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## Public Trust and Citizen Engagement as Tools of Democracy for Good Governance in Nigeria

Olukayode Gilbert Ojo  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Health Sciences and Public Policy

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Walden University  
2022

Abstract

Public Trust and Citizen Engagement as Democratic Tools for Good Governance in

Nigeria

by

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MPP, Ekiti State University, 2011

BA, University of Ibadan, 1986

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

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## Abstract

Since Nigeria gained independence in 1960, political leaders and elected officials' behavior and actions have contributed to a decline in public trust and people's engagement with the democratic system. It is currently unknown whether the concepts of public trust and citizen engagement can be democratic tools for good governance in Nigeria, with its diverse religions, ethnicities, and cultural values. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the Yoruba people's perceptions of the barriers to, and facilitators of, public trust and citizen engagement in the Nigerian democratic system. The theoretical framework was polarities of democracy theory, espoused by Benet as a means of attaining sustainable social change in society. The study's research design was a nonexperimental case study using a purposive sampling method. Twenty-eight individuals who were knowledgeable about the research phenomenon were purposefully chosen from the six Yoruba states of Nigeria. Data from semi structured interviews with participants and field notes, journal articles, government gazettes, and other archival materials were analyzed using NVivo software. Findings showed that most of the participants were nonpartisan in their politics. They voted in elections but did not engage in political party activities such as holding rallies, holding political office, and maintaining active party membership. A commission should be created to oversee political education political parties provide to ensure that their members are well informed of their rights and know when and how to utilize their voting rights. Citizens' participation in Nigeria's democratic process may increase positive social change if due process and justice are seen as being deeply ingrained in both the justice system and governance. These efforts may promote Nigeria's democratic growth and sustainable development.

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## Dedication

This work is dedicated to the glory of God Almighty for this unmerited grace of attaining the zenith of educational attainment. I am also dedicating this work to the memory of my late parents, Chief Joseph Ajayi Ojo and Madam Matilda Agbeke Ojo, who jointly built the foundation (myself) upon which this study stands today. I will forever be grateful for all your efforts during your lifetimes at molding a thorough bred man in me. I will always treasure your words of wisdom and inspiration.

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My appreciation to Mr. Emmanuel Oguntomi, my “adopted son”, who worked with me on this project as my research assistant. I will forever be thankful for your immense contribution to the work. I also want to acknowledge the contributions of my entire family, beginning with my wife who inspired me to undertake the study, my children, Barrister Babatope Gilbert-Ojo, Ms. Oyindamola Gilbert-Ojo, and Babakayode Gilbert-Ojo for their understanding, prayers, and contributions throughout the course of the study. For all my friends and colleagues in my place of primary assignment that supported me along the journey to this level, I say thank you, and God bless you.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Since being granted independence by the United Kingdom in 1960, Nigeria has faced several decades of abysmal leadership from the political leaders of the country that has paved the way for military coups and the fragmentation of the country along ethno-religious-cultural cleavages. The behavior and actions of the political leaders and elected representatives since independence has led to the deterioration of public trust and disengagement of citizens in the country's democratic system, which is a deep concern to local and the international observers. According to Iroghama (2012), Nigeria started witnessing disintegration in public trust and citizen engagement after the 2007 general elections, which led voters and most Nigerians to sought for electoral reform. The situation presents a social problem marked by widespread national cynicism that some interest groups have exploited for their narrow interest (Odo, 2015).

Studies involving any of the two concepts of public trust and citizen participation and Nigeria democratic governance have focused on diverse areas, these are; public trust in elections (Kerr & Luhrmann, 2017), trust in government and fuel subsidy (Ayodele, 2014), government democratic practices for the institutionalization of good governance and development (Ozohu-Suleiman, 2016), efficiency of public participation in Nigeria traditional cities (Chado & Johar, 2016), public participation and democratic governance (Sulaimon, 2016), and young people's views on the relevance of voting in Nigerian elections (Okaiyeto et al., 2021) among others. What is unknown is how Nigerians perceive the concepts of public trust and citizen engagement, both of which can be democratic tools for good governance (Kumagai & Ilorio, 2020; Mead, 2018;

Mohammadi et al., 2018). I explored the perceptions of Nigerians, specifically the Yoruba people, about the barriers to, as well as facilitators of, public trust and citizen engagement in the Nigeria democratic system.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the study phenomenon by describing the study's background, research problem, and purpose. The chapter also include the research question, overviews of the theoretical framework and nature of the study, and definitions of key terms. I also discuss the assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study.

### **Background**

Public trust is the foundation upon which the legitimacy and sustainability of good governance is built (Tahmina & Chowdhury, 2019). It is influenced by citizens' appraisal of governments and its institutions' policy making in general and/or the individual political leaders as promise-keeping, efficient, fair, and honest (Ukertor, 2019). It is essential in building a competent state (Cheema, 2005; Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003), and attracting economic, political, social, and technological prospects of globalization (Tahmina & Chowdhury, 2019; Ukertor, 2019). For this reason, scholars argue that the erosion of public trust in government indicates the presence of democratic crises that impede good governance (Kumagai & Ilorio, 2020; Thornassen, 2015; van der Meer, 2017).

There is growing evidence of the dilapidation of trust in governments globally (Ayodele, 2014; Grimes, 2017; Iroghama, 2012; Kerr & Luhrmann, 2017; Kumagai & Ilorio, 2020; Latinobarometro, 2005; Lenihan & Bennett, 2015; Murtin et al., 2018;



Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2013a; Tahmina & Chowdhury, 2019; Uslaner, 2017a, b; van der Meer, 2010, 2017; van der Meer & Zmerli, 2017). Over the last 50 years, public trust has plummeted from a high of 78% to a low of 20% in the United States (Lenihan & Bennett, 2015; McGrath, 2017). Since 2007, public trust in government decreased by an average of 2% in OECD member countries from 45% to 43%, but the decrease has been sharper in countries such as Slovenia, Portugal, Spain, Finland, and Mexico (OECD, 2017). Trust in government stands at 36% in Latin America (Latinobarometro, 2005). Trust in government ranges between 80% in Switzerland to 12% in Greece (OECD, 2013a). In 2006, public trust was estimated to be 66% in the 15 West European Union members and 38% across the eight new East European members, plus Romania and Bulgaria (Ukertor, 2019). Reasons advanced for declining public trust in developed countries, for instance the United States, are political in nature. In Rainie et al. (2019) study, 10% faulted the news media; 14% blamed the outgoing administration under President Donald Trump; 36% said that government was doing too little, doing wrong things, or doing nothing at all; and 9% of respondents blamed powerful social forces for the rise in inequality and the spread of individualism, while 31% cited the intractability of issues like climate change, illegal immigration, etc.

These findings contrast sharply with those for African countries where the majority of the factors identified as adversely impacting public trust are not only linked to the president (the executive tier), but also the judicial and the legislative tiers. The Afrobarometer (2006) reported that trust in Nigeria's president plummeted from 78% to 26% while trust in democracy plunged from 81% in 2000 to 25% in 2005. The

Afrobarometer's (2016) 5-year survey of 36 Africa countries found that public trust in governance increasingly degenerated in Nigeria in comparison to other Africa countries. Niger (86%), Burundi (82%), Senegal (75%), Namibia (75%), Tanzania (74%), Egypt (74%), Tunisia (73%), Uganda (71%), Burkina Faso (71%), Mali (68%), Botswana (66%), Cameroon (62%), Swaziland (60%), Zimbabwe (59%), Kenya (59%), Cape Verde (59%), Lesotho (58%), Mauritius (57%), Malawi (56%), Sudan (55%), Zambia (54%), Algeria (54%), Guinea (53%), Benin (52%), South Africa (50%), Mozambique (49%), Morocco (49%), Sierra Leone (47%), Togo, (46%), and Cote d'Ivoire (46%) were the highest rated. Madagascar (44%), Ghana (44%), Gabon (41%), Sao Tome and Principe (33%), Liberia (32%) and Nigeria (31%) had the least trusted governments, far lower than the mean of 57%. Similarly, Ayodele's (2014) study reported that 85% participants expressed distrust in the Nigerian government, and 60% agreed that the trust level will keep falling because government officials are dishonest. These statistics validate rising distrust in the Nigerian government. Countries with relatively high percentage of public trust perceived lower levels of corruption (Ukertor, 2019).

Public trust in government in Nigeria has eroded due to a variety of factors. These include corruption, electoral fraud, and abuse of power (Ukertor, 2019); election killings and kidnappings and incredibility of candidatures in election (Olaleye & Ayobade, 2018); large-scale corruption and government failure to deliver on election promises or dividends of democracy (Onapajo & Adebisi, 2020); public office holders' false declaration of assets and acquisition of assets that cost beyond their legitimate earnings (Owete & Akinwumi, 2015); ethnic politics and class divisions (Ezeibe & Ikeanyibe,

2017; Ikeanyibe et al., 2018); and insecurity and insurgency (e.g., the Boko Haram insurgency, banditry, kidnappings; Lauterbach, 2020). Research shows a sharp decline from 64% to 36% between 2000 and 2005 in the number of Nigerians who agreed that their government was effective at prosecuting corrupt and fraudulent public office holders (Ukertor, 2019).

For instance, trust in government electioneering processes declined from 76% in 2000 (based on 1999 national elections) to 44% in 2003 due to widespread fraud, corruption, and other practices perpetrated by government officials in elections (Ukertor, 2019). The deteriorating trust in the government's activities sparked national outrage immediately after the 2007 general elections, which compelled the Nigeria government to respond to the public call for electoral reform by setting up the Uwias Electoral Reform Committee in 2008, which was tasked to recommend policies for national elections that will enhance trust in government (Irohama, 2012). Key policies advanced by the committee for improving electoral processes in Nigeria include (a) strengthening legal frameworks and enhancing the electoral body, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), (b) mandating that no elected candidate assume public office until the tribunal or court disposed of election case(s) alleged against such candidate, and (c) mandating that presidential and gubernatorial elections be held six months prior to the expiration of sitting governments and legislative elections be conducted two years after the former (Okeke, 2020; Okoro & Mabadeje, 2019; Uwais Report, 2008).

Many of the Uwais Committee recommendations were not considered in the Electoral Act of 2010, thus, trust in governments worsened in the subsequent 2011, 2015,

and 2019 national elections, with the results indicating low public acceptance (Okeke, 2020; Okoi & Iwara, 2021). It is in this context of degrading public trust that Iroghama (2012) examined trust in Nigeria's government by modeling citizens' determinants of political trust to know the processes that ensures trust in government. Iroghama concluded that political trust in government depends on several factors: corruption management, economic performance, political participation, basic needs provision, health care availability and accessibility, employment opportunities, education, infrastructural development, food security, crime management and security control, and exercise of fundamental human rights. Lack of these factors erodes public trust in government with immediate and grave consequences (Kumagai & Ilorio, 2020; van der Meer, 2017). Nigerians are more likely to have trust in government when electoral institutions display de facto autonomy (Kerr & Luhrmann, 2017).

Countries with high levels of trust in government have low level of corruption (Kumagai and Ilorio (2020; Uslaner, 2002), a higher quality of government (Bjørnskov, 2006), lower crime levels (Halpern, 2001; Rosenfeld et al., 2001), higher levels of political participation (La Porta et al., 1997), higher levels of compliance with the law (Tyler & Huo, 2002), and higher levels of economic growth (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2002). Although there is no evidence yet causal relationships, it is well supported that public trust is a tool for building, maintaining, and enhancing good governance (Kumagai & Ilorio, 2020).

More so, the relationship between public trust and citizen engagement in governance is established through citizens' participation in the electioneering process,

decision-making, and political and social organizations (World Bank, 2017). Citizen engagement provides avenues to rebuild and deepen trust (Claibourn & Martin, 2000; Jennings & Stoker, 2004; Kumagai & Ilorio, 2020; Paxton, 2007). As Putnam (2000) noted, “citizens engagement and public trust are mutually reinforcing” (p. 137). When public trust in government erodes, formal citizen engagement in governance processes is not possible, and the absence of citizen engagement in governance is a barrier to development. Government’s performance will be poor, and trust in government will fail (Brixi et al. 2015; Kumagai & Ilorio, 2020).

In 2021, Nigeria ranked 102nd out of 104 countries in the Chlander Good Government Index, the third worst nation in good governance globally (CGGI Report, 2021). The 2020 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index scored Nigeria 25 out of 100; its ranking increased from 146 in 2019 to 149 in 2020 among 180 countries in the corruption survey (Okoi & Iwara, 2021). The backdrop analyses represent failures in the governance agenda of the present administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, who campaigned and promised to prosecute any corrupt public office holders and fight insecurity, banditry, and kidnappings that ravage the country. The End SARS protests against police brutality that claimed citizens’ lives in 2020 further indicates the extent of bad governance in the country and the limited possibility of trust in governance.

Kaka (2018) and Chisomaga (2016) conducted studies on Nigeria using Benet’s (2006, 2012, 2013, 2019) polarities of democracy theory. Chisomaga used the theory of polarities of democracy to conduct a study on the implementation of the Niger Delta

amnesty program on Nigeria's petroleum industry. The study was planned to detect and comprehend the perceived consequences of the amnesty policy implementations in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria. Chisomaga stated that the amnesty program was set for implementation due to the escalated struggle among the Niger Delta people against apparent neglect of the Niger Delta area that has led to the degradation of the rural areas due to oil explorations by the multi-national companies.

Kaka (2018) employed the polarities of democracy theory as the theoretical framework to determine the failure of the community development committee in Rivers State. The study was conducted to explore the perceptions of the people in Rivers State with the purpose of obtaining insight into why the efforts of the community development committee set up by the government failed. The committee was set up to ensure direct participation of the local people in the development of the oil producing rural areas of Rivers State. Findings revealed that the community development committee officials wasted cash and resources, suppressed residents' voices, failed to represent minorities, and safeguarded the political and personal interests of the elites.

However, neither Chisomaga (2016) nor Kaka (2018) examined the two concepts of public trust and citizen engagement as democratic tools for facilitating good governance in Nigeria. In reviewing the literature, I found no research on the perceptions of Nigerians in the major ethnic groups of the Hausa/Fulani, the Igbos, and the Yoruba people regarding how public trust and citizen engagement can facilitate good governance in Nigeria. More importantly, I did not find literature on Nigerians' perceptions of public trust and citizen engagement through the lens of the polarities of democracy theory. Thus,

this gap in knowledge in the public administration discipline has created the need to explore how public trust and citizen engagement can serve as democratic tools for facilitating good governance in Nigeria, using the polarities of democracy theory of Benet (2006, 2012, 2013, 2019). This study may contribute to existing literature, strengthen policy measures on governance in Nigeria, and contribute to positive social change.

### **Problem Statement**

Researchers are increasingly investigating public trust in governments globally (Ayodele, 2014; Grimes, 2017; Iroghama, 2012; Kerr & Luhrmann, 2017; Kumagai & Ilorio, 2020; Latinobarometro, 2005; Lenihan & Bennett, 2015; Murtin et al., 2018; OECD, 2013a; Tahmina & Chowdhury, 2019; Uslander, 2017a, b; van der Meer, 2010, 2017; van der Meer & Zmerli, 2017). Recent evidence shows that the reason why public trust has declined in developed countries, such as United States, is because of the over engagement of government institutions (Rainie & Perrin, 2019). In contrast, in developing countries, such as a typical African nation, public trust in government is eroded by government failures in governance due to prevalent corruption and malpractices of government officials (Ukertor, 2019). In Ayodele's (2014) study, 85% participants distrusted the Nigerian government, and 60% agreed that their trust level will keep falling because government officials are dishonest and corrupt.

The deteriorating state of public trust and citizens' disengagement in the Nigerian democratic system is traceable to the emergence of the fourth democratic republic in 1999. Public trust in government decreased from 76% in 2000 to 44% in 2003 (Ukertor,

2019). Between 2000 and 2005, citizens' trust in Nigeria's president plummeted from 78% to 26% while trust in democracy plunged from 81% to 25% (Afrobarometer, 2006). Ayodele (2014) reported that 15% of respondents trusted Nigeria government. The Afrobarometer (2016) 5-year survey of 36 Africa states documented 31% trust in Nigeria's government while a neighboring country, Niger, recorded 86%.

In 2007, President Umaru Musa Yar'adua government constituted the Uwais Committee to reform the electioneering process in Nigeria as an attempt to respond to the declining public trust in the Nigerian government. This is in a bid to thoroughly scrutinize the electioneering process of public office holders amid rigging, corruption, and other fraudulent practices that have eroded trust in government and/or governance (Iroghama, 2012; Okeke, 2020; Okoro & Mabadeje, 2019; Uwais Report, 2008). The committee's recommendations have not significantly improved the electoral process and/or impacted governance. Thus, public trust in government has further declined (Afrobarometer, 2006, 2016; Ayodele, 2014; Iroghama, 2012; Ukertor, 2019).

According to Van de Meer (2017), the institutional and behavioral consequences of political leaders are prerequisites to measure public trust, which has implications for the political stability and the quality of democracy. Thus, factors that account for erosion of public trust in successive Nigerian governments include (a) corruption, electoral fraud, and abuse of power (Ukertor, 2019); (b) election killings and kidnappings, and incredibility of candidatures in election (Olaleye & Ayobade, 2018); (c) large-scale corruption and government failure to deliver on election promises or dividends of democracy (Onapajo & Adebisi, 2020); (d) public office holders' false declaration of



assets & acquisition of assets that cost beyond legitimate their earnings (Owete & Akinwumi, 2015); (e) ethnic politics and class divisions (Ezeibe & Ikeanyibe, 2017; Ikeanyibe et al., 2018); and (f) insecurity and insurgency – Boko Haram insurgency, banditry, kidnappings (Lauterbach, 2020).

