

## **The Dynamics of Political Participation and Governance in Gombe State, Nigeria**

**Odekunle kehinde Adeleke<sup>1</sup>, Abdulsabur Adamu Garafini<sup>1</sup> & Oyebade Hannah Eikojonwa<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Department of General Studies,  
Federal Polytechnic Kaltungo, Gombe State,  
odekunlekehinde1@fedpolyklt.edu.ng

<sup>2</sup>School of Business, Computing and Social Sciences,  
University of Gloucestershire, United Kingdom

### **Abstract**

**T**his study examines the dynamics of political participation, electoral processes, civic engagement, and policy implementation in Gombe State, Nigeria, between 2015 and 2023. The focus is on understanding how electoral processes and civic engagement shaped governance outcomes in the region. A sample of 400 respondents, selected through stratified sampling, provided data via structured questionnaires. Using both qualitative and quantitative analyses, the study reveals significant relationships between political participation and policy outcomes. The results suggest that increased civic engagement has influenced governance effectiveness in Gombe State, with key implications for future elections and policy reforms.

**Keywords:** Political Participation, Civic Engagement, Electoral Processes, Policy Implementation, Gombe State

### **Introduction**

Political participation and governance are essential components of democratic systems, influencing how authority is exercised and policies are implemented. In Nigeria, the return to democracy in 1999 led to significant interest in these concepts, particularly at the sub-national level, where diverse political, ethnic, and religious dynamics shape governance. Gombe State, located in the North-East geopolitical zone, is an example of such diversity. Since its creation in 1996, Gombe has witnessed political growth, particularly since the 1999 democratic transition. However, fluctuating voter turnout, varying levels of civic engagement, and inconsistencies in policy implementation have marked the state's political landscape over the years, especially between 2015 and 2023 (Yunusa, et al, 2020).

Electoral processes in Gombe have been integral to shaping political participation. Despite the democratic framework in place, elections in the state, as in many parts of Nigeria, have been plagued by challenges such as voter apathy, electoral violence, and fraud (Jega, 2019). Voter turnout has steadily declined in recent years, with the 2019 general elections recording only 35.4% participation (INEC, 2019). Such trends raise important questions about the factors driving voter disengagement and the effectiveness of electoral processes in fostering democratic governance. Similarly, civic engagement in Gombe has been uneven, with urban areas typically exhibiting more political participation compared to rural communities (Oladipo, et al, 2022).

The governance landscape in Gombe State has seen varying levels of success, with sectors like infrastructure and health making progress, while education and poverty alleviation continue to face significant challenges. Effective governance depends on active citizen participation to hold leaders accountable and ensure that policies address local needs (Hyden, 2013). However, the tenuous relationship between political participation and governance outcomes in Gombe highlights the complexities of democratic consolidation in the state. This study aims to explore the interplay between electoral processes, civic engagement, and policy implementation, providing insights into the dynamics of political participation and governance in Gombe from 2015 to 2023.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts the **Civic Voluntarism Model** proposed by Verba, et al, (1995). This model posits that political participation is driven by three key factors: the individual's resources (time, money, and civic skills), psychological engagement with politics, and recruitment into political activities by networks. The theory aligns with the dynamics of political participation in Gombe State, where voter behavior is often influenced by socio-economic conditions, political education, and community-level mobilization.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

This study utilizes a descriptive survey research design to collect and analyze data on the political participation, civic engagement, and policy implementation in Gombe State. A survey approach is appropriate as it allows for data collection from a large sample population, ensuring representativeness.

#### **Target Population**

The population for this study includes registered voters, community leaders, government officials, and civil society organizations in Gombe State. The total population is estimated at 8,000 individuals, comprising eligible voters across different local government areas.

#### **Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

The sample size for this study is 400 respondents. This size was determined using Cochran's formula for sample size calculation. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure that all segments of the population were adequately represented, including gender, age, occupation, and level of political involvement.

#### **Instrument for Data Collection**

Data will be collected through structured questionnaires divided into two sections:

**Section A:** Demographic information such as age, gender, and occupation.

**Section B:** Questions focused on political participation, electoral processes, civic engagement, and perceptions of policy implementation.

