources of political influence used by political activists among the students on the campuses in Nigerian

universities and were on a three-point Likert scale of Frequently Use (3), Sometimes Use (2) and Never Use (1). To validate the instrument, copies of the questionnaire were given to two experts in the Department of Social Sciences Education, University of Ilorin to ensure content validity. Its reliability was established using test-retest technique and a reliability index of 0.73 was obtained. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer all research questions.

Results

Research Questions 1: What are the prevalent political culture among undergraduates on the campus in Nigerian universities?

Table 1: Prevalent Political Culture among Undergraduates on the Campus

S/N	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
1	Political corruption	1.16	1.08	6 th
2	A self-denigrating	1.97	1.15	1 st
3	Electoral malfeasance	1.15	1.17	7 th
4	Electioneering hooliganisms	1.20	1.05	5 th
5	Ethnic bigotry	1.07	0.94	9 th
6	Leadership irresponsibility	1.42	0.94	3 rd
7	Leadership rascality	1.46	1.19	2 nd
8	Godfatherism	1.31	1.18	4 th
9	Mentality of winner-takes-all	1.14	1.18	8 th
10	Corporate devastation	1.07	1.10	9 th

Table 1 indicated that out of 10 items that address prevalent political culture among undergraduates on the campus, items 2, 7 and 6 which were ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively are prevalent political culture among

undergraduates. However, the least of the items were items 5 and 10.

Research Questions 2: What are the prevalent political influence among undergraduates on the campus in Nigerian universities?

Table 2: Prevalent Political Influence among Undergraduates on the Campus

S/N	Items	Mean	Standard	
			Deviation	Rank
1	Political power as result of social position	1.43	1.18	2 nd
2	Coercion with the physical force	1.14	1.06	5 th
3	Traditional basis of authority	1.21	1.17	4 th
4	Rational-legal basis of authority	1.47	1.17	1 st
5	Charismatic basis of authority	1.23	1.20	3 rd

Table 2 indicated that out of 5 items that address prevalent political influences among undergraduates on the campus items 4, 5 and 1 which were ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively are prevalent political influences among

undergraduates. However, the least of the items was item 2.

Research Questions 3: What are the resources of political influence used by political activists among the undergraduates on the campus in Nigerian universities?

Table 3: Resources of Political Influence among Undergraduates

S/N	Items	Mean	Standard	
			deviation	Rank
1	Status position	1.51	1.28	4th
2	Positive incentives	1.15	1.27	9th
3	Social media as channel of information	1.64	1.25	2 nd
4	Sanctions	1.43	1.25	5th
5	Disincentives	1.12	1.20	10th
6	Use of Physical force	1.32	1.26	6th
7	Logical reasoning	1.58	1.24	3rd
8	Administrative authority	1.21	1.23	8th
9	Legitimate power	1.77	1.31	1st
10	Educational level	1.26	1.13	7th

Table 3 showed that out of 10 items that address resources of political influence among undergraduates on the campus, item 9, 3 and 7 which were ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively are resources of political influence used by political activists among students. However, the least of the items was item 5 which stated

“Disincentives” was ranked 9th with means score of 1.12 and standard deviation of 1.20.

Discussion of Findings

This study investigated undergraduates' political culture and influence on the campuses and the resources used by the political activists among the students to influence others on the campus in Nigerian universities and has provided some findings. Findings of this study revealed that a self-denigrating, leadership rascality and leadership irresponsibility are the prevalent political culture among undergraduates on the campus. This finding is consistent with the findings of Rosemary, et al. (2014) and Okeke, (2017) who discovered that Nigeria political culture are characterized with self-denigration, bordering on corporate damage, national euthanasia, political corruption, electoral malfeasance, electioneering hooliganisms, ethnic bigotry, elite coldness, leadership irresponsibility and rascality. This implies that some of the political culture in Nigerian political system reflect on political activities on the campuses.

Findings of this study also showed that rational-legal basis of authority, political power as result of social position and charismatic basis of authority are the prevalent political influence among undergraduates on the campus. This finding is also consistent with the findings of Adelabu and Akisolu, (2009) who reported that students were politically socialized in the schools to certain extent that they possess a wide range of political ideologies to engage in political discussion and influence political affairs and behaviour of others in the schools. This implies that students influence other students politically to produce intended political behaviour.

Furthermore, Findings of this study also revealed that legitimate power, social media as

channel of information and logical reasoning are the major resources of political influence used by political activists to influence other students politically on the campus. This finding is consistent with the findings of Adelabu and Akisolu, (2009) who found out that students have their own local news carriers in form of campus journalism and political affiliation and education enable undergraduates to engage in political activities on campus.

Concluding Remarks

Political activities on campus have to look into to prevent crises and ungodly behaviour among the students. The findings of the study have showed the prevalent political culture and influence among the undergraduates on our campuses. They are among the factors that bring about political crises and violence on our campuses if they are not well managed. Based on the findings, it was concluded that students' political culture and influence need to be regulated through political education and socialization to prevent political crises, violence and dictatorship among the students. Resources of political influence could be enhanced to sustain fair political activities among the students and consolidation of democracy on our campuses.

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