There are now diverse agitations for redefining self-determination and/or succession in Nigeria, after 106 years of amalgamation and 60 years of independence (Lami, 2021; Ojo, 2021; Okoli, 2021; Tijani, 2020; Tofarati, 2021). The Ilana Omo Oodua (an umbrella body of over 200 self-determination groups), under the leadership of Professor Banji Akintoye, is agitating for Oduduwa Republic (Ojo, 2021; Tijani, 2020). The Igbo sociocultural groups include Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide (led by Professor George Obiozor, a former Nigerian ambassador to the United States), the Indigenous People of Biafra (led by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu), and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra, which is agitating for Biafra Republic in the Southeastern region. The Middle Belt ethnic groups are agitating for Middle-Belt Nations (Okoli, 2021; Tofarati, 2021), and in the north, the Coalition of Northern Groups is in operation (Lami, 2021).

Evidence such as the Afrobarometer survey cross-sectional study of Chukwuma et al. (2019) on political trust and Nigerian health service delivery found no evidence of increased public trust in the local council or opposition parties in Nigeria. Eniayejuni and Evcan's (2015) study on citizens' participation: between continuity and change in Nigeria, reported that citizen participation is needed at all governance levels to address lack of transparency, responsiveness to people's needs, and accountability in governance.

This finding aligns with Olaleye's and Ayobade's (2021) literature review on the awareness and utilization of citizens' participation in good governance in Nigeria.

Yagboyaju and Akinola (2019) concluded that Nigeria's governance is driven by self-interest and primordial considerations. The governments have failed to secure lives and properties, promote the rules of law, and provide visionary leadership.

Other studies involving any of the two concepts of public trust and citizen participation and Nigeria democratic governance have focused on diverse areas, these are; public trust in elections (Kerr & Luhrmann, 2017), trust in government and fuel subsidy (Ayodele, 2014), government democratic practices for the institutionalization of good governance and development (Ozohu-Suleiman, 2016), efficiency of public participation in Nigeria traditional cities (Chado & Johar, 2016), public participation and democratic governance (Sulaimon, 2016), and young people's views on the relevance of voting in Nigerian elections (Okaiyeto et al., 2021). From this summary, it is evident from all the works reviewed so far, that no study has been conducted on whether the two concepts of public trust and citizen engagement can serve as democratic tools to facilitate good governance in Nigeria.

Therefore, it is established that published research has not yet examined the perceptions of the Nigerian people (Hausa/Fulani, Igbos', and the Yoruba's') on the concepts of public trust and citizen engagement as democratic tools to facilitate good governance in a complex country like Nigeria with diverse religions, ethnicity, and cultural values. More importantly, Yoruba people of Nigeria's perceptions about the barriers to, and the facilitators of public trust and citizen engagement in the Nigeria

democratic system have not been viewed through the lens of the polarities of democracy theory. Therefore, this study using qualitative method attempt to fill the gap in knowledge by examining the opinions of the Yoruba people of Nigeria to determine whether the two concepts of public trust and citizen engagement as democratic tools can facilitate good governance in Nigeria's democratic system, and also suggesting similar behaviors to the Hausa/Fulani and the Igbos which constitute the other major ethnic groups in Nigeria.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore and document the Yoruba people's perceptions of the barriers to, and facilitators of, public trust and citizen engagement in the Nigerian democratic system. In this study, I explored key stakeholders' opinions on the perceptions of the Yoruba people about the barriers and facilitators of public trust and citizen engagement in Nigerian democratic system with a complex history of diverse religions, ethnicities, and cultural values. The study findings may suggest to all Nigerian political leaders and elected representatives at all strata of governance factors that could facilitate good governance in the country. The suggested factors could also strengthen the state institutions to perform their obligations to society and ensure that Nigeria continues to provide leadership in Africa and protects democracy from military incursions in other African states.

### **Research Question**

What are the Yoruba people of Nigeria's perceptions about the barriers to, and facilitators of, public trust and citizen engagement in the Nigerian democratic system?

### **Theoretical Foundation**

In this qualitative study, I explored and documented the Yorubas' perceptions of public trust and citizen engagement with the government in the Nigerian democratic system. I also explored whether the two concepts of public trust and citizen engagement as tools of democracy can facilitate good governance in Nigeria's democratic system. I used the theoretical framework of the polarities of democracy theory, espoused by Benet (2006, 2012, 2013, 2019). Benet (2019) proposed the polarities of democracy as a theory for attaining sustainable social change attempts in society.

Benet (2006) developed the theory of polarities of democracy as a theoretical framework to promote positive social change. The approach is designed to emancipate the people from all manners of oppression and dehumanization (Benet, 2019). Benet (2019) stated that the theory of polarities of democracy offers opportunities for information sharing, advocacy, and collaboration on social enterprise implementation. Other options include social innovation and social entrepreneurship initiatives (both nonprofit and social purpose businesses) designed to create and retain community wealth. Benet's theory of polarities of democracy evolved from the belief that some elemental powers exist that establishes circumstances for the people's oppression. The intimidation can manifest in various forms, from inequalities in political power-sharing, health, socioeconomic, and infrastructural developments as experienced by the oppressed, or what Benet refers to as psychological and spiritual oppression experienced by the people.

Benet (2019) leveraged Johnson's (1992) work, which posited that polarity management should occur when an unsolvable situation arises rather than when a

solvable problem arises. Johnson further argued that polarities to manage are pairs of two interdependent poles that cannot function well independently. Since the two sides of a polarity are interdependent, you cannot choose one solution and neglect another. In furtherance, Benet described polarities to manage as consisting of two interdependent poles that are incongruent and cannot operate independently of each other. Benet provides the distinction between the pairs of two interdependent poles that Johnson's polarities can manage. The two pairs of two interdependent poles that the polarities manage cannot function independently as the two sides rely on each other to work.

Johnson (1992) stated that not all circumstances warrant using the concept; polarity management can be used when a problem defies all solutions and not when one can proffer solutions to a problem. Benet (2019) further elucidated on Johnson's distinction, which is relevant because some issues have answers. Because some matters defy solutions because of the presence of a dilemma (polarity), one needs to manage polarities (Benet, 2019). Benet further identified 10 values of the unifying theory in their polarity relationship: freedom and authority, justice and due process, diversity and equality, human rights and communal obligations, and participation and representation. Benet argued that polarities of democracy could be applied to function as a unifying theory to guide, plan, and evaluate democratic social change efforts devised to construct healthy, sustainable, and just communities. Although I used the theory in its entirety (each of the pairs was interrelated with the other teams), I focused on the participation and representation pair. The theory was useful in exploring how the concepts of public trust and citizen engagement become positive aspects of both participation and

representation, which are requirements for achieving the highest level of democratization and movement effectiveness for society's socioeconomic and political growth. Therefore, Benet's theory was appropriate for the study's theoretical framework.

### **Conceptual Framework**

I used Johnson's (1992, 1996) theory of polarity management as the conceptual framework. The rationale for using Johnson's theory is that it is the foundation of Benet's (2019) polarity of democracy theory. Johnson's polarity management theory is described as a powerful way of enhancing the growth of individuals, groups, and systems.

According to Johnson (1992, 1996), polarities exist that involve chronic issues that may be unavoidable and unsolvable among individuals, groups, organizations, or societies. Johnson argued that all situations do not include polarities. Thus, polarity management theory is mostly needed when a person, group, organization, or society faces an unavoidable and unsolvable problem rather than an avoidable and solvable problem (Johnson, 1992).

According to Johnson (1992), there are two criteria for the determination of whether a polarity exists to manage or solve a problem: whether the difficulty is ongoing and whether the two poles are interdependent. There are three generic polarities, namely part and whole, self and other, and doing and being. There are many polarities within and outside generic polarities, namely individual and team, autocratic, and participatory. Two pairs of opposite polarities exist: polarities of opposite meanings and polarities of doing and being (Johnson, 1992).

Johnson (1992) conceptualized the polarities to be regulated as pairs of contrasts that cannot function independently. Because the two sides of a polarity are interdependent, one cannot be chosen as solution and the other ignored. The goal of polarity management is to garner the most from each pole while avoiding the other's limits (Johnson, 1992, p. 18).

Benet (2019) adopted the polarity management theory of Johnson (1992, 1996). Polarity of management theory is a useful approach to understanding the two concepts of public trust and citizen engagement as democratic tools for good governance. Benet's polarity of democracy theory is an expansion of Johnson's polarity of management theory and enables the conceptualization of government and society in relation to individual and organization.

The framework connects to the research question by offering a means to examine (a) the barriers to good governance as a polarity to manage or to solve and as well as (b) the facilitators of good governance (public trust and citizen engagement) within Nigeria's democratic system. I explored key stakeholders' opinions in the six Yoruba states. I constructed the semi structured interview questions using polarity of management variables to determine if the situation could be managed or ignored. To analyze the data, I followed the seven steps identified by Rubin and Rubin (2012).

### **Nature of the Study**

I used the qualitative case study method. I sought to explore and document the Yoruba people's perceptions of the barriers to, and facilitators of, public trust and citizen engagement in the Nigerian democratic system. Hesse-Biber (2010) described the

qualitative research approach as a method of understanding how individual interpret the social world around them. Hesse-Biber argued that individuals' social world is created and understood based on the perceptions of individual interaction with their environment. Qualitative research offers tools to evoke recall in aiding problem-solving. Qualitative researchers use observation, open-ended questions, in-depth interview (audio or video), and field notes to collect data from participants in their natural settings. These sources provide abundant data about real-life people and situations (De Vaus, 2014; Eyisi, 2016; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014).

Qualitative research depends on nonnumerical primary data such as words and pictures collected by the researcher to provide factual and descriptive information (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). It also permits development of theory from data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). Thus, scholars use words such as “investigate, do-it-yourself and bottom up to explain the originality and independent nature of the qualitative research approach” (Eyisi, 2016, p. 3).

According to Creswell (2012), a researcher conducting a case study employs an inductive process to explore issues and provide answer to questions on human social behavior that seeks to understand a social phenomenon. The qualitative case method is applied with a focus on an individual, organization, event, or program in what can be referred to as a specialized, rare bounded system (Rudestam & Newton, 2015; Stake, 2000). A case study can be descriptive when the goal is to conduct an in-depth inquiry of a social phenomenon to understand individual people's perceptions and worldviews to explain their behavior's consequences (Babbie, 2013).



I used the qualitative case study method to examine the perceptions of the Yoruba ethnic group of Nigeria on the concepts of public trust and citizen engagement as tools of democracy for good governance in Nigeria. I adopted a purposive sampling method to select key-informant participants who were well informed about the research questions to contribute reasonable knowledge to the phenomenon under study (see Babbie, 2013; Mohajan, 2018). I relied on 30 participants purposively selected from the representative groups of participants (two leading political parties in Nigeria [APC and PDP], members of the academia knowledgeable in the topic area, women's organizations, youth organizations, religious leaders, and representatives of ethnic and cultural associations from all the six states of the Yoruba people of Nigeria) for the study.

The collected data were transcribed and analyzed by following the seven steps of data analysis: (a) transcribe and review the data, (b) generate codes from the interview transcripts, (c) document and categorize the codes, (d) recategorize and cluster the codes, (e) review the clustered codes, (f) develop overarching and emergent themes, and (g) discuss the research findings (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The findings may be used to suggest similar opinions of understanding of public trust and citizen engagements as democratic tools for good governance by other ethnic groups. The method may also allow me to determine if Nigeria's complex nature with diverse ethnic groups and cultural differences influences the people's trust level and engagement with the government in Nigeria's democratic system.

## Definitions

*Citizen engagement:* The interface between the government and its citizens. Citizens are considered critical stakeholders when the government's decisions and policies are being planned for implementation (Brixi & Woollock, 2015).

*Democracy:* A concept, according to Benet (2006) that can be a tool to overcome oppression. Benet accepted the World Social Forum definition of the idea of democracy as one that includes "global justice, extensive citizen participation and empowerment, and a broad-based commitment to human rights."

*Governance:* The administration of a state, organization, groups, and unions using prevailing laws, universally acceptable norms, and legally recognized powers of an organized entity (Matlosa, 2008). Good governance as a concept is biased in favor of acceptable administrative behavior, which is regarded as ethical against actions that do not project the state and organization's ideals. In every ideal situation, the universal fair values, norms, and principles are the common denominators of the relationship between the governed and the government (Gisselquist, 2012). Weiss (2000), citing the Commission on Global Governance's definition, describes governance as the sum of the different ways that individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their everyday affairs.

*Nigeria ethnic groups:* The over 300 ethnic groups that exist in Nigeria. These groups have no fewer than 100 dialects, several religions, diverse histories, and cultures. Majority groups are the Hausa-Fulani of the North, the Yoruba of the Southwest, and the Igbo of the Southeast (Adegbami & Uche, 2015).

*Public trust:* The reliance of the people on their elected representatives as competent and committed. The concepts also indicate the effectiveness of political-administrative architectures to execute all government policies and programs, as allowed by the constitution, even when they are at variance with the interest and political considerations of the elected representatives of the citizens (Van der Meer & Zmerli, 2017).

### **Assumptions**

In line with Creswell (2012), who posited that scholars engaging in social science qualitative studies should reflect on the philosophical assumptions that will guide the research in understanding the researcher's worldview that influences the study. This study was conducted by using the following assumptions:

#### **Ontological Assumptions**

Ontology is the study of being (Crotty, 2003), reality, and sustainability of life, a survival function (Benet, 2019). Guba and Lincoln (1994) also argued that ontology denotes the "form and nature of reality" and what can be acknowledged about this form and nature of reality (p. 108). They further argued that many qualitative research methods' ontological assumption values objectivity and, therefore, embrace a subjective-objective stance in community-based studies. Patton (2015) describes ontological realism assumption as the "belief that reality and its components exist independently of any consciousness" (p. 112). To this end, the ontological assumption for this study is of the social world of beings. It is assumed that man is a social being who has needs in hierarchical order (physiological, safety, love & belonging, esteem, self-actualization) for

continuity of life. The government is saddled with establishing an environment for the achievement of these needs. The study investigated the democratic system of governance by seeking citizens' opinions based on their lived experiences in the democratic governance of Nigeria to ascertain their level of trust and engagements in the government administrations over time while working to survive and sustain life.

### **Epistemological Assumptions**

Babbie (2013) defines epistemology as the science of knowing; systems of knowledge. Patton (2015) describes epistemology realism as the belief in the "knowability" of things, which presupposes that proposition about reality must be either true or false, regardless of which is which.

The two distinct yet compatible paradigms of Benet's (2019) epistemological theories vis-à-vis critical and interpretive theory for the survival and sustainability of man are deemed best adopted in accessing the performances of democratic governance of this study. The assumption follows that; in critical theory, it is assumed that there is the existence of truth and reality in life. Man is inclined to be egoistic or altruistic, thus demands positive motivation to have oppressive-free life. It, therefore, appears to be a problem to good governance in Nigeria. Politicians, political office appointees, and other technocrats behave inhumanely to the society (corruption, bribery, mismanagement of public funds, money laundering, impoverishment of the economy, etc.). The interpretive theory assumes that humans are aware of the truth and reality, which is a function of perceptions, knowledge, and experience acquired over time. The past democratic administrations have left citizens with expertise that could either make or mar their trust

and engagements in democratic practices. Democracy being the way out will briefly examine both the positive and negative aspects of egoistic and altruistic behavior and masculinity and feminist in the governance over time. Based on the epistemological assumptions, this study derived knowledge using the Yoruba people's perceptions of public trust and citizen engagement as tools of democracy for good governance in Nigeria.

### **Axiological Assumptions**

Axiology, a term with its origin from Paul Lapie in 1902, investigates two kinds of values: ethics and aesthetics that study the concepts of "right" and "good" in *individual and social conduct*. Heron and Reason (1997) posited that axiology looks at "nature of value" and "captures the value of question of what is intrinsically worthwhile." Rudestam and Newton (2015) describe axiology as a philosophical assumption in social science research to study ethics, values, and aesthetics.

The assumptions here relate to the values associated with democracy. It is assumed that the five polarity pairs of democracy are assessment instruments on evaluating democratic dividends that democracy purports to deliver to the people with reference to the democratic governments of the Fourth Republic Nigeria. Therefore, this study holds as values the identified 10 values of the unifying theory in their polarity's relationship: freedom and authority, justice and due process, diversity and equality, human rights and communal obligations, and participation and representation (Benet, 2013).

### **Methodological Assumptions**

Priyanka (2013), citing Creswell (2003), argued that methodological assumptions include the researcher's hypotheses on the methods adopted in its qualitative research. Methodological assumptions reveal the researcher's data collection and analysis process, which is inductive and based on the researcher's experiences. The methodological assumptions also help guide the research process to identify current information that may help revise previous understandings and details to generalize the community's findings under investigation.