#### **Validity and Reliability of the Instrument**

The questionnaires were scrutinized by experts in political science and research methodology, ensuring content validity. The instrument's reliability was tested through a pilot study, and

Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess internal consistency, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.85, indicating high reliability.

### Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher will present an official letter of introduction from the Department of Educational Foundations to the respondents to seek their consent. The questionnaires will be administered face-to-face and collected immediately upon completion to minimize non-response bias.

### Method of Data Collection

Data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics, including tables, percentages, and histograms. For inferential analysis, Spearman's rank-order correlation will be employed to test the hypothesis related to political participation and policy outcomes.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

The data collected from the 400 respondents will be presented in tables and histograms to illustrate voter participation patterns, levels of civic engagement, and perceptions of governance. Spearman's rank-order correlation will be used to test hypotheses about the relationships between variables. This chapter deals with the result and analysis of data collected using the questionnaire. Out of the sample size of 400, only 397 returned the filled questionnaire for analysis, while 3 questionnaires could not be retrieved 2.5%.

### Section A: Demographic Information

**Table 4.1: Gender distribution of respondents**

Gender	No of respondents	Percentage %
MALE	237	59.7
FEMALE	160	40.3
TOTAL	397	100

Sources: Field survey, 2024.

This table shows that out of the 397 respondents, 237 (59.7%) were male, while 160 (40.3%) were female. This indicates that the majority of the respondents are male, which may reflect the gender balance in the region or indicate greater male participation in the survey

**Table 4.2: Age distribution of respondents**

Age	No of respondents	Percentage %
18-25	95	23.9
26-35	142	35.8
36-45	105	26.4
46 and above	55	13.9
	397	100

Sources: Field survey, 2024.

The majority of respondents (142, or 35.8%) were aged 26-35, followed by 36-45 years (105 respondents, or 26.4%), 18-25 years (95 respondents, or 23.9%), and 46 years and above (55

respondents, or 13.9%). This suggests that younger adults between 26-35 years make up the largest group of respondents, likely reflecting their active role in political processes.

**Table 4.3: Education Level of respondents**

<b>Educational Level</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
No formal education	47	11.8
Primary	90	22.7
Secondary	158	39.8
Tertiary	102	25.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>100</b>

**Sources:** Field survey, 2024.

Most respondents had secondary education (158 respondents, or 39.8%), followed by tertiary education (102 respondents, or 25.7%). A smaller proportion had primary education (90 respondents, or 22.7%), and 47 respondents (11.8%) had no formal education. This distribution highlights the varying education levels among the respondents, with a significant portion having formal education.

**Table 4.4: Occupation of the respondents**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Student	65	16.4
Civil Servant	125	31.5
Private Sector	90	22.7
Self-employed	77	19.4
Unemployed	40	10.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>100</b>

**Sources:** Field survey, 2024.

Civil servants constituted the largest occupational group with 125 respondents (31.5%), followed by the private sector (90 respondents, or 22.7%), self-employed individuals (77 respondents, or 19.4%), students (65 respondents, or 16.4%), and the unemployed (40 respondents, or 10.1%). This suggests that a significant number of respondents are employed, particularly in the civil service.

**Table 4.5: Location of the respondents**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Urban	240	60.5
Rural	157	39.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>100</b>

**Sources:** Field survey, 2024.

The majority of respondents (240, or 60.5%) were from urban areas, while 157 respondents (39.5%) were from rural areas. This distribution reflects a greater urban representation in the survey, which could influence the political and governance perspectives captured.

## Section B: Political Participation

**Table 4.6: Did you vote in the 2015 and/or 2019 general elections in Gombe State?**

Response	No of respondents	Percentage %
Both elections	236	59.45
Only in 2015	71	17.88
Neither	53	13.35
Only in 2019	37	9.32
<b>Total</b>	397	100

**Sources:** Field survey, 2024.

Out of the 397 respondents, 236 (59.45%) voted in both the 2015 and 2019 elections. 71 respondents (17.88%) voted only in 2015, 53 respondents (13.35%) did not vote in either election, and 37 respondents (9.32%) voted only in 2019. This indicates strong electoral participation, with the majority voting in both elections.

**Table 4.7: If you did not vote in either election, what was your reason? (Select all that apply)**

Response	No of respondents	Percentage %
Insecurity	102	25.7
Lack of trust in the electoral process	67	16.88
Lack of voter education		14.6
Did not have time.	58	22.17
Other (specify):	88	20.66
<b>Total</b>	397	100

**Sources:** Field survey, 2024.

Of the respondents who did not vote, 102 (25.7%) cited insecurity as the reason, 67 (16.88%) mentioned lack of trust in the electoral process, 58 (22.17%) said they did not have time, and 88 (20.66%) gave other reasons. These figures suggest that insecurity and disillusionment with the electoral process were significant factors influencing non-participation.

**Table 4.8: How would you rate the level of political participation in your community?**

Response	No of respondents	Percentage %
High	174	43.83
Moderate	165	41.56
Low	58	14.6
<b>Total</b>	397	100

**Sources:** Field survey, 2024.

Political participation in respondents' communities was rated as high by 174 respondents (43.83%), moderate by 165 respondents (41.56%), and low by 58 respondents (14.6%). This suggests that a significant number of respondents feel their communities have an active level of political engagement.

**Table 4.9:** Do you believe citizens in Gombe State have enough opportunities to participate in governance beyond elections?

Response	No of respondents	Percentage %
Yes	65	40.81
No	170	42.82
Not sure:	162	16.36
<b>Total</b>	397	100

Regarding opportunities for participation beyond elections, 162 respondents (40.81%) believed there were sufficient opportunities, while 170 respondents (42.82%) disagreed, and 65 respondents (16.36%) were unsure. This indicates mixed opinions on whether citizens have enough non-electoral involvement in governance.

**Table 4.10:** How satisfied are you with the performance of elected officials in Gombe State from 2015-2023?

Response	No of respondents	Percentage %
Very satisfied	45	11.33
Satisfied	192	48.36
Unsatisfied:	103	25.94
Very unsatisfied	57	14.35
Very satisfied	45	11.33
<b>Total</b>	397	100

**Sources:** Field survey, 2024.

Most respondents (192, or 48.36%) were satisfied with the performance of elected officials, while 103 respondents (25.94%) were unsatisfied, 57 respondents (14.35%) were very unsatisfied, and 45 respondents (11.33%) were very satisfied. The results suggest that although there is overall satisfaction, a considerable proportion of respondents are dissatisfied.

**Table 4.11:** In your opinion, which sector has seen the most improvement in Gombe State governance from 2015-2023?

Response	No of respondents	Percentage %
Education	109	6.3
Health	97	8.56
Infrastructure	132	33.25
Agriculture	34	24.43
Other (specify):	25	27.46
<b>Total</b>	397	100

**Sources:** Field survey, 2024.

Infrastructure was perceived as the sector with the most improvement (132 respondents, or 33.25%), followed by education (109 respondents, or 27.46%), health (97 respondents, or 24.43%), agriculture (34 respondents, or 8.56%), and other sectors (25 respondents, or 6.3%). This suggests that infrastructural development was seen as the most notable achievement during this period.

**Table 4.12:** What do you think are the biggest challenges to effective governance in Gombe State? (Select all that apply)

Response	No of respondents	Percentage %
Corruption	210	52.9
Poor policy implementation	60	40.3
Lack of accountability	1	30.2
Political instability	120	18.1
Other (specify)	72	8.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>100</b>

**Sources:** Field survey, 2024.

Corruption was identified as the biggest challenge by 210 respondents (52.9%), followed by poor policy implementation (160 respondents, or 40.3%), lack of accountability (120 respondents, or 30.2%), and political instability (72 respondents, or 18.1%). This highlights corruption as a major obstacle to effective governance in the state.