The assumption that qualitative research enables the investigation of underlying conditions for positive social change holds for this study. It is believed that the research methodology (qualitative) allowed me to obtain information on the lived experiences of the study participants on the concepts of public trust and citizen engagement as a tool of democracy for good governance in Nigeria.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore and document the Yoruba people's perceptions of the barriers to, and facilitators of, public trust and citizen engagement in the Nigerian democratic system. This study explored key stakeholders' opinions on Nigerian government in a democratic system with a complex history of diverse religions, ethnicities, and cultural values. The study also examined opinions to suggest if the two concepts of public trust and citizen engagement as tools of democracy might facilitate good governance in Nigeria's democratic system. The collection of data for this study was planned to be concluded within three months from the start date.

However, the completion of data gathering rested on the availability of all my study participants scheduled for interview. It was of my opinion that adequate data would have been extracted from my participants appropriately required to respond to the research questions and complete the study. The study is delimited to only the perceptions of the Yoruba ethnic groups in Nigeria on the concepts of public trust and citizen engagement as democratic tools for good governance in Nigeria. I am fully aware that Nigeria is a multi-ethnic group nation and, therefore, other ethnic groups may have their own perceptions on the two concepts as to its desirability for good governance in Nigeria.

### **Limitations**

According to Patton (2015), personal biases always constitute significant barriers and limitations in a qualitative research method. The methods result from the fact that researchers include the primary source in which data are harvested, analyzed, and the findings and conclusions are narrated. Creswell (2013) noted that personal biases could influence a study's results if not managed properly. To extricate my personal preferences in the research, I ensured a healthy level of awareness and monitoring of the process of data collection and analysis to remove and prevent any intrusion of my personal biases always. Baxter and Jack (2008) argued that qualitative case study design can be difficult when delineating the limitations of the study which generally occurs in study that are wide-ranging. The difficulty was considered with the limitation to the study of the perceptions of the Yoruba speaking people of Nigeria alone on the concepts of public trust and citizen engagement as tools of democracy for good governance. Another intrinsic limitation in the case study method is the probable challenge of generalization

(Flyvberg, 2006; Willis, 2014). The study is limited only to the perceptions of the Yoruba speaking people of Nigeria alone among other various ethnic groups in Nigeria. It is therefore, expected that generalization or external validity may constitute a challenge. Study participants were carefully selected to represent those set of people that are knowledgeable about Nigeria history and developments, the concepts of public trust and citizen engagement, and good governance in a democracy (Singleton & Straits, 2005). I also triangulated all my data using my field notes and journal records to confirm the data during collection and analysis. Furthermore, questions were crafted using few words with possible answers analyzed for correctness against the research question that allowed participants to answer without floundering.

### **Significance**

The research, foremost, address the gap in knowledge regarding public trust and citizen engagements as tools of democracy to facilitate good governance in Nigeria, through the perceptions of the Yoruba people of Nigeria. The study results suggest how the concepts of public trust and citizen engagement can be used as democratic tools to facilitate good governance for sustainable development in Nigeria. The research participants' suggestions will help Nigerian policy makers formulate policies that could help foster good government through improved citizen's engagement and improved public trust. The suggested solutions by the study participant's perceptions to the barriers and facilitators of the concepts of public trust and citizen engagement may improve the level of trust and engagement between the government and the governed.



Furthermore, the study may play a significant role in protecting democracy in Africa. Nigeria has been described as the largest democracy in Africa. The country has continued to show its leadership in Africa's political and economic power (Etemiku, 2017). Nigeria's quest to protect democracy in Africa led to the West African forces' intervention through its leadership to remove President Jammeh of the Gambia, who lost reelection in the country, December 2016 general election and refused to cede power (Finnan, 2017). Therefore, it is reasonable to prevent Nigerians from disintegrating. It may lead to the collapse of democracy in many African countries that looked towards Nigeria to protect their democratic system. The study of public trust and citizen engagements as democratic tools to facilitate good governance for sustainable development will suggest to policy makers and citizens how to manage the inherent polemics in our democratic system in Nigeria and Africa in general.

### **Summary**

As discussed in this chapter that the deteriorating state of the public trust and citizen disengagement in Nigeria's democratic system is of high concern not only to the populace, but also to the global community at large. With the country's 60 years of independence on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 (Akubor, 2016), it has still underperformed in all socio-economic indicators such as life expectancy, death rate, access to water, poverty rate, mortality rate, and crime rate, and still carries the tag of a developing economy (Holmes et al., 2012; UNDP, 2018), in fact, it has become the poverty capital of the world (Iheonu & Urama, 2019).

Nigeria being a complex country with diverse religions, ethnicity, and cultural values might likely be having these factors influencing and fanning public distrust and citizen disengagement from government. Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore and document opinions to suggest if the two concepts of public trust and citizen engagement as tools of democracy might facilitate good governance in Nigeria's democratic system. This study examines the perceptions of the Yoruba people in Nigeria on the concepts of public trust and citizen engagement. The inference from the study can be generalized to suggest similar behavior of the other two major ethnic groups in Nigeria (the Hausa/Fulani and the Igbos). It explores the Nigerian government in a democratic system that has a complex history of diverse religions, ethnicity, and cultural values. The study uses the theoretical framework of the polarities of democracy theory espoused by Benet (2006, 2012, 2013, 2019). Benet proposed the polarities of democracy as a model for attaining sustainable social change attempts in society (Benet, 2019). In Chapter 2, I present the literature review: literature search strategy, search terms, supporting literature on the study phenomenon, and the theoretical framework. The review includes a list of research gaps and a summary of the study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and document the perceptions of the Yoruba people in Nigeria regarding the concepts of public trust and citizen engagement. Abysmal leadership from Nigeria's political leaders helped lay the groundwork for military coups and the country's fragmentation along ethno-religious-cultural cleavages a few years after the country was conferred independence by the United Kingdom in 1960 (Odo, 2015). Since independence in 1960, the behavior and actions of political leaders and elected representatives have resulted in a deterioration of public trust and citizen disengagement in the Nigerian democratic system, which has become a source of worry for both local and international observers (Iroghama, 2012; Kerr & Luhrmann, 2017; Kumagai & Ilorio, 2020; Lauterbach, 2020; Papaioannou, 2015; van der Meer, 2017).

After the 2007 general elections, in particular, Nigeria's public trust and citizen involvement began to deteriorate (Iroghama, 2012). Several scholars (Iroghama, 2012; Kerr & Luhrmann, 2017; Kumagai & Ilorio, 2020; Lauterbach, 2020; Papaioannou, 2015; van der Meer, 2017) have noted the deteriorating state of public trust and citizens' disengagement in the Nigerian democratic system. According to Odo (2015), the prevailing corruption, political maladministration, bad governance, and some political leaders' tyranny have resulted in widespread national cynicism that some interest groups have exploited for their narrow interest.

In this chapter, I review literature related to the study topic. I begin by discussing the literature search strategy and keywords used for literature review. I then discuss the study's theoretical foundation. This discussion is followed by a review of related literature on the concepts of public trust, citizen engagement, democracy, good governance, and development in Nigeria. In the literature review, I probe the conceptual links between the concepts of public trust, citizen engagement, and good governance in Nigeria.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

I found the documents for the literature review by searching academic databases and search engines, including Thoreau, Sage Political Science, Academic Search Complete, ProQuest Central, Business Source Content Comprehensive, Google Scholar, Business Source Elites, Public Administration Abstracts, SocINDEX, Research Gate, and Urban Studies Abstracts. The following keywords were critical to the search: *Nigeria*, *public trust*, *citizen engagement*, *democracy*, *good governance*, and *development*. I focused on literature published within the past 5 years. Because of the historical, cultural, religious, and ethnic context explored in this study, I did include several studies that were published more than 5 years ago to provide an exhaustive review and content.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

I used Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013, 2019) polarities of democracy theory as the study's theoretical framework. Benet (2013) developed the polarities of democracy theory as a theoretical framework for promoting healthy, sustainable, and just communities. I also used Johnson's (1992) theory of polarity management as the

conceptual framework; Johnson's theory was the foundation for Benet's polarities of democracy theory. Thus, to promote an understanding of Benet's polarity-management theory, it is important first to present Johnson's polarity management theory. In this section, I want to clarify the two concepts of public trust and citizen engagement as democratic tools for good governance.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Johnson's (1992) polarity management theory was the conceptual basis for Benet's (2019) polarity of democracy theory. Johnson initially developed the polarity management theory to distinguish between problems that have solutions and problems that are unsolvable because a polarity exists. The distinct nature of Johnson's polarity management is that it asserts that there are solutions for solvable problems. However, there are unsolvable problems that occur when a polarity exists, and these require polarity management. According to Johnson, there are two criteria for determining if there is a problem to solve or a polarity to manage: "1) is the difficulty ongoing? 2) Are there two poles which are interdependent?" (p. 81). Johnson states:

Polarities to manage are sets of opposites which can't function well independently. Because the two sides of a polarity are interdependent, you cannot choose one as a "solution" and neglect the other. The objective of Polarity Management perspective is to get the best of both opposites while avoiding the limits of each. (p. xviii)

In a situation where there is an unsolvable problem (when a polarity exists), Johnson envisioned management's polarity to encircle a four-quadrant graph as depicted

in Figure 1 below. In Figure 1, the left side represents one pole while the right side represents the other pole. The upper and lower quadrants reflect the positive and negative aspects of each pole (Johnson 1992).

**Figure 1**

*A Framework to Visualize Johnson's (1992) Polarity Management and the Infinity Loop*

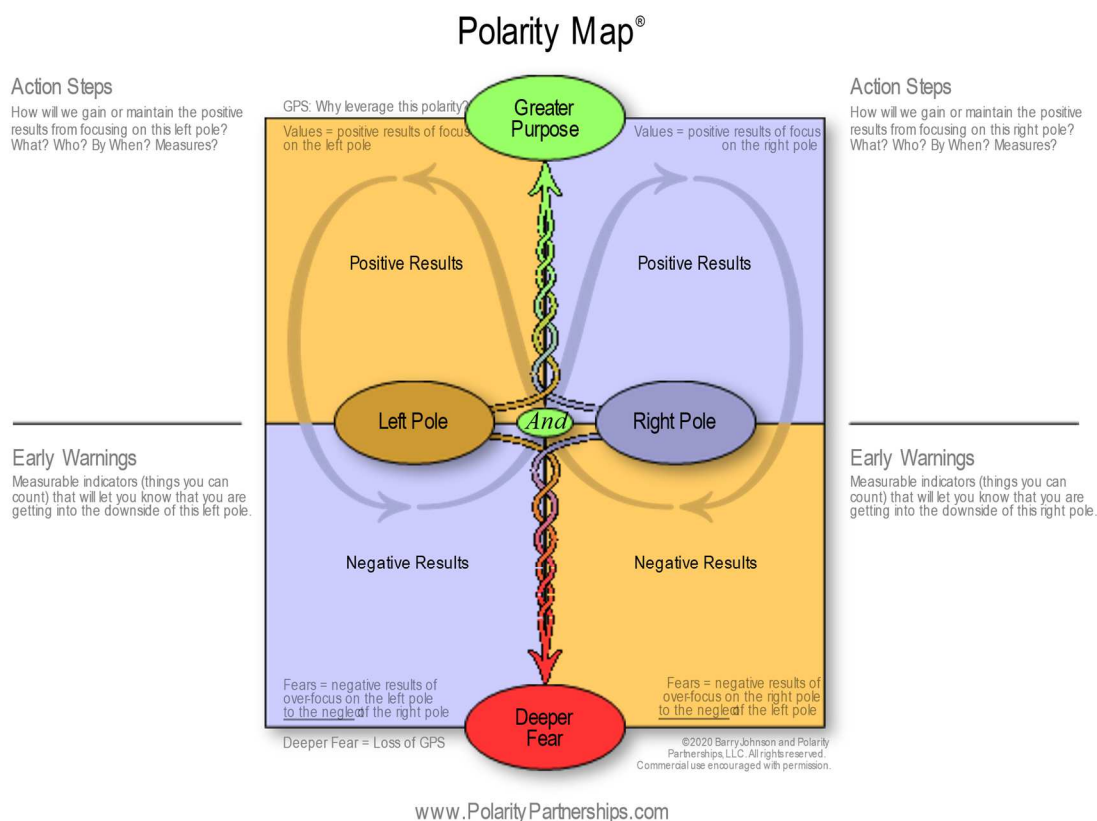


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Johnson (1992) concluded that there is a "dynamic tension in all polarities over whether to shift to the opposite pole, when, and how. Within that tension there are two major forces at work: crusading and tradition-bearing" (p. 55). The crusader and tradition-bearing forces each support an opposite pole. They each promote the positive

sides of their pole but are concerned about the opposite pole's negative side. If not managed well, this will result in an ongoing shift from one pole to the other ultimately maximizing the negative aspects. Alternatively, effectively managing the polarity can result in maximizing the positive aspects while minimizing the negative aspects. In either case an infinity loop is created (as shown by the gray line and arrows in Figure 1) and staying in the positive quadrants of the infinity loop requires effectively managing the polarity.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This analysis focus on Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013, 2019) polarities of democracy as the theoretical framework for my study. Benet developed the polarities of democracy theory as a theoretical basis for promoting stable, sustainable, and just societies (Benet, 2013). The theory has 10 values that exist as five polarity pairs: freedom and authority, justice and due process, diversity and equality, human rights and communal obligations, participation and representation as shown in Figure 2.

According to Benet (2013) polarities of democracy is the unifying theory of democracy through the philosophical perspective critical theory. The central philosophy was to facilitate social change by overcoming oppression based on five fundamental polarities. Structural forces create an environment of repression, which marginalized people can encounter psychological and spiritual oppressors in economic, and health inequalities. Thus, the unifying theory of democracy corresponds with critical theory's goal: to conquer injustice and achieve emancipation for humanity. On this assumption, the critical theory presents a focus on democracy as a place for cooperative, practical and

transformative activities (Benet, 2019; Bohman, 2012). Figure 2 illustrates the polarity relations of the 10 values of the polarity of democracy theory.

**Figure 2**

*The Polarities of Democracy Theory with the Values Arranged in Their Polarity Relationships*

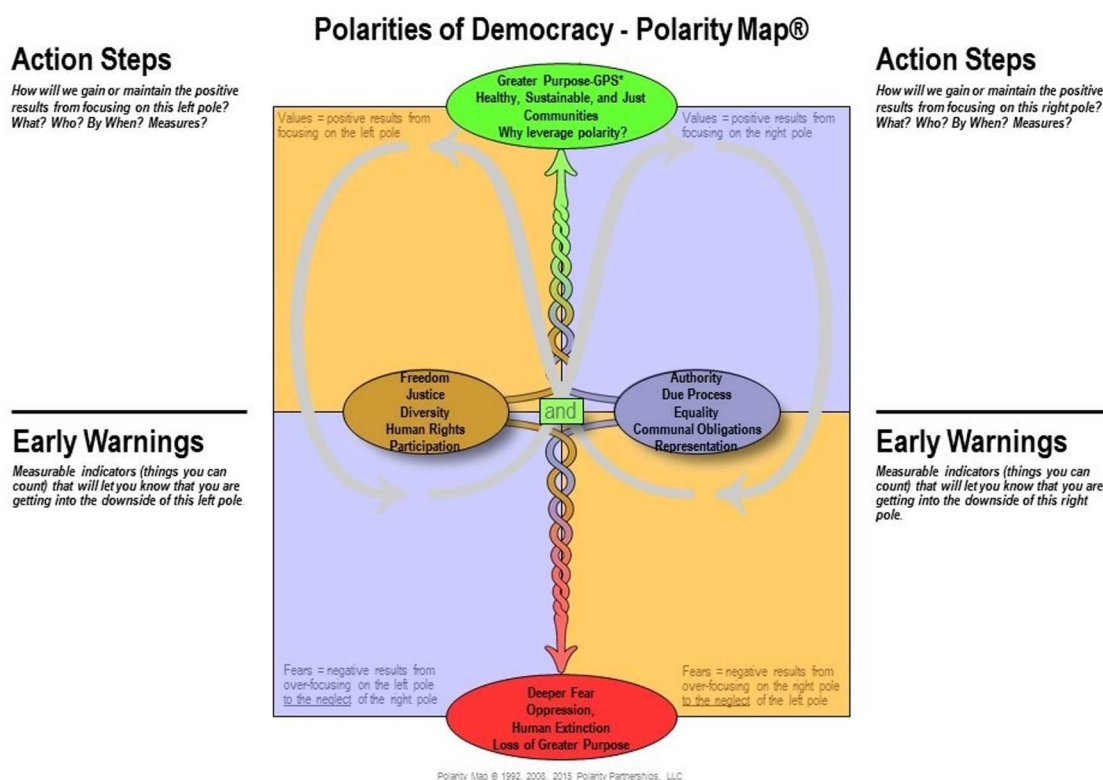


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According to Benet (2019), the polarities of democracy theory uses polarity thinking to maximize the positive aspects while minimizing the negative aspects of each of the polarity poles. Thus, the polarities of democracy has been used as a theoretical framework for several doctoral studies in Nigeria (Agbormbai, 2021; Ezeocha, 2016; Kaka, 2018; Tobor, 2014; Udeagbala, 2020). For example, Ezeocha (2016), looked at the



consequences of the Niger Delta amnesty program implementation on Nigeria's upstream petroleum industry and found that polarity management, if well entrenched in policy formulations, may be a catalyst for positive social changes if the polarities of democracy theory is leveraged for public policy formulations, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Also, Kaka (2018) studied decentralization of local government and rural development in Rivers State Nigeria and posited that, using the polarity of democracy theory at a lens, suggests that the failure of the community development committees created by the state government did not yield the expected results because of mutual features of corruption and lack of representation of the indigenous people in the program.

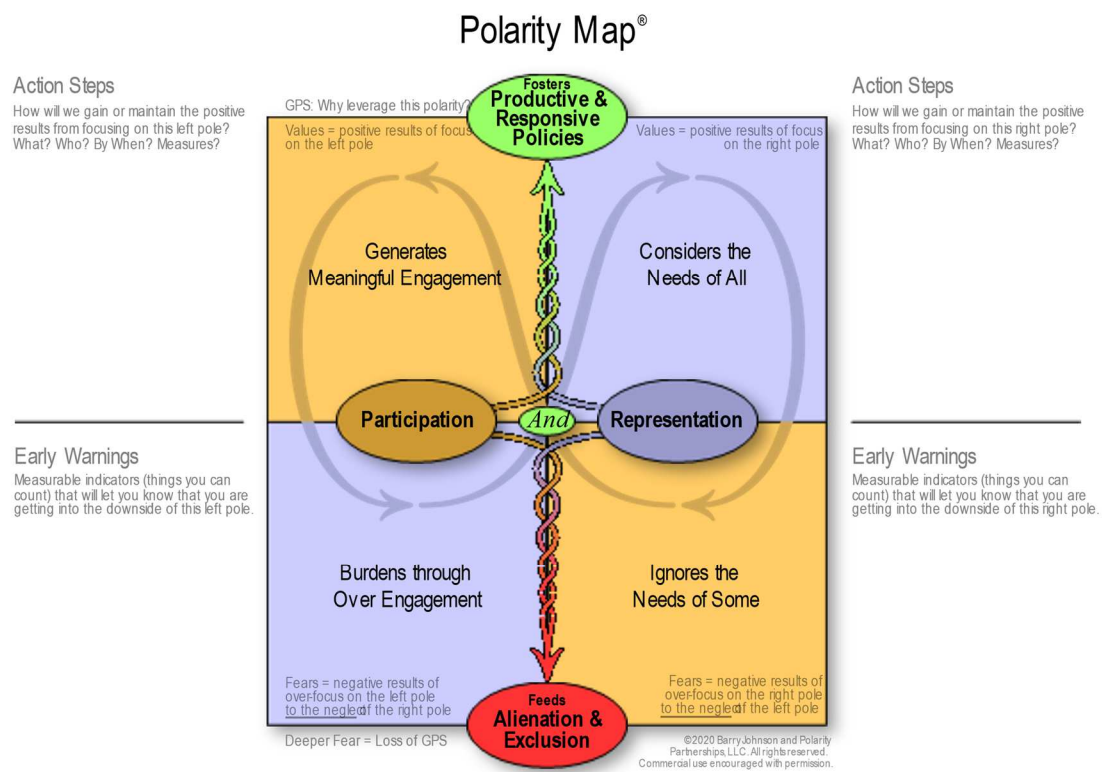
I used the polarities of democracy as the theoretical framework for my study to assess effectiveness of maximizing the positive aspects of each pole while minimizing the negative aspects of each pole towards the building of healthy, sustainable, and just communities in Nigeria as seen through the perceptions of the Yoruba of the South-Western States in Nigeria. For this purpose, while using the theory as a whole, I focused on the participation and representation pair in particular. Figure 3 presents a basic representation of a polarity map for the participation and representation pair (Benet, Kayser, & Rackl, 2022). However, Benet (2019) cautions that a basic map should not be considered as representing all possible versions of a pair:

Basic Maps represent just one example of the potential positive and negative aspects of the Polarities of Democracy pairs. They should not be thought of as the only possible positive or negative aspects of the ten values that make up the five pairs of the Polarities of Democracy theory. Nor should the higher purpose and

deeper fear associated with an individual pair be thought of as the only possibility. Students reading my original dissertation research, or conducting their own research, can find dozens if not hundreds of other examples of positive and negative aspects that could be used in the appropriate quadrants along with an appropriate higher purpose and deeper fear. (p. 16)

**Figure 3**

*Polarity Map for Identifying the Positive and Negative Aspects of Participation and Representation Values*



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### **Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts**

In this section, I discuss the Nigeria historical development and the challenges of developing unity. Further discussions focus on the concept(s) relating to public trust, citizen engagement and good governance or democratic governance, these include: the concept of public trust; the concept of citizen engagement; good governance and development; democracy, democratization process and good governance in Nigeria; perceptions of public trust in Nigeria democratic system; perceptions of citizens engagement in Nigeria democratic system; conceptual link between public trust, citizens engagement and good governance; some evidences in Nigeria; and other developing world case study.

#### **Historical Development and the Challenges of Developing Unity in Nigeria**

The Northern and Southern protectorates of the Niger Area was amalgamated in 1914 into what is presently referred to as Nigeria (Akinyemi et al., 1989; Okereka et al., 2020). Isiani and Obi-Ani (2019) stated that the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates leading to Nigeria of today brought together over two hundred and fifty ethnic nations forced into one geographical entity in 1909. Also, Olasupo et al. (2017) explained that the Nigerian state was formed by a colonial decree. It did not emerge spontaneously from African traditional culture; rather, it was placed on the society by the British imperialist through the instrumentality of colonialism (Olasupo et al., 2017; Omotoso & Oladeji, 2017).

The amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates, in 1914 was forced on the people for the purpose of administrative convenience rather than for unity.

The British colonial masters forced the amalgamation for a variety of reasons, the most prominent of which was cost-cutting and administrative ease (Akinyemi et al., 1989; Okereka et al., 2020).

As a result, it has been challenging to unite its over 374 ethnic groups, 400 distinct languages (as opposed to dialects), and at least three distinct belief systems into a cohesive whole. It is important to remember that prior to the arrival of the colonial rulers, the various communities in what is now Nigeria worked under different administrative structures. Following the amalgamation, a new Nigeria, named after the word “Niger Area,” emerged as Africa’s most populous nation and ranked seventh in the world.

According to Suberu (2001), Nigeria’s creation was regarded as a country with one of the world’s most ethnically diverse populations and conceivably the most profoundly fragmented along with geographical settings, historical traditions, political institutions, and demographic configuration among all the conquered territories by the European in Africa. The ethnic groups in Nigeria were subsumed into three dominant ethnic structures of Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa-Fulani. This arrangement brought to fore the striking political feature of the ethnic diversity in Nigeria. Before the independence constitution of 1960, Nigeria constitutional developments spanned through four eras, Clifford constitution of 1922, Richard constitution of 1947, Macpherson constitution of 1951, and Oliver Littleton constitution of 1954 with various features that granted limited participation to the people in one form or another.

Nigeria was granted independence in 1960, with Sir Tafawa Balewa as the first Prime Minister of Nigeria and became a republic in 1963. The civilian administration of

Sir Tafawa Balewa was interrupted by a military coup in 1966, which subsequently led to the Nigerian civil war from 1967 to 1970. In between the coup of 1966 and the return to democratic rule in 1999, Nigeria has witnessed six successful and four unsuccessful coups (Adeakin, 2015). The Military rule lasted for thirty-four years (Etim & Ukpere, 2012), out of sixty-one years of Nigerian independence at current time. The lengthy period of military interregnum in Nigeria, which many scholars described as an aberration, was characterized by so many features that affect Nigeria's people and the country's political administration. The unprecedented oil wealth due to the Middle East's instability in the early '70s catapulted Nigeria's foreign policy into international fame, which encouraged the financial profligacy that dotted most military administrations in Nigeria.

One of the military regimes' many striking features is the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) foisted on the country by the World Bank in 1986 due to the request for a loan for structural development by the government of then Gen. I.B Babangida (Adeakin, 2015). Etim and Ukpere (2012) argued that the lengthy period of military rule in Nigeria had imprinted the military command system culture on the minds of Nigerians thus making it difficult to delineate the boundaries between the barrack and the civil society at the emergence of civilian administrations on our return to democracy in Nigeria in 1999. The long military aberration has arguably disengaged the political leaders from society and breeds mistrust between the government and the people.

While all the ethno-cultural-religious nationalities enslaved by British colonialists were unified in their opposition to colonialism, they disagreed about how the country's

system and forces and wealth should be controlled or shared (Olasupo et al., 2017).

Evidently, under colonialism in Nigeria, nationalism was not founded on the notion of a collective Nigerian; instead, it was based on ensuring increased involvement in colonial governance for the various ethnic nationalities' elites (Bamisoye 1988; Olasupo et al., 2017; Onuoha 2012; Shittu 2013). Rather than seeing Nigeria as the object of their agitations, early nationalists saw ethnic consciousness and personal identity as the common denominator.

By adopting a policy of "separate development" for the region and regionalizing to strengthen jointly exclusive identities, British colonial policy promoted Hausa-Fulani/Islamist identity in the north (Olasupo et al., 2017). While the Richards Constitution of 1946 "unified" the nation under a centralized government, it also divided it into three ethnically controlled administrative and political units, which corresponded to Nigeria's three main ethnic groups: Hausa/Fulani in the north, Igbo in the east, and Yoruba in the west (Olasupo et al., 2017). According to Onuoha (2012), this exercise triggered the regional autonomy of the nationalist movement into three disparate camps, with clear implications for post-independence politics.

According to Akubo (2016), 60 years after Nigeria's independence, the country still underperformed in all socio-economic indicators; life expectancy, death rate, access to water, poverty rate, mortality rate, and crime rate, and still carries the tag of a developing economy (UNDP, 2018). The country was recently tagged the poverty capital of the world (Iheonu & Urama, 2019).

Furthermore, the concentration of state resources easily transforms the state into a “political empire” worth fighting for and ruling, because once it is obtained, all other items – strength, protection, money, and a good life – would be added. Since every racial group or coalition of racial groups that governs the state often controls so much more, democratic conflicts – specifically elections, quickly became inter-group and/or inter-ethnic confrontations/wars. Admittedly, for competing ethnic groups, the post-independence state has become a hegemonic vehicle (Omotoso & Oladeji 2017). Thus, the quest for ethnic appropriation, succession, and hegemonic dominance of the state defines the post-independence state’s processes (Araoye 2012; Olasupo et al., 2017).

With the intrinsic imbalance in state formation and colonial and post-colonial policies, Nigerian states continue to experience sub-nationalist agitations along ethno-cultural plate boundaries, rather than nurturing national peace and unity. These sub-nationalist agitations are rooted in Nigerians’ love for their distinct identities and abhorrence of any kind of dominance. Most agitations, according to studies (Olasupo et al., 2017; Omotoso & Oladeji 2017), are intended to abolish the historical history inherent inside them and rebuild them within the negotiated terms of the Indigenous groups, making the state legal, inclusive, and functional. Thus, Olasupo et al., identified the revolutionaries’ agitations for “self-determination.”

### **The Concept of Public Trust**

Scholars across disciplines have all researched public trust in recent decades, but there is no agreement on a precise description (Castaldo et al., 2010; Six, 2005; Xue & Zhai, 2009). According to Jenny et al. (2014), a trustor is needed in addition to the

trustee. The bond between the trustee and the trustor, as well as the society's external social-cultural norms. The willingness to accept the risk that comes with uncertainty about and vulnerability to the actions of another party is described as trust (Stickel, 1999). Chowdhury and Tahmina (2019) argued that trust occurs when all parties have positive expectations of each other, confidence develops, and the partnership achieves the desired results.

According to Yang and Peng (1999), trustworthiness literally means trust, whereas trusting implies trust. The partnership between the trustor and the trustee is known as trust. Trust eliminates confusion and social complexities by stating that no party can use adverse selection, moral hazard, hold-up, or any other vulnerabilities in a given transaction. The elements of confidence and/or the qualities of the trustee must be attained (Chowdhury & Tahmina, 2019). Since trust is a dynamic phenomenon that increases or decreases over time, studies have described distrust as a lower level of trust. According to Lewicki et al. (1998), trust and mistrust can coexist and occur at the same time. Fear, suspicion, cynicism, wariness, watchfulness, and caution are all associated with mistrust. Hope, faith, belief, assurance, and effort are all components of trust.

Trust is the hallmark of democracy, and it is centered to the representative and participation in democratic system vis-à-vis representative and participation pair of polarities of democracy. Multiple causes, according to Kumagai and Ilorio (2020), are to blame for the loss of confidence in government. Researchers discovered a clear connection between the loss of trust and corruption. For representative democracy to work, confidence in the government, or political trust, is needed. According to Kumagai



and Ilorio and van der Meer (2017), the loss of confidence in government is thought to represent a “democratic crisis” with immediate and grave consequences. Citizens’ views and interpretations of what is right and equitable, as well as what is wrong, determine public trust. The rights and justice of one individual might not be considered by another.

Short-term results, leader and agency assessments all influence public trust.

Government trust is built on two key pillars: social trust and political trust. Citizens’ preferences are crucial in determining their level of confidence in government. Trust and satisfaction can suffer if citizens’ expectations grow faster than actual results. According to the OECD (2013), government confidence is a cornerstone for the legitimacy and survival of democratic systems. For government agencies to operate fairly and effectively, they must have a high degree of confidence. It has the potential to influence individual actions in ways that endorse policy goals.

Thus, Kwasau (2013) noted that corruption is a barrier to every nation that seeks and strives to entrench and maintain democracy and good governance. Nigeria’s successive leaders have sadly viewed its high destiny irrevocably. The trillions of dollars realized from the sales of crude oil over several years, which are enough to lift Nigeria into the midst of the advanced countries and transform the lives of the poor and needy people were brazenly stolen and converted to private use (Achebe, 1983; Odo, 2015). Leaders of Nigeria have robbed, stole, and wasted public money, inflated contracts, and bloated or *padded* payrolls (Odo, 2015). Kleptocracy (the rule by the thieves) became the system of government adopted by the Nigerian political leaders (Fredlound, 2001; Odo, 2015; Okau, 2014). According to Kwasau (2013), amongst these corrupt activities in the

Nigerian economy are functioning to fuel the nation's scandal, oil-related corruption of N1.7 trillion between 1999 and 2011, NNPC's 20 billion dollars scandal in 2014, the Police Pension Fund fraud scandal, James Ibori one time governor of Delta State conviction in London court on corrupt Case of Money Laundering of about 450 billion Naira Nigerian local currency.

Nigeria's leaders subjugated the people too long with the relentless pillaging of natural resources by economic emasculation. Many Nigerians live below the poverty line, but their leaders live at the height of luxury. Nigeria's economy is not doing well; the official exchange rates denominated in American currency, range from N386 to USD1 (as of August 2020; galloping inflation and high unemployment), banks on the precipice of collapse, and manufacturing sectors are in deep trouble, pending implementation of the privatization policies (Elaiwu, 2012; Gurumka et al., 2014). No person can effectively participate in a democratic process without basic livelihoods.

Leveraging on polarities of democracy theory, public trust becomes central to the values inherent in the pairs of participation and representation of theory. It gives the people an assurance and a hope of fulfillment, and that the leaders are dependable, and will be committed to the society by offering effective leadership. It also ensures an increase in citizen participation and confidence in elected officials. Trust is gained by the trustor's well-coordinated, decisive, and moral actions towards the trustee (the elected and the electorate). These are fostered by democratic systems of governance that encourage strict adherence to social norms, codes of conduct, or governance standards that are widely established in the democratic system. All these are encapsulated in the 10 values

of the polarities of democracy theory. However, the Nigeria's democratic system, on the other hand, has struggled over the years to offer democratic dividends to the people, hence the political instability and numerous agitations for secessionists tendencies, which have undermined public trust and caused a lack of confidence in government operations.

### **The Concept of Citizenship Engagement**

Studies have argued on the conceptualization of citizenship and citizenship rights within differing cultural, ethnic, national, and gendered contexts (Nyamu-Museni, 2002). According to Gaventa (2002), citizenship is an ensemble of different forms of belonging. Citizenship is a status that entitles individuals to a specific set of universal rights granted by the state (Oldfield, 1990). Rights are largely seen as rights to political and civic participation. Rights include the right to vote within a representative democratic system, to form associations (such as parties), and to exercise free speech (Gaventa, 2002). Contemporary interest in citizenship could be described by considering many factors, including increased international migrations (Gaventa, 2002). Other studies including (Ellison, 1997; Newell, 2000; Turner, 1999) have argued for the need to address the exclusions created by the linkage of citizenship to nation-states

Citizen engagement or participation is a contestable concept (Mead, 2018; Mohammadi et al., 2018). It refers to a range of various actions by different people. Kim et al. (2018) noted that citizen participation promotes democratic values such as accountability (Moynihan, 2003; Nabatchi, 2012). Governance scholars have paid more attention to the role of citizen participation in government (Kim & Lee, 2012; McLaverty, 2011; Transparency International and United Nations Human Settlements

Program, 2004). According to Mead, citizen participation is the redistribution of power to give way to the have-not citizens excluded from the political and economic processes. It is how they can induce significant social reform that enables them to share the affluent society's benefit.

Citizen engagement is the act of any person taking part in public affairs. The United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development calls for the right to participation (Gaventa, 2002). More collegial and collaborative public involvement processes compete with more traditional top-down approaches (Abelson & Gauvin, 2006). For a long time, citizens have been considered as the recipients of government services, with no role in policy formulation, decision-making, or program implementation. Geddes (2005) argued that people's participation should be central to local governance to ensure welfare and poverty alleviation. Roberts (2004) and Thomas (1993) in Mohammadi et al. (2018) stated that the role of citizen participation in the decision-making process had sparked much debate. They distinguished two different views about citizen's participation: [a] the People-centered (PC), and [b] the Authority-centered (AC).