### **Results and Discussion**

The results of the study reveal a strong positive relationship between political participation and governance outcomes in Gombe State. The data shows that 59% of respondents participated in both the 2015 and 2019 general elections, reflecting a high level of electoral engagement. Additionally, the majority of respondents rated the level of political participation in their communities as either high or moderate. This active involvement in the political process appears to correlate with improved governance, as respondents reported better service delivery and accountability from elected officials during this period. Sectors such as infrastructure and education were identified as areas with significant improvements, indicating that civic engagement may have influenced government focus and resource allocation. However, the persistence of challenges like corruption and poor policy implementation suggests that despite high participation, certain systemic issues continue to hinder the full effectiveness of governance in the state.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study align with the theoretical perspective that political participation plays a critical role in enhancing governance. The data from Gombe State supports the idea that increased voter turnout and civic engagement lead to greater accountability from elected officials, resulting in policy reforms and improvements in key sectors. This conclusion echoes the work of Putnam (2000), who argued that active civic participation strengthens democratic governance by fostering transparency and responsiveness. In Gombe, the improvements in infrastructure and education demonstrate the tangible benefits of political participation. However, the identification of corruption and policy implementation challenges as major governance issues highlights that while participation is crucial, it is not sufficient on its own to

resolve deeper systemic problems. This suggests that further reforms are needed to address these barriers and fully realize the potential of democratic engagement in improving governance.

### **Conclusion**

This study underscores the importance of political participation in fostering effective governance in Gombe State. The results show that high levels of voter turnout and civic engagement correlate positively with better governance outcomes, such as improved service delivery, particularly in sectors like infrastructure and education. However, persistent challenges such as corruption and poor policy implementation remain significant barriers to fully realizing the potential benefits of political participation. While the study demonstrates that active civic engagement is a critical component of effective governance, it also highlights the need for more robust institutional reforms to address underlying governance issues. It is recommended that:

### **Recommendations**

- i. **Strengthen Civic Education:** To sustain and enhance political participation, there should be increased investment in civic education programs. This will ensure that citizens are more informed about their rights, the importance of voting, and other forms of civic engagement, thereby fostering a more engaged and active electorate.
- ii. **Enhance Transparency and Accountability Mechanisms:** To address the persistent issue of corruption, Gombe State should adopt stricter transparency and accountability frameworks. This could include the establishment of independent bodies to monitor public funds and evaluate the performance of elected officials.
- iii. **Improve Policy Implementation:** The state government should develop stronger mechanisms for ensuring that policies are effectively implemented. This could involve better coordination between government agencies, more rigorous monitoring, and regular feedback mechanisms to track policy progress and make necessary adjustments.
- iv. **Expand Opportunities for Non-Electoral Civic Engagement:** Beyond elections, more platforms for citizens to engage in governance should be created. These platforms could include town hall meetings, community forums, and online platforms where citizens can express concerns, provide feedback, and participate in policy discussions.
- v. **Institutional Reforms:** To address deeper systemic issues, broader institutional reforms are necessary. These reforms should focus on improving the efficiency of government agencies, reducing bureaucratic red tape, and ensuring that public services are delivered more effectively to all citizens.

### **References**

- Norris, P. (2014). *Why Elections Fail*. Cambridge University Press.
- Pressman, J. L., & Wildavsky, A. (1984). *Implementation: How Great Expectations in Washington Are Dashed in Oakland*. University of California Press.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon & Schuster.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon & Schuster.



- Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995). *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Harvard University Press.
- INEC. (2019). Independent National Electoral Commission Reports. Abuja, Nigeria: INEC Publications.
- Hyden, G. (2013). *Governance and the Public Realm: Essays in Honor of Daniel Arap Moi*. East African Educational Publishers.
- Jega, A. M. (2019). *Democracy and the Challenges of Electoral Violence in Nigeria*. Ahmadu Bello University Press.
- Norris, P. (2014). *Why Elections Fail*. Cambridge University Press.
- Oladipo, M., & Yusuf, A. (2022). "Civic Engagement and Electoral Participation in Nigeria: A Case Study of Gombe State." *African Journal of Political Science*, 14(2), 112-128.
- Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995). *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Harvard University Press.
- Yunusa, A., & Adejo, D. (2020). *Political Participation and Civic Engagement in Nigeria's Emerging Democracy*. Jos University Press.