Scholars have advocated for citizens' continuous engagement in governance as a practical element in implementing development programs. Arnstein (1969) developed eight hierarchical steps of the participation process: manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power, and citizen control (Waheduzzaman, 2007). International Association for Public Participation (IAPP, 2003) proposed five stages of people's participation: informing, consulting, involving, or

deciding together, collaborating, or acting together, and empowering. But Bishop and Davis (2002), and LGA (2007) noted that the ordinary and universal stages of citizen participation include informing, consulting, involving or partnership, and assigning or control. UNDP (2006) showed increasing development in countries' mechanisms to promote more direct citizen engagement in governance processes. Many countries lack good governance because people are not allowed to participate in government policy formulation and decision-making.

According to Askvik et al. (2011), people want representatives of public institutions to generate positive outcomes for themselves and society in general. People tend to mistrust them when public institutions struggle to provide services effectively and efficiently by wasting public money, displaying a lack of honesty, and using graft and corruption (Brillantes & Fernandez, 2001; Chowdhury & Tahmina, 2019). The USAID (2016) reported that the autocratic governments of more than half the world's population say that the most extensive human rights in the world are being scrutinized. The conduct of elections fosters democratic practice growth through citizen and politician engagement and competition, respectively. It guarantees political liberalization and corrected corruption and misuse of power (Diamond, 2007; USAID, 2016). The organization of workshops, round-table debates, public dialogues, and political conferences will be in vain and questionable in the ramifications of duties if the election is not equally carried out by the supporting body responsible for elections (Chowdhury & Tahmina, 2019).

According to the polarities of democracy theory (2006, 2012, 2013, 2019), democracy which imbues workplace and society is the solution to oppression from man's

experience throughout history, instead of a polarity to manage. However, advancing democracy and the democratization process is a big challenge. The theory's 10 values are needed in advancing democracy and the democratization process. Thus, citizen participation promotes values and standards for democratic governance, equal rights, and engagements in democratic practices. It is an exercise of right in democratic practices to improve governance, and it is widely appraised for good governance and democratic activities

Citizenship status avails entitlement to civil rights legally and each state is mandated to protect citizens and the exercise rights, such as political and civic participation, economic, cultural, and social participation. Citizen engagement occurs by participating in decision-making and getting involved in political public activities. Decentralization of power is a direct approach to foster citizen participation in governing policy and decision-making and provides impetus for growth and development. This resonate with Benet's polarities of democracy theory argument that democratic practices are the either/or solution to oppression from man's experience, but it requires 10 values of the polarities for effective management. I will be discussing the linkage between good governance and development in the next subsection.

### **Good Governance and Development**

Governance is as old as human civilization (Muhammad, 2017; Preti, 2004), and it has three legs vis-à-vis economic, political, and administrative (Hyden & Court, 2002; Muhammad, 2017). It cut across several contexts like corporate governance, international governance, national governance, and local governance (Srivastava, 2009). Governance

is the way power is exercised to manage a country's economic and social resources for development (Srivastava, 2009). It relates to the decision-making process, whereby decisions are implemented or not implemented (Muhammad, 2017; Nassanga, 2003). It is the analysis of how we arrive at conclusions in governance.

In the World Bank definition, governance entails the legitimate authority through formal and informal traditions and institutions for the common good. According to Alaraj and Ibrahim (2014), good governance relates to government interaction with the citizens and their involvement in the process. It uses transformative, administrative, political, social, and economic authorities to meet the law's requirements (ANAO, 2003; Ferguson & Popescu, 2006; UNESCAP, 2012).

Good governance is the governance that is transparent and accountable to the masses. It ensures zero tolerance for corrupt practices, consideration of minorities' views, and attentiveness to the voice of the most vulnerable in the society for decision-making activities (Governance Pro, 2017; Kimutai & Aluvi, 2018; OECD, 2001). Good governance is only practiced in any state about her political, social, cultural, and economic levels by the governing authorities (Weatherbee, 2004). According to Kimutai and Aluvi (2018), good governance includes transparency, consensus-oriented, citizens participatory, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, equitability and inclusivity, and obedience to the rule of law. It gives confidence to their responsiveness to society's needs both at present and future times.

The World Bank highlighted essential characteristics of good governance for developed and developing countries. Good governance includes political accountability,

rule of law, accountability in bureaucracy and freedom of information (Srivastava, 2009). According to Onichakwe (2016), good governance permits the rule of law, enforces contracts and agreement between individuals. It also determines the optimal size of the government and makes the best possible use of government resources.

Development as a construct has been seen in different perspectives because of its multi-dimensional nature. Onichakwe (2016) conceived it as a process whereby significant social structure changes, popular attitudes, and national institutions accelerate economic growth, decreasing inequality and eradicating absolute poverty simultaneously. The objectives of development are people-oriented, increase availability and distribution of essential sustainable goods, the rising standard of living, rising income levels, employment, and social amenities or infrastructures. High level of labor output per man, persistent increase in sectorial contributions to development.

Also, development concerns the achievement of fundamental and substantial modifications in societal activities. These have to do with equality of life, equality of opportunity, equity in income distribution, and democratic practices in the development goals or aspirations (Lawal & Tobi, 2006; Nguyen, 2016). According to (Ukwandu & Jarbandhan, 2016; Ukwandu, 2014), the term development is contextual. It is vital to clarify its nature when relating it to people living in developing parts of the world like Sub-Saharan Africa. The overall goal of development is to increase the economic, political, and civil rights of all people across gender, ethnic groups, religions, races, regions, and countries (Ukwandu & Jarbandhan, 2016; World Bank, 1991a).



The relationship between good governance and development is symmetrical and significant in international policy debate (Adetoye & Omilusi, 2016). Studies including Ukwandu (2014) and Ukwandu and Jarbandhan (2016) have proved that for any state to enjoy the benefits of capitalism and development, the state has to offer good governance. A country's government is responsible for good governance through an efficient bureaucracy that regulates the economy (Hall & Soskice, 2001; Svensson & Oberg, 2005; Ukwandu & Jarbandhan, 2016). Oskarsson et al. (2009), Ukwandu and Ukwandu and Jarbandhan argued that good governance should embrace mutually beneficial terms of doing business, creating efficient regulatory bodies that protect entrepreneurs' intellectual property as a catalyst for capitalism and growth. The uncertainty arising from insufficient information or unwieldy bureaucratic bottlenecks is a sign of bad governance.

Politically, the nexus between good governance and development is well pronounced (Ukwandu & Jarbandhan, 2016). It is asserted that good institutions beget good governance, and good governance begets development (North, 2005; Ukwandu & Jarbandhan, 2016). Good governance is sine-qua-non to effective use of public resources to generate public goods. According to Adetoye and Omilusi (2016), it is the state's responsibility to provide enabling environment structure for development through other agencies or parastatals. The state is the government network, quasi-government, and non-governmental institutions that co-ordinates, regulates, and monitors economic and social activities.

Adetoye and Omilusi (2016) quoted Diamond (2004) that good governance is multi-dimensional; the first relates to the state's capacity to function in the service of a

public good. It connects intimately to the second dimension — commitment to the public good. The third dimension is transparency which relates to the state business openness and conduct to scrutinizing other state actors and the public. The fourth dimension is the rule of law, which applies equally to the lowly and the mighty. The fifth dimension consists of participation and dialogue that enable the public to provide input to the policy-making process, correct mistakes in policy design and implementation, and promote social inclusion.

In Nigeria and Africa in general, leading styles have been seen as leadership in personal affairs, personal politics, and politics (Omale & Amana, 2014; Seligman, 1950). In Nigeria, an influential “godfather” at the height of a vast government, state, and local patronage is a personalized political arena. Political decisions and outcomes are deeply at the public’s expense and amongst these godfathers in general (Sklar, 2006). Odo (2015) further claimed that Nigeria’s triggers of leadership problems include constitutional requirements on the age and qualifications of the presidents and governors (school certificate).

The varied and pervasive disregard for human rights, which has been seen in illegal detention, extra-judicial killings by law enforcement officials, child marriage, child trafficking, marginalization of women, kidnapping, abductions, domestic violence, murder, etc. all lead to deteriorating democracy in Nigeria (Okoroafor, 2010). More so, the propensity to personalize public projects is a significant problem in Nigerian leadership. It initiates a vision and leaves office, which harms the development of the country. There is also political summersault, where policy cannot develop as it is

unilaterally updated and countered. For example, Mark (2014) claims that Obasanjo sold refineries to Chinese investors in Nigeria, and Yar'adua revived them a year later. Even if such programs are in Nigeria, it becomes clear that each new government has its plans and discards whatever is on the ground. The worst thing is that the next government would be a member of another faction. It reflects the many unfinished schemes that have littered the entire country's landscape. The situation shows the dichotomy between the people, as represented by the elected members of the National Assembly and the Executives who are supposed to work in tandem and ensure that all programs and policies of government are effectively backed by laws to make them effective.

According to Benet (2013) the polarities of democracy theory is a unifying theory of democracy through the philosophical perspective of critical theory. The critical theory presents "a focus on democracy as a place for cooperative, practical and transformative activities". Good governance fosters democratic practices or democracy and Benet's polarities of democracy theory propose 10 values to successfully manage their relationship pairs of interrelated polarities. Good governance relates to government interaction with the citizens and their involvement in the process. Thus, governance is the way power is exercised to manage a country's economic and social resources for development. Good governance is citizen participatory, people-centered, accountable to the masses, transparent in decision-making, enforcement of rules and regulation, responsive, effective and efficient in resources utilization, meeting societal needs, equitable and inclusive to all citizens, guided and conform to the rules and regulations for fairness and justice. The backdrop demands contextualization of democracy, democratic

process, and good governance in Nigeria, and this makes the discuss in the next subsection.

### **Democracy, the Democratization Process, and Good Governance in Nigeria**

Democracy is archaic, dating back to ancient Greece (Okoroafor, 2010). It is a system of government based on the acquisition of authority from the people (Odo, 2015; Yio, 2012). In a democratic state, authority is rooted in the people's consent, that is, in the belief that people have the right to run or choose their government. According to Amaechi (2010), the attainment of democracy is yet to be full-fledged in Africa and needs to be domesticated to Nigeria's local conditions and targeted to her peculiar problems. Democratization is political change, an on-going process that signifies a transition away from dictatorial rule.

Studies including Odo (2015) have argued that democracy and good governance are most successful political ideas of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is because democracy permits freedom of expression, choice, and makes future aspirations. It is traceable to the period of the British colonial administrative system in Nigeria. The British colonial masters founded a territorial unit geographically defined for Nigeria (Amaechi (2010). They spread the myth and propaganda that a great distance separated the ethnic groups by a difference of history and traditions and ethnological, racial, tribal, political, and religious (Coleman, 1958; Nnoli, 1980). According to Amaechi (2010), at their departure in 1960, the British bequeathed to the Indigenous political leaders mostly a shaky political amalgam called Nigeria. With the dashing of the nationalist feelings and hopes nurtured

at independence, citizens recoiled their loyalties from the nation to their immediate ethnic groups.

The idea of democracy became popular in Nigeria following independence from British colonial rule. This paves the way for the introduction of political parties to enable Nigerians to contest for elective positions (Odo, 2015). Military rule for more than 30 years out of 60 years of Nigerian independence destroyed the fundamental tents of the democratic system in the country. Ordinarily, the mere existence of different ethnic groups does not necessarily lead to ethnic acrimony. The challenge lies in harnessing the similarities of the various groups for unity (Odo, 2015; Ramphal, 2000). Abdullahi (2014) reported that the Muritala/Obasanjo military junta began returning Nigeria to democratization (democratic transition) after the post-independence period (Abdullahi, 2013; Esew, 2003; Oyediran et al., 2005). The Second Republic lasted for four years (1979-1983) due to a severe economic crisis and political legitimacy crisis. General Muhammad Buhari's (1983- 1985) rule had no plan for a transition to civil rule. There was also an attempt at the democratic transition between 1985 and 1993 under President Ibrahim Babangida (Abdullahi, 2013, 2014; Esew, 2003; Etannibi, 2004). The second successful democratic transition that ushered in the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic in Nigeria (1998-1999) was by General Abdulsalami Abubakar (Abdullahi, 2014; Oyediran et al., 2005).

Nigeria was restored back to civil democratic rule after a protracted military rule that lasted for more than three decades on May 29, 1999. Since then, the democratic system has experienced some stress mainly due to the hang-over effect of the prolonged military rule (Odo, 2015). These challenges include the demand for creation of more

states and local governments, quest for a more acceptable revenue sharing formula, inadequate infrastructural facilities, and rising corruption levels (Odo, 2015). The handling of the ethnic militias, especially in the Niger Delta, and the frosty relationship between the executive and the legislature, especially during the regime's first tenure, illustrated a tendency to command rather than conciliate or negotiate.

Akude (1989) reported that Nigeria has recorded failed attempts at democracy mainly because of the great diversities among Nigerian peoples. He noted that these diversities, ordinarily, do not constitute problems but the use we have been making of them by trying to project and protect ethnic interests. Expectedly, the existence of these background issues continued to threaten the sustainability of the democratic system. According to Odo (2015), democracy in Nigeria is going through difficult times. Viable democratic institutions such as a credible electoral system, independent judiciary, the rule of law, etc., are yet to take root in the country. Lack of credible election has resulted in the erosion of political legitimacy on public officeholders. Where democracy is devoid of credible elections, good governance is negated, and the people's sovereignty is relegated to the background if not ultimately denied. Some of these problems are systemic and have much to do with how the institutions of democracy are used for expediency.

Nigeria's democracy is regarded as nominal with an outward appearance of a democratic nation through elections but without the rights and institutions that guarantee a functioning democratic system. Good governance translates into provision of basic infrastructures, access to medical and healthcare services, educational, industrial, and agricultural development of the society, and above all, the institutionalization of the rule

of law (Odo, 2015). Nigerian elected leaders should not always see calls for sovereign national conferences and agitations for restructuring of the polity as detrimental to democracy and development.

According to Odo (2015), Nigeria has never been elected President since independence. Many did not have the weakest idea about political leaders' existence and essence when unprepared without exemption. It is the trick of the progress of the world. In history, Ekpu (2010) stated that Tafawa Abubakar was not ready, but Ahmadu Bello moved him to Lagos while in Kaduna. Shagari wanted the Senate, but he was diverted to Dodan Barracks by the Nigerian National Party Kingmakers. Olusegun Obasanjo stayed in jail while his jailors pulled him out of the prison and raised his head in a mild protest; when Obasanjo stopped and wheeled him to Aso Rock, Umar Musa Yar'adua went to Ahmadu Bello, Zaria, for a teaching job. Goodluck, Jonathan just adapted his seat as the state governor of Bayelsa when Obasanjo called him into more senior positions as Yar'adua vice-president. Therefore, it becomes apparent that none of the presidents has been able to dream, study, work, research, and network in years in Nigeria. It is no surprise therefore, that none of them has proven to be a top artist. Nigeria has been saddled with leaders who have been neither adequately trained nor prepared for work over the years since its political independence (Odo, 2015).

Not only that, Omotosho (2013) also argued that not long after the democratic government began in 1999, ethnic groups became the decisions that reject the nation's constitutional agreement. The unhappy state of citizenship has encouraged the spread of different ethnic militias that are unhappy with inequality, marginalization, and mis-

governance. Among the ethnic militias groups that were formed all over the country includes the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) which is from the Yoruba ethnic group, the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) and the Boko Haram Sect from the North, the Indigenous People of Biafra, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra for the Igbo people, the Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), and the Supreme Egbesu Assembly (SEA) from the Southern part of Nigeria, among others. The difference is in good governance, and democratic practice which has been widened in Nigeria further by race.

Benet (2006, 2012, 2013, 2019), in constructing a theory of workplace and societal democracy, hinged its acceptance of the concept of democracy with the one advanced by the World Social Forum that takes in "global justice, extensive citizen participation and empowerment, and a broad commitment to human right'" (p. 31). Evidence revealed that the attainment of the concept of democracy is yet to be full-fledged in Africa (Amaechi, 2010; Elaigwu, 2011; Yio, 2012) and needs to be domesticated to Africa's local conditions and targeted to its peculiar problems (Odo, 2015). Democratic system of government is based on the acquisition of authority from the people; the devotion to the rule of law; the emphasis on the legitimacy of regulations; the availability of choices and cherished values (including freedom); and accountability in governance. However, the momentary experience of Nigeria in democratic governance after independence is attributed to the following factors: the breakdown of the rules of the game of politics, gross misuse of political power, erosion of the rights of individuals,



disenfranchisement of the Nigerian populace through blatant rigging of elections, conspicuous consumption of politicians amidst the abject poverty of the masses and compelling regional governments that threatened the relatively weak federal center with wanton abandon. The perceptions of public trust in Nigeria democratic system will be discussed in the next subsection

### **Perceptions of Public Trust in the Nigerian Democratic System**

Public trust in government is now a problematic phenomenon worldwide; Nigeria is not an exemption from the situation (Ayodele, 2014). Government legitimacy depends on its programs and policies, not on ethnic or patrimonial connections (Cook et al., 2005). Else, as most common, the distraught citizenry expresses repudiation to the governments or the politicians perceived as deceitful and corrupt, negligent, and inept, or brazenly favoring the top echelon in the society. According to Ayodele (2014), Nigerians have had several encounters in this context and registered their disappointments on the subsequent administration's performances since the 4th republic. Lip services and lack of political-will prevented the implementation and follow-up of most of these laudable programs. Despite all the promises, the administration recorded low human development indexes, poor per capita income, high poverty rate, low life expectancy, high level of illiteracy, massive importation, and import dependent economy etc.

Omotosho (2013) argued that Chief Obasanjo's administration serves as the platform by which governance and democracy in Nigeria were laid. The administration's commitment to this development is evident in keeping the country on the right track by formulating policies, programs, and reforms, specifically designed to spur growth and

development – National Economic Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDS), Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Monetization Policy, Constitutional Conference, Policy Towards Poverty Reduction/Alleviation, e.g., Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), PAP, SMSE. The execution of most of these policies and programs was abysmal and ended in a debacle. This caused frustration and impoverishment to many Nigerians.

Lewis and Bratton (2000) reported that Nigerians strongly support democracy, perceive democracy in liberal terms, accept democratic values, reject non-democratic alternatives, are satisfied with the state of Nigerian democracy, and approve of government's handling of the economy, view inequality as a continuing problem, see no clear association between political and economic liberalism. But Nigerians are disenchanted with democracy as a government system because it could not meet their good governance yearnings. Nigerians no longer have trust in major institutions that are critical to the integrity of elections (Lewis & Alemika, 2005). Afro barometer (2006) reported that the anticipated benefits of democracy have been slow to emerge, and the new dispensation has failed to fulfill many Nigerians expectations. However, a large majority of Nigerians still prefer democratic government over all other options.

Salisu (2016) provided that sizeable numbers of gains have been measured for the citizens since the democratic dispensation over time. These successes were attributed to governments' efforts through their policies and programs in various sectors of the economy. A Gallup poll conducted among Nigerians confirmed that 94% of Nigerians

distrust the government because they believe it is corrupt (Ayodele, 2014). The establishment of nine federal universities and the drive towards the deregulation of the downstream sector of the petroleum industry by the administration of Goodluck Jonathan represent some of the gains of democratic governance (Igba, 2012). The Nigerian government, Ayodele (2014) reported, acknowledged the previous concerns of withdrawals of fuel subsidy on the first day of January 2012, without considering the effects on the public.

Aniekwe and Kushie (2011) and Omudiwe and Berwind-Dart (2010) reported that the elections of 1999, 2003, and 2007 were characterized by snatching of ballot boxes, political killings, electoral violence, general arson, and electoral officials' kidnaps/abductions. Many opposition politicians were murdered. The widespread violence which marred the 2007 national and state elections killed over 300 people (Human Rights Watch, 2007). Likewise, the 2011 presidential elections were marred by unprecedented post-election violence, especially in the far North, which killed many innocent citizens (Human Rights Watch, 2011; Salisu, 2016).

Thus, Kwasau (2013) noted that Since the Fourth Republic, elections have been nothing more than a weapon to advance aristocratic interests than voters' interests in Nigeria. The elections held in 2003 and 2007 had the worst characteristics: widespread bribery, monetization, assassination, political thuggery, corrupt electoral official sharp practices, judicial injustice, systematic disenfranchising of the population; discounts on voting by the electorate, utter lack of respect for the rule of law. These reflect the corroding of the integrity of democracy as the most vigorous governance.

Benet (2006, 2012, 2013, 2019) argued that democracy as a concept should be an either/or solution to the problem of oppression, but the challenge is that an act of democracy requires the 10 values, and they exist as five polarities pairs which require effective management of the five polarities pairs to make democracy work as either/or a solution to the problem of oppression. Evidence showed that Nigerians are disenchanted with democracy as a government system because it could not meet their good governance yearnings. Government pronouncements or manifestoes were mere propaganda and policy statements that do not necessarily translate into meaningful developments. Nigerians no longer have trust in major institutions that are critical to the integrity of elections. Despite the failures of the elected leaders and representatives of the people, Nigerians remain steadfast and uncompromising about democracy as the best government system to ensure a just and egalitarian society. Thus, citizens continue to subscribe to democratic practices and values by showing considerable continuity in their views on democratic practices, perceive erosion of their political rights and democratic processes. Next discuss is the perceptions of citizen engagement in Nigeria's democratic system in the next subsection.

### **Perceptions of Citizen Engagement in Nigeria's Democratic System**

Nigerians' participation in democratic practices includes political processes and decision-making activities, political parties' involvement, voting during elections, participation in elections, community participation, and all other matters relating to political activities (Falade, 2014). According to Falade, only 35 percent of the eligible voters voted in the general elections of 2011. The presence of electoral apathy in Nigeria

is no longer contestable, and to know that people regard policy as a filthy game must be very devastating. But there is no explanation for this except the undemocratic processes, disillusionment, abuse, and uncertainties in Nigeria's political system. The development shows low participation of voters in the election and was still enthusiastic in polls. This has had dire implications for Nigerian's involvement in political activities and governance.

Falade (2014) observed that Nigeria varies from person to person in citizen involvement in the political system. In exercising rights, privileges, or interests, political engagement is considered a resource waste. Many holders or aspirants to political offices disappointed the public after they got elected and are therefore regarded as equal and investing anything like this in a politician makes no difference. This experience or attitude also threatens the right to vote since electoral votes no longer count in reality. According to Falade (2008), six political participants have been described in Nigeria: inactive people (citizens who don't engage in any political action), electoral specialists (with a strong interest in voting alone, no other political commitment), parochial participants (who do not vote or participate in any other political activity, if that affects their interests) (they are highly involved in all political activities: exercising the franchise, party campaign, communal services, and contacting public officials). The economic, social, cultural, political, religious, and demographic features of people decide citizen participation in Nigeria's democratic practices. In Falade (2014) categorization, there are majorly monetary, spiritual, and ethnic influences.

Studies such as Falade (2007, 2014) and Odo (2015) commented on politics as a dirty game, full of hate, snugness, resentment, and other evil activities. Judicial corruption, electoral disruption, wars, killings, buying and selling of votes, incomplete commitments, social tension, money laundering, political slavery, skewed interests, and many more abuses discouraged many Nigerians from democracy. Falade stated that political culture does not allow real democracy to be developed and maintained in Nigeria. It is fearsome and troubling that women's involvement in political activities is low in Nigeria. Women had been invisible in activities since independence in 1960 when political practices began. The declaration of Beijing in 1985, of which Nigeria is a signatory, provided the implementation policy but has received little or no attention (Adelekan, 2010). Chuku (2009) argued that the absence of African women in political practices results from the long-standing cultural and patriarchal forces against women and their involvement in politics.

Evidence revealed that the average female representation in the Afro Barometer (2015) is 5.8 percent. The new government has only six women as ministers, compared to 31 ministers (Nagarajan, 2015). Thus, Dim and Asomah (2019) endorsed that Nigerian women's low participation in politics is not without repercussions at polling and election levels: many concerns appear to be overlooked or partly answered by men who had little to no knowledge of these severe challenges that women are facing. Increased women's political participation would encourage policy and programs to address these fundamental issues affecting women in Nigeria, which tend to be ignored always.

According to Babayo et al. (2017), the election of candidates who can boost their livelihoods and promote the nation by reasonable governing, means voting for political leaders on their heritage and primordial connection. In the 2007 elections, former President Olusegun Obasanjo said, "Election is a war, and you must win by every possible means." It means that they did not rely on the people's strength for votes, but preferably on bribery and subjugated tactics such as democratic thuggery, rigging, and even political murder. Thus, in 2015, voters' voting habits changed from usual culture to a socialized, problem-based preference (Babayo et al., 2017). Traditional scientists influence the political participation of people in West African countries by their socioeconomic features and their access to resources such as wealth, education, and civil skills (Sweet-Cushman & Krawczyk, 2017). Bratton et al. (2005), Holzner (2010), Inman and Andrews (2009), and Mattes (2008) argued that the disadvantaged groups (low) are more interested in civic activities than those with more opportunities with their personal growth based on their familiarity with the Political Structures.

Local political institutions have a more significant effect on citizens' view of the system (Cornelius, 1999; Diamond, 1999; Grindle, 2000; Roderiguez, 1997). People are less likely to engage if they see the democratic system as corrupt (Krawczyk & Sweet-Cushman, 2017). Bratton (2010) argued that people's understanding of political actions defines their commitments in terms of fact. The appraisal of government efficiency and results motivates their political behavior. Krawczyk and Sweet-Cushman (2017) stressed the importance of good governance in Western Africa's local political participation. They reported that local public bodies are more likely to be active in local government when

they find it transparent. The authors conclude that political engagement is a function of relationships with the local political system and not just of the individual levels of capital and the access to mobilization networks.

The Nigerian politicians have no tolerance, Gurumka et al. (2014) has pointed out, and shameful fights within the party have killed many politicians who have been clandestinely assassinated in opposition to this. Odunayo Olagbaju, a former Member of the Osun State Chamber of Assembly; Olayiwola Lawrence, President of the Alliance for Democracy (AD) at Île-Ife; Odumegwu, leader of the ANPP in Nnewi; Chief Bola Ige, the AD stalwart, doubled as the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Harry Marshal as Chief of the ANPP (Sani, 2007). It is pathetic that, as the Nigerian police state is frail, dysfunctional, inefficient, and corrupt, many of these assailants have never been arrested and ensure justice is done for the victims and their families.

It could be drawn that Nigerians vary from person to person, in citizen involvement in the political system. This is because politics is conceived as a dirty game, full of hate, snugness, resentment, and other evil types of activities. Political involvement is seen to promote judicial corruption, electoral disruption, wars, killings, buying and selling of votes, incomplete commitments, social tension, money laundering, political slavery, skewed interests, political turmoil, and many more abuses perpetrated by political leaders and their thugs; these have discouraged many Nigerians from democracy. According to Benet (2006, 2012, 2013, 2019), the positive aspects of each value of the polarities of democracy theory must be maximized while minimizing the negative aspects of each value, in working towards effective management of democratic



processes or democracy. For instance, Nigerian women's active participation in the policy area is of great importance for resolving human rights and life-threatening issues. In furtherance, I will explore the conceptual linkage between public trust, citizen's engagement, and good governance in the next subsection

### **Conceptual Link Between Public Trust, Citizen Engagement, and Good Governance**

Researchers have emphasized that the relationship between public confidence and civic commitment is very dynamic and bi-directional (Dutu & Diaconu, 2017). They argued that government institutions have a strong challenge to build public faith in the democratic system. According to Dutu and Diaconu (2017), the presence of a citizens' negative view and perceptions of both elected and appointed governmental officials and their activities ultimately dampens the zeal for participation. The citizen's frustration is thus a reaction to either good or bad administrative performance or public administration's public expectation (Bugarcic, 2001). OECD (2013) argued that the higher the level of educated people and knowledge, the higher their government output standards. Transparency is a powerful tool of stimulating citizens' engagement with their government (Holmes, 2011).

To have good governance, people's dedication to policy making is a significant element in power and it helps to create public confidence in the government (Dutu & Diaconu, 2017). Studies including Dutu and Diaconu, (2017) and Yetano et al. (2009) have shown that citizen participation in democratic practices should not be regarded as a goal but as a way of achieving an end. To make it easier, the government should participate in governance processes more directly and help empower people previously

excluded. Shah (2007) argued that the most common way to supporting transparent and inclusive policy is by enhancing democratic efficiency, productive and successful management. A public policy incorporating community-led services and projects should be consisting of public access to public records, active measures to educate people, and a two-way partnership between the citizens and the government (Train, 2003; OECD, 2001). Train (2003) argued that the concept of transparent administration and accountability is highly essential for government administration to discern clearly.

Beshi & Kaur (2020) and Farazmand (2004a, b) observed that citizen-oriented decision-making is an essential objective of the democratic system. The government must be accountable, transparent, and interact with people efficiently while addressing their needs. Good governance embraces inclusion, encourages engagement and involvement in a national and international setting. For a democratic government and its institutions to operate effectively, public faith in government is indispensable (Gordon, 2000; Jung & Sea, 2012; Parker et al., 2008). Public services, health, education, defense, regulation, energy, transport, water, waste management, etc., are consistently demanded by the government (Beshi & Kaur, 2020; Yang & Holzer, 2006). Yousaf et al. (2016) and van der Meer (2010) considered these the glue that links a democratic system and the oil that lubricates a policy machine. They are strong governance products.

Academics have confirmed that good governance increases public faith and encourages citizen participation in democracy and the political and administrative regime (Salminen & Ikola-Norrbacka, 2010; Yousaf et al., 2016). Yousaf et al. (2016) maintained that the government's implementation of sound governance principles not

only supports the need of the people but significantly increases public confidence in the government. Research demonstrates an effective strategy for governance initiatives to provide people with more opportunities to engage and contribute to government programs to develop and improve government efficiency and evaluation (Citrin & Muste, 1999; Kim, 2010; Kweit & Kweit, 2007). It shows that people should be seen not only as customers or users of public services but as mutual governance partners to promote the growth and good governance of the democratic system, according to O'Leary & Bingham (2008) and O'Leary et al. (2010). Kim and Lees (2012) concluded that people's participation in public management is a way to collaborate with people to advance democratic principles, such as good governance responsiveness and transparency. Heeks and Bailur (2007), Norris and Moon (2005) and West (2004) reported the new age of citizens' commitment to governance through electronic government (e-government).

Public good governance organizations will boost public trust through activities of e-government such as web pages and encouraging information communications (Park & Blenkinsopp, 2011). Chhabra and Jaiswal (2008), and Welch and Hinnant (2003) have noted that there is the limited position for good governance as mediators between e-government and trust. Few studies indicate indirect impacts of Internet usage on government confidence through the perceptions of openness, interactivity, efficiency, and accountability. Research such as Alaaraj and Hassan (2016), Tolbert and Mossberger (2006), and Welch and Hinnant (2003) explored the direct effect on trust and faith in the government of e-government services.

According to Waheduzzaman (2007), there are different governance qualities, and different levels of participation and types of participation instruments are required for citizens or agencies. In the first stage, IAP2 (2003) suggested that informational information is a one-way mechanism in which the government agency informs people of its decision. Gidson et al. (2005) claimed that the best way to educate the public is through a power model. The whole program and policy processes cannot be completely transparent, accountable, and predictable. Two-way communication is implemented in the second phase of meetings, but the citizens' involvement is limited within the program decision-making. Government agencies must communicate suggestions but determine arbitrarily and conduct them (IAP2, 2003). The survey instruments, workshops, exhibits and commentary, key contacts, meetings between interest groups, public hearings, and public meetings promote citizens' participation (Bishop & Davis, 2002; Waheduzzaman, 2007). The third stage focuses on engagement, which is a stage for participation in policy making and listening to informed policy making.

The fourth step uses engagement empowerment. The governing body supports people's capacity building to execute development programs (IAP2, 2003). Democracy as a governance example is used to establish alliances with people, delegates, and participatory decision-making. Krawczyk and Sweet-Cushman (2017) said good governance could increase citizens' involvement. Government transparency is becoming increasingly relevant as it can raise citizen confidence levels and a more significant political participation (Heald, 2006; Park & Blenkinsopp, 2011). Krawczyk et al. (2013) supported the round 4 Afro Barometer surveys from Liberia, the public finds they are

more likely to participate in local politics with the impression that the provincial government is more transparent.

Positive reviews of local services can lead to greater involvement, and pessimistic estimates could lead to less dedication. The assessment and review of citizens' satisfaction with service delivery metrics have also been markedly improved in recent years (Abrahamsen, 2000; Boukaert & Van de Walle, 2003; Park & Blenkinsopp, 2011). Krawczyk and Sweet-Cushman (2017) said that the public's satisfaction with delegate services is plentiful, especially on citizens' possible function in delivering services. Thus, Okoroafor (2010) said human development is crucial for Nigeria's growth and promotion of democracy and good governance, particularly in acquiring skills and information. The government's highest priority should be to do away with analphabetism by enhancing primary education for people.

Thus, the relationship between open government administration and citizen participation's philosophy confirms that open government administration demands that government people be involved, inspired, and dedicated by contributing and participating in open government initiatives to improve their efficiency. This requires a government to be more cautious about building public trust, particularly for legislation, law enforcement, and the public interest to reinforce public confidence. The outcome and determinant of inclusive governance are building trust. Thus, when management is more successful and democratic functionally, people have greater faith in politicians, elected officials, and political institutions

### **Public Trust and Citizen Engagement in Nigeria**

The socio-demographic predictors for women's political involvement in Nigeria were investigated by Dim and Asomah (2019) based on the 2015 Afro barometer results. The study shows that schooling, faith, residency, party membership, and the geopolitical region predict political participation. The best predictors of women's political participation are post-secondary education, southeast geopolitical area, and party affiliation based on beta values created through multivariate, linear regression analysis. The study especially points to the implications of education and women's promotion in Nigerian politics to become affiliated with political parties.

In Nigeria, a presidential election study in 2015, Babayo et al. (2017) analyzed political conduct and electoral behaviors. Qualitative data in a case study are the methodology technique for the analysis. The research concluded that, due to the changing of the political attitude of electorates and electoral regimes, from religious affiliation, race, regionalism, and nepotism to policy issues like corruption, instability, poverty, and unemployment in Nigeria to many other similar cases, the presidential election in 2015 is to a certain degree different from that of the past presidential elections. It proposed that the voters be re-oriented to concentrate on their leaders' choices based on results, transparency, campaigning, and a free electoral arbiter who will conduct an election without any favor, for more decisive and equal elections will produce leading leaders in Nigeria.

The imperatives of supportive institutions in the Udeh study (2017), entitled Democracy and Good Government in Nigeria. The study assessed the role that political

parties, INEC, the judiciary, and the Public Service should play in Nigeria as central pillars of democracy and good governance. They found that the executive's verdicts have selectively adhered. The litmus test of credible elections in Nigeria was the Party primaries. INEC, PDP, and Goodluck Jonathan were honored with their free conduct of credible elections and their surrender of authority. The study concluded that democracy's progress in Nigeria depends on strong democratic institutions. Politicians urged to resist the conventional greedy accumulation of material that would hinder the achievements of democracy. An autonomous judicial agency has been encouraged to take this opportunity to render justice to all individuals and organizations.

Research on democracy, good governance, and progress in Nigeria was conducted by Abdulhamid (2016). The study provides an insight into the argument given. It notes that ongoing debates about democracy, good governance, and the nexus of growth are the product of a liberalized political climate allowing for dialogue and participation. However, the bad news is that Nigeria's political leadership is still grappling with the growing problem after almost two decades of democratization. The paper argues that the process of democratization has undergone a lack of far-reaching good governance. The study recommends a social democratic alternative, which can initiate a democratization process that stresses citizens' active growth involvement.

Edet (2015) analyzed in yet another report election management and democratization in Nigeria: the 2007-2015 evaluation. It examined, by concentrating on the 2007-2015 general elections, the effects of the election administration, and Nigeria's democratization process. The polls and how such elections affected democratization in

the region explore Nigeria's crucial electoral administration. They found that electoral management's democratization depends mostly on electoral processes' institutional bases, particularly the INEC. A competent, neutral, and autonomous INEC will build better prospects for Nigeria's successful electoral administration. This study suggests that electoral law is improved to promote stringent punishment for electoral criminals and beneficiaries of fraudulent elections. The study concludes that the trend towards electoral fraud in the courts and court judgments shows that democratic values are being reinforced, and there are some hopeful aspirations for democracy.

The symmetric relationship between good governance and growth has been explored by Adetoye and Omilusi (2016). In this report, the relationship between democracy, good rule, and development in Nigeria is examined. A lack of funding, a lack of good governance, openness, and accountability are accused of the slow speed and state of action. It also describes the systemic corruption and vulnerability of Nigerian government institutions, which people manipulate as a means of growth to enhance their status. The study concludes that socio-economic and political development can be accomplished only with good governance and adherence to its values, drawing examples and illustrations from countries in Europe and America.

The research highlighted the connection between good governance and growth management and explores the concept of good governance, administration, development, and development management. The thesis used secondary sources of data such as library studies, literature reviews, textbooks, and journals. They find the elements and standards for good governance and administration of development, advocating reasonable control



in Nigeria and civil society if our development administration is to have the desired effect. Governments' ability to plan, devise, and execute policies and programs that are growth-oriented and committed to improving people's quality of life demonstrates good governance in the administration of development.

In the 2016 Salisu reports the assessment of democracy in the Fourth Republic of Nigeria, 1999–2014. In the fourth Nigerian Republic, the story explored democratic governance. Nigerians are supposed to build Nigeria's socio-economic and political transformation with a democratic government on 29 May 1999. They claim that Nigerians have had trouble with democratic interactions. The unbroken character of democratic transition, the strengthening of civil and political rights, and a certain amount of economic growth are positive results of the experiences of democracy. However, weaknesses in governance, de-illustration, broad-based unemployment, a wide-scale failure of infrastructure, illiteracy, insecurity of life and property, political corruption, and poor governance institutions seem to have ignored the achievements of democratic experience. There is also a reduction in popular confidence in the mechanism of democracy, institutions, and actors. Responsible and efficient political leadership and civil society are suggested as central to Nigeria's productive democratic success.

Nwogu (2015) in his exploration of the definition of democracy and the dissent views of the Nigerian political class agreed that democracy in its ordinary meaning, guarantee the right of all eligible individuals to take part without any form of coercion and hindrance on what constitute their choices of representations at all levels of governance and the policies that will guide the existence of their community. This

fundamental feature of democracy as posited by Nwogu, ensures good governance in all democratic countries of the world. It is, therefore, necessary to note that Nwogu's definition of democracy accentuates the significance of citizen's engagement with the government and public trust in the elected representatives of the people. The above scenario ought to engender sound democratic cultures and institutions that will bring about political stability. This will promote positive development and yield adequate dividends of democracy to the people.

Studies including Olu-Adeyemi (2012), and Yagboyaju and Akinola (2019), investigated Nigerian states and the challenges of democratic governance. The articles discussed Nigeria's political past in the area of competitiveness and western democracy. It has been observed that Nigeria's crucial challenge has been to achieve good governance through democracy since her independence in 1960. Evidence of Nigeria's democracy shows that, while election trust can guarantee governance legitimacy, trust has eroded because of the average electoral practice's long history. Therefore, democratic integrity is essential for legitimate democracy and good government in Africa.

Okeke (2015) analyzed democratic consolidation, its success, and its challenges in Nigeria in a related report. It described some of the features of democratic consolidation success achieved in Nigeria between 1999 and 2015. It looked at the obstacles to battle its progress, thus posing a series of far-reaching recommendations for increasing Nigeria's chances of democratic consolidation.

Odo (2015) explores the leadership challenges of political framework democracy, good governance, and Nigeria's progress. The study addressed leadership challenges in

Nigeria, which will allow us to understand their existence and implications for sustainable democracy, good governance, and country growth. The research submitted that Nigeria should resolve the factors underpinning the country's inability to exercise leadership and set up a program to build and educate young people as potential leaders of the future about the principles of genuine democracy.

A review of democratic rule and democratization in Nigeria (1999'– 2013) in the Abdullahi report (2014). This study aims to define and clarify Nigeria's challenges and prospects of democracy and recommend correct positive results. The study found that elected officials' failure to follow the rule of law constitutes an important demoralization issue. Other problems include official public corruption, electoral rigging, inadequate transparency, and lack of life and property protection. Policy options are suggested that would clear Nigerians' doubts and fears and restore people's confidence in the government. Among other aspects, these include proper law enforcement in all matters relevant to governance, proper budget execution, free and fair elections, and adequate security provision.

Likewise, between 1999 and 2012, Gurumka et al. (2014) studied Nigeria's democracy and good governance. The thesis explores the degree to which democracy in contemporary Nigeria has been achieved. It argued that Nigeria was blighted by good management and increased socio-economic growth with problems like corruption, militancy, firefighters' official publics, and extortion, the smuggling of children, corruption, and lack of respect for the rule of law, integrity, tolerance, and violent religious crises. They say that the system needs to uphold law, openness, and

accountability for democracy and good governance to flourish in Nigeria. Nigeria's political system should accommodate structures and rational opinions that can speed up socio-political and economic growth, especially those of the opposition party.

Also, by selecting some local government zones in Ondo State, Nigeria, Falade (2014) researched political participation in the democratic system. The investigation consisted of both qualitative and quantitative sources of data. The results have shown that 57% of those surveyed are not involved in political activities and that political participation has had a gender impact. It calculated that 30% and 13% of both men and women were engaged in democratic practices, and 38% of the men and 12% were electorally entitled. The results also showed that 53percent had lost faith in leaders or politicians, a small number of respondents over the average. To Nigerians, both formal and informal political training methods were suggested as a matter of urgency.

Omale and Amana (2014) investigated the relationship between the family pattern of action, especially regarding the sharing and communication of resources with leadership patterns in some African countries (mainly Nigeria), and the often-transposed model for state leadership in this insufficient context. The curriculum study shows a cultural way in which the rate of corruption is rising in Africa. It is still valid in Nigeria that even primary school pupils are affected by crime prevalence. They postulate that the burning finger of crime is not even the family's most fundamental socialization agent. Therefore, they suggested that the family system of sharing and contact be revised for the child to have a highly self-serving management pattern, which is working through

George Lakoff, Albert Bandura, and Jean Piaget's prism. The war against corruption in Africa must therefore return to the design of family sharing and contact.

Furthermore, Kwasau (2013), through his study of the literature approach, explored Nigeria's fourth obstacle to democratic consolidation. The survey results show that democracy was with open arms and is believed to offer good dividends and socio-economic growth. Not too far away from democracy in the country, corrupt practices, electoral misconduct, godfatherism syndrome, mass unemployed, rising poverty, instability, and many more have battered the entire economy and nation, undermining political stability and stabilization within the republic.

Between 1999 and 2012, Omotosho (2013) researched Nigeria's governance and democracy crisis with a descriptive research approach. Certain principles of governance have been highlighted as principles of good governance and responsibility and openness. At the same time, Nigeria has taken enormous strides in the republic to date. It was found that, due to corrupt practices, ethnic groups, and weakness in leadership are among the rising national challenges that frustrate democracy in the country, the dividends of democracy have still to be entirely harvested by people. However, it is recommended that strengthening and building government institutions establish democracy and rewards in Nigeria instead of personalizing the state authority.

The fourth Republic of Nigeria has been investigated by Aleyomi (2013). The study looks at the connection between corruption and the process of democratization since 1999. It provides examples of corruption in Nigeria, demonstrates its impacts on democracy, and suggests actionable remedial steps. They recommend that the prospects

of socio-economic growth that is important to the deepening and sustainability of democracy remain restricted unless practical corrective measures are taken to counter corruption.

In a related report, Wani and Suwirta (2013) explored the issue and the prospects for democracy in Nigeria. The study seeks to explain Nigeria's mechanism of democracy. Democratization concept elucidated whether the government has managed to uphold and preserve justice and the rule of law or has struggled to achieve democracy. The report also discusses all of Nigeria's lack of democracy. The critical point is that the government needs to consider people's real problems in every democratic country and meet its citizens' necessities and rights.

Similarly, in the Nigerian review of material for data collection, Arowolo and Aluko (2012) examined democracy, political engagement, and good governance. It re-examined previous attempts to break down political and management variables. The research showed that Nigeria's democratization is widely perverse due to electoral mismanagement, bribery, abuse, and political participation limits. The conclusion was that the impending obstacles could not pave the way for consolidated democracy, making good governance easier.

Ajuzie (2010) analyzed Nigerian experience in political parties and democratic consolidation. Because of Nigerians ethnic/regional character, they are critical of partisan political ties and democratic consolidation. They found that third republic parties were closely dominated by the government and could not positively affect democracy. It argued that in the fourth republic, a political faction, the PDP, is dominant. The study

reported that it does not good predict a political consolidation in the direction of a single-party state.

Furthermore, Okoroafor (2010) explored democracy and good governance: socio-economic growth ingredients in Nigeria. Democracy is the rule of government in the most civilized and developed countries in the world. Nigeria entered the train on 29 May 1999 as a country with the beginning of democratic rule. The study is intended to discuss these principles in Nigeria to define the need for genuine democracy and good governance in Nigeria. The paper explores the synergies between democracy and good administration while describing them as necessary ingredients for updating Nigeria's socio-cultural and economic growth. Nigerians have been urged to include attitude changes, systemic or structural changes, constitutional amendments, government-wide accountabilities, and the inclusion of anti-corruption education in their educational curriculums to ensure democratic stability in Nigeria at all levels.

Finally, in Nigeria, Amaechi (2010) researched democracy-building as opposed to state-building. His paper argues that the previous democratization attempts failed, mainly because of race, bad governance, corruption, poverty, unhealthy "transplantation" of international democratic principles without any relation to local imperatives, and the state's inability to rediscover the socio-political basis of religion which has preserved old democratic traditions. Therefore, it disregards the fact that 'democracy' cannot be accomplished in Nigeria without developing relevant institutions and structures with the normative approval of various parts of the country.

### **Public Trust and Citizen Engagement Globally**

Beshi and Kaur (2020) investigated the role of acceptable governance practices in public trust in local governments. The study explores the role of public confidence in the local government in acceptable governance practices. The Bahir Dar city administration has designed a conceptual model for the analysis and empirically tested it in Ethiopia. The study results indicate that the public's confidence in their municipal governments has been strongly affected by independent variables. The city administration has more confidence in participants who viewed openness, accountability, and responsiveness than their counterparts.

Arif et al. (2019) explored the mediating impact of e-government in Pakistan, exploring good governance and public trust in a related report. The information used confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling. There were 1000 Pakistani participants in the study, and the rate of response was 76.3%. The findings showed that good governance and public trust have informal relationships. The results show that e-government is a mediator between good government and public confidence.

Chowdhury and Tahmina (2019) have analyzed government morale: public confidence and mistrust factors. A collection of secondary literature sources is extensively studied in this review. They state that socio-demographic variables, participation in social networks, fair and competitive elections, democratic governance presences, political and social security institutions, successful economic and social policies, e-government initiatives, and decentralization of services lead to building trust among the people. The enthusiastic approach to decision-making and interactive



engagement between public employees and residents also creates government confidence. The failure to provide services causes mistrust of government capability due to poor economic performance of a state, subversive corruption, bureaucratic stoicism in increasing social needs, breaches of checks and balances in government bodies, loss of public social confidence, and inefficiency. The effects of the results indicate policies to reduce distrustful elements and enhance efficiency.

Abuiyada (2018) discussed how the traditional growth theories struggle to resolve GAD-related needs for most of the population. The study demonstrates the link between ideas of growth and the exact requirements of the people. It also focused on gender and development, as women have little influence across the board. In the non-home or public sector, they need to be more involved. Equitable consideration is required between empowerment and growth for development to be successful.

Kimutai and Amisi (2018), a report on public engagement in Kisumu County, also examined good governance and service provision. The research used an approach to case studies. They conclude that public involvement in key government positions in Kisumu County is primarily consolidated. At each point of the project cycle, general feedback was obtained and collaborated. The study found that this engagement has increased public ownership and encouraged oversight of government projects. But political intervention, weak government attendance, and knowledge of government processes among the communities' representatives have hindered the depth and efficacy of civic engagement in the County. The results indicate they increase public engagement in Kisumu County in scale and quality.

In the Krawczyk and Sweet-Cushman (2017) report, they understand the relationship between good governance and local civic engagement in West Africa. They investigate local participation impacts with eight West African nations: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, and Senegal. They use Round IV African barometer figures to analyze the impact of local participation. Their findings are evaluated within the context of good governance and demonstrate that it is relevant in local political participation, particularly concerning citizen perceptions and attitudes to local governments' results.

Dutu and Diaconu (2017) explored group participation for open administration: the system's analytical metrics and principles. The study used an integrative research methodology to generate new insights into citizens' potential involvement by incorporating a community-based approach to this subject. They claim that engagement is the "catalyst" for government opening, and confidence plays a crucial role in public participation. Moreover, to address the general managers, administer the value-for-money process, and expand the definition of market orientation (business concept) in public institutions practice.

Alaaraj and Hassan (2016) addressed the partnership between e-government and public faith in Lebanon through good governance. The analysis used 400 Lebanese primary data sources; the data were analyzed using structural equations modeling. This research contributes effectively to policy makers in governments by delivering dependable, open, and accountable governmental services that strengthen and create public confidence.

The connection between good governance and developments in sub-Saharan Africa, which is the lesson of South America, has also been explored by Ukwandu and Jarbandhan (2006). The study recognizes that growth problems are due to slavery, geography, poor health, history, globalization, and colonialism. However, the most significant growth barrier in Sub-Saharan Africa is possibly poor governance. The authors thus conclude the central catalyst for growth is good governance. They also succeeded in showing in-depth development in other parts of the world subject to the same historical course of slave trade and colonialism. Especially in developing regions of South America, a focus on good governance was successful. They conclude that the dream of growth will continue to be uncertain if sub-Saharan Africa does not follow this kind of right governance approach.

Does good governance improve public confidence in the Lebanese government? is a corresponding study by Alaaraj and Ibrahim (2014) The study explores small and medium-sized businesses in Beirut capital by distributing surveys to managers and workers. Their results show that acceptable governance practices affect public confidence in Lebanon positively and substantially.

Kim and Lee (2012) investigated electronic engagement, accountability, and confidence. The survey used a 2009 e-participation study by the Seoul Metropolitan Government for data collection of 5 different dimensions for governing the satisfaction of: (a) electronic participatory applications, (b) electronic participants' government responsiveness, (c) electronic participatory development, (d) decision-making influence, and (f) government accountability. The e-satisfaction participants with government

response and its effect on the decision-making have a positive correlation. Likewise, the measurement of public accountability by e-participants and the confidence in local government coordinating an e-participation program are positively linked.

### **Gaps in the Literature**

Good governance and public participation in government, especially in Africa, are increasingly studied, but studies have not explored citizens' willingness to participate in democracy in the countries concerned (Krawczyk & Sweet-Cushman, 2017). Krawczyk and Sweet-Cushman have argued that good governance could improve engagement, although relationships have yet to be explored. Furthermore, although the value for democratic and legitimate leadership has not been carefully studied, increased accountability, efficient delivery of services, and decreased corruption have on citizen participation in politics (Krawczyk & Sweet-Cushman, 2017).

Abrahamsen (2000) argues that good governance emphasizes effective market structures and effective capital management, putting the state-market relationship at the center of growth and development. Critics of the neoclassical good governance definition claim that the supporting evidence is insufficient, and that it lacks the "personal-centered" nature of good governance and social and political contexts (Bendana, 2004; Masermule & Gutto, 2008).

The relationship between citizens' satisfaction with service provision and political participation remains under-reported, especially in Africa. (Krawczyk & Sweet-Cushman 2017). If citizens' perceptions of the local political system affect their level of involvement (Holzner, 2010), we can suppose that the citizen's local services

assessments would influence their participation frequency. Positive reviews can lead to greater participation, and pessimistic estimates should lead to less dedication.

Dutu and Diaconu (2017) held that the transparency of the local administrative institutions and citizen's involvement in the practice of local public administration and among scholars, irrespective of the vision or richness of national law, are still some subjects under debate. While scholars agree that citizen participation in decision-making in public administration can play a role in influencing government trust, there remains to be tested the specific type of relations between the citizen participation mechanism and its effect on building public confidence in government (Mizrah & Vigoda-Gadot, 2009). Some scholars call for more studies on understanding democratic growth and the perceived role of citizen engagement in political, cultural decision-making in various countries in tackling this issue (Fung & Wright, 2001; Kim & Lee, 2012; Mizrahi & Vigoda-Gadot, 2009).

Studies have shown that several governments have adopted different modes of electronic engagement, including online forums, virtual rooms of debate, electronic juries, and electronic voting (OECD, 2003). Further studies show that the role of good governance as the intermediary between the e-government and the trust is minimal, with very few indirect impacts of internet use on government trust through openness, interactivity, efficiency, and accountability perceptions (Chhabra & Jaiswal, 2008; Welch & Hinnant, 2003). Therefore, future studies are suggested to expand empirical research into acceptable management practices and samples and geographical distribution (Alaaraj & Ibrahim, 2014).

Falola and Heaton (2008) documented Nigeria's difficulty, which has a range of ethnic and cultural values. These two factors may have affected and fostered public mistrust and citizen disassociation from the government, which are critical factors in Nigeria's economic and political growth. Therefore, published research has not exposed the Yoruba people's views as democratic instruments for fostering good governance, with diverse ethnic groups and cultures, for a complex country like Nigeria.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

As previous studies indicate, the principles of public trust, citizenship, and good governance are not defined by consensus (Xue & Zhai, 2009). However, academics have established useful governance concepts such that good governance is clearly defined. Studies have also shown that good governance constitutes an instrument for public confidence; otherwise, a government like this would risk public mistrust and disengagement in democratic practices.

Good governance is thus characterized as governance assets, facilitating efficient and effective delivery of services such as participatory, open, accountable, communicative, equitable, inclusive, compliance with the rule of law, and accountability to legislative responsibilities. The availability of these features in democratic governance promotes public trust, promotes more involvement of people in democratic practices, and improves their developmental projects and plans. Nigerian leaders excluded or economically desperate constituents, public appointees, and governmental administrators since the advent of democracy in the 4<sup>th</sup> republic are a pure reason as to why politics is viewed as a dirty game by Nigerians.

In Nigeria, there were many reasons why successive federal and state governments are not appropriately governed, as research in this paper indicates. These include pervasive corruption, public mistrust, poverty, instability and violence, vulnerability, undemocratic, conflict, race, political disturbance or bigotry, and analphabetism.

In Chapter 3, I present the research method. The methodology includes discussions on the research design and justification for the research design. Its advance reasons for the qualitative research method, and succinctly document my role as the researcher. Further discussions in the methodology include participant selection, sample strategy, criteria for sample selection, governance procedure for invitation, instrumentation, other data sources, and procedure for data collection. Ethical issues, data analysis plan, consideration for choosing QDA software, issues of trustworthiness, and the chapter summary is documented.

## Chapter 3: Research Methods

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and document the perceptions of the Yoruba in Nigeria on the concepts of public trust and citizen engagement. I explored key stakeholders' opinions on Nigerian government in a democratic system with a complex history of diverse religions, ethnicities, and cultural values. I also examined whether the two concepts of public trust and citizen engagement as tools of democracy might facilitate good governance in Nigeria's democratic system. Thus, the research question for this study was: What are the Yoruba people of Nigeria's perceptions about the barriers to, and facilitators of, public trust and citizen engagement in the Nigerian democratic system?

Public trust and citizen engagements are democratic tools synonymous with good governance principles that can accelerate development and growth in any country that adopts a democratic system of government, such as Nigeria. Public trust is defined as the reliance of the people on their elected representatives as competent and committed (Van der Meer & Zmerli, 2017). The concepts also indicate the effectiveness of political-administrative architectures to execute all policies and programs of the government, as allowed by the constitution, even when they are at variance with the interests and political considerations of the elected representatives of the citizens (Van der Meer & Zmerli, 2017).

Citizen engagement is defined as the interface that occurs between the government and its citizens, where citizens are considered critical stakeholders when



decisions and policies of the government are being planned for implementation (Brixi & Woollock, 2015). Weiss (2000), citing the Commission on Global Governance's definition, described governance as the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is the continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated, and cooperative actions may be taken. Governance is seen as the combination of all the processes of administering a state, organization, groups, and unions using prevailing laws, universally acceptable norms, and legally recognized powers of an organized entity. Good governance as a concept is biased in favor of acceptable administrative behavior, which is regarded as ethical against actions that do not project the ideals of the state and organization (Congleton, 2020). In every ideal situation, the universal acceptable values, norms, and principles are the common denominators of the relationship between the governed and the ruled.

Against this backdrop, I explored and documented the perceptions of the Yoruba in Nigeria on the concept of public trust and citizen engagement with the government in a democratic system that has a complex history of diverse ethnic groups and cultural values. I wanted to clarify whether the two concepts of public trust and citizen engagement as tools of democracy can facilitate good governance in Nigeria's democratic system. In this chapter, I provide an in-depth overview of the research method, which includes a description of the research design and its appropriateness for the study. I also discuss my role as the researcher and provide information on the population of the study; the sample and sampling strategy; procedures for recruitment,

participation, and data collection; research instrumentation; and procedures for data analysis, including considerations for choosing QDA software. Ethical procedures and issues of trustworthiness are also included.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The research question for this study was: What are the Yoruba people of Nigeria's perceptions about the barriers to, and facilitators of, public trust and citizen engagement in the Nigerian democratic system? Public trust is determined by citizens' views and interpretation of what is right and equitable, as well as what is wrong (Van der Meer, 2017). It is built on two key pillars: social trust and political trust. Citizen engagement is the act of any person taking part in public affairs. The United Nations' Declaration on the Right to Development calls for the right to participation (Gaventa, 2002).

I used a qualitative nonexperimental case study research method because of its alignment with the study purpose and research question. A nonexperimental case study research design, according to Rudestam and Newton (2015), emphasizes only the specific organization, event, program, or process. My focus is on comprehending the isolated event of investigation within a complex context. Qualitative researchers explore the data to acquaint themselves with the topic of the study. The explorative approach in a qualitative design becomes very apt when studying a reoccurring phenomenon in a study. According to Babbie (2013), explorative studies in qualitative methods satisfy three purposes: to meet the researcher's curiosity and wish for a more transparent comprehension; to test the possibility of undertaking further extensive research; and lastly, to advance a new method that can deplore for any further study. Case study is

rooted in the pragmatic philosophy of human social behavior that seeks to understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews of people. It is useful in investigating the reports of the subjective opinions, attitudes, beliefs, reflections, and perceptions of people on their experiences of issues in the outer world (Cooper & Endacott, 2007; Percy et al., 2016).

Using a qualitative nonexperimental case study research method, I sought to understand the perceptions of the Yoruba people of Nigeria to be able to know if the twin concepts of public trust and citizen engagements as tools of democracy can facilitate good governance in Nigeria. The qualitative nonexperimental case method was also suitable for this study for another reason. I investigated local knowledge and understanding of a given program; people's experiences, meanings, and relationships; and social processes and contextual factors that marginalize a group of people (Mohajan, 2018).

The qualitative nonexperimental case study method provides in-depth knowledge and as well enabled the documentation of the perceptions of the Yoruba people in Nigeria on the concept of public trust and citizen engagement in a democratic system of government that has a complex history of diverse ethnic groups and cultural values. The findings can be used to suggest similar opinions of the understanding of public trust and citizen engagements as democratic tools for good governance by other ethnic groups (Hausa/Fulani and Igbo) in Nigeria. The method also helped to explain if the complex nature of Nigeria with its diverse ethnic groups and cultural differences influences the people's trust level and engagement with the government in Nigeria's democratic system.

The qualitative nonexperimental case study method is considered the best fit for the study. The case study approach (Patton, 2002; Rudestam & Newton, 2007; Creswell, 2013) is the best approach to answer the research questions and which also align with the purpose and topic formulated for this study (Viswambharan & Priya, 2016). Since the researcher's objective in this study is to explore and learn about the understanding and perceptions of the Yoruba people on the concept of public trust and citizen engagement as democratic tools for good governance to facilitate sustainable social justice efforts for the development of the society and wellbeing of the people in Nigeria. The Qualitative case study method presupposes the assumptions of a body of pre-knowledge and understanding of the two concepts of public trust and citizen engagement as democratic tools for good governance. The approach permits the researcher to ask the participants what influence and determine their level of trust and engagement with the government. Response to these questions may expand the previous knowledge about the concepts of public trust, citizen engagements, and good governance to accelerate social change efforts for sustainable developments in the society with complex and diverse ethnic groups and cultural values.

### **Role of the Researcher**

According to Patton (2015) human being serves as the instrument for the harvesting of data in a qualitative study, therefore, the researcher requires extra vigilance to deal and reflect on possible sources of bias and errors. Simon (2014), citing Denzin and Lincoln (2003), explained that in a qualitative research method, a researcher is an instrument of data collection, which means that the researcher plays a significant role in

collecting data rather than relying on inventories, questionnaires, or a mechanical device. Therefore, a researcher must develop some capacities capable of performing its role successfully in a study, which includes the ability to become a consumer of research with instincts for insights to know how to tell the differences—the ability to develop skills that helps in formulating research questions with a more in-depth critical thinking skill.

Furthermore, a researcher must have sophisticated interview skills that will enhance the validity and trustworthiness of all data harvested, astute observational skills that involve probing deeper to obtain information-rich enough for the success of a study. It also includes skills necessary to interpret data and efficient evaluative thinking useful in conducting program evaluation (Burkholder et al., 2016). In order to maintain credibility, dependability, and transferability in the study, the researcher's role include monitoring and reducing barriers that may surface during the study based on the researcher's previous knowledge and aspirations that fire up the interest in the phenomenon of study in conjunction with the literature review.

Constant monitoring helped me to eliminate this bias and other errors interfering in the study. I needed to develop competence by practicing through extensive training on how to exclude the participants from prejudice when introducing the study to them and use the template design for the interview guide during the interview. There was need to be sensitive to the fieldwork, make the right observation, select the right kinds of literature for secondary data, and handle and analyze the data per the study design. My other roles include the collection and analysis of data and presenting the findings in the

most appropriate ways of satisfying the requirement of the school and different target audiences.

Therefore, as the interviewer for the study, it was easier for me to obtain relevant information from my potential participants by trusting me because of the same ethnic and cultural values that I share with them as a Yoruba man. Thus, there was no language barrier and challenge, having been born, raised, and able to fluently speak Yoruba dialect and English, the official language of the Nigerian people. The instrument therefore was interpreted by me, following due protocol, to the study respondents or speak the English language to the respondents; in any case the need arises. Apart from sharing the same ethnic and cultural background with the study participants, there was no personal or professional relationship with any of my participants. Through constant vigilance and monitoring of the process of data analysis, I avoided quick interpretation and extricated my personal biases, which stem from my knowledge of the topic area. I stayed focused only on what the data collected said about the study.

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection Logic**

Adams (2018) writes, the Yoruba people of Nigeria have their ancestral home in Ile-Ife, which is the universal mythology accepted by most Yoruba-speaking people both in Nigeria and in the diaspora. The population of the Yoruba people is over 40 million people, by estimation, with most living in the southwestern part of Nigeria, and some numbers spread in the Central and South-South regions of Nigeria. The Yoruba people are the most popular and well-educated ethnic group in Nigeria and a sizeable

ethnolinguistic group or ethnic nation in Africa, and most of them speak the Yoruba language. Much of the Yoruba people are situated mainly in six states of the Nigerian federation, covering: Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo. The others cover some areas of Kogi, Kwara, Edo, and Delta States in Nigeria. At the same time, others that migrated through the trans-Atlantic slave trade can be found in other countries as well, including Cuba, Dominican Republic, Brazil, Jamaica, Grenada, Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago, and Saint Lucia, among others.

The target group in this study was limited to only the Yoruba that live in the southwestern states of Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo. Participants were selected from the leaders or representatives of the following groups: The representative of the two leading political parties in Nigeria (APC and PDP), members of the academia knowledgeable in the topic area, women organization, Youth organization, religious leaders, and representative of ethnic and cultural associations from all the six states of the Yoruba people of Nigeria.

### ***Sampling Plan***

The study adopted a purposeful sampling method using critical case sampling, which, according to Patton (2015), allows the researcher to use the weight of pieces of evidence at its disposal to study only a case among other cases that exist within the sampling sites. Key informant participants that are well informed about the research questions were selected to contribute reasonable knowledge to the phenomenon under study. The method, according to Patton, is predicated on the fact that it allows for the selection of an information-rich case that enables the researcher to learn in-depth issues

that are centrally critical to the purpose of a research study. It was also a real way of confirming the originality of the study.

Other considerations in selecting participants for the study included the sample size. The number of participants recruited in a qualitative study must be enough to provide adequate information to illustrate the phenomenon under investigation until the point of saturation when additional interviews can no longer reveal new details and themes about the phenomenon under study (Sargeant, 2012). Clarke (2019) argued that the goal of a qualitative research study is to create knowledge and understanding of a phenomenon rather than having a broad view of the research study. Thus, the topic and the research question must be in alignment to form the thrust of the study, which lead me to identify and describe the participants that were suitable for the study interviews.

There are no specific rules that govern the size of a sample. The proposed study was relying on 30 participants purposively selected from the representative groups of participants (two leading political parties in Nigeria [APC and PDP], members of the academia knowledgeable in the topic area, women organization, youth organization, religious leaders, and representative of ethnic and cultural associations from all the six states of the Yoruba people of Nigeria) for the study. The sampling size is capable of producing the necessary data carefully, thereby ensuring data saturation to the point of theoretical saturation during analysis to advance the knowledge that illuminated the research problem.

In seeking a sample size in a qualitative research method, Clarke (2019) posited that the sample is critical to the population size. The sample size is the number of



participants in a study. Qualitative studies place more emphasis on depth rather than breadth in research. The researcher must be careful in ensuring that the criteria and strategy for choice and determination of a participant meet the established criteria for inclusion in the study (Burkeholder et al., 2016).

A purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting participants from each participating group selected for this study. The criteria for inclusion for the study include age, gender, educational background, knowledge of the topic area. The participants were recruited from the University academic, political analysts, opinion leaders in the states and the local communities, political leaders, youth leaders, and religious leaders, randomly selected within the represented six speaking Yoruba states of Nigeria, Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

Permission becomes overly critical in social science research when the principal objective is either to contact people for participants in a study or when a researcher wants to retrieve data. The researcher needed the assistance of the gatekeepers to the people and the necessary data for the study. It also served as protection for the participants from any harm. The institutional review board (IRB) of a university or other research facility must sanction and approve all processes leading to data collection to satisfy all governance arrangements as stipulated by the ethical codes relating to the conduct of social research (Economic and Social Research Council, 2012). I sent an invitation letter (see Appendix A) with the informed consent form approved by the university to prospective participants.

Prior to collecting data from the respondents, I obtained approval (approval number 02-15-22-0741132) from Walden University's IRB. The approval allowed me to approach designated Nigerian institutions and authorities to obtain their authorization to recruit respondents for the study. These include approvals at; the representative universities ethical board to recruit academia for the study; the states and/or local government area authorities to reach the local communal, political analysts, opinion leaders in the states, political leaders, youth leaders, and religious leaders, randomly selected within the representing six speaking Yoruba states of Nigeria, Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo.

Two supporting letters were attached with the Walden University ethical approval; one explaining in details the research study vis-à-vis its problem statement, purpose, objectives, the rationale behind the enlistment of the respondents, guidance and nature of the participation, and the participant time cost for the study; the other for the informed consent to the participant on their voluntary involvement in the study and for the respect of their rights, in which withdrawal is allowed at any point they considered necessary or at their will without any consequence.

It also stated out the modalities put in place to ensuring confidentiality or privacy of the participant will be ensured and assured, and every information provided is solely for the study and not transferable to any organization or used for any purpose other than the declared research study in the Walden University. These letters and ethical approval were served with an invitation letter for the study to all participants bearing my contact details for correspondence or clarification or questions on the study. Every participant in

the study was requested to sign the informed consent as a waiver for the audio recording of the interview, which I transcribed for each respondent.

### **Instrumentation**

According to Yin (2018), case study interviews are like guided conversations that differ from a structured discussion. The questions must not be harsh but flexible, which made research scholars termed them as in-depth, unstructured, or intensive interviews. In line with Patton (2015), Yin also posited that a researcher in a case study interview must adhere to its range of investigation, as shown in its case study protocol, expressing the actual questions in a manner that is not biased and which serves the need of the line of the investigations. Researchers in a case study must avoid asking why questions in order not to put their participants in a defensive position (Yin, 2018). Appendix B contains the interview protocol for this study.

I gave strict adherence to the scholarly guidelines for the development of my study's interview guide for data collection. Other areas including the study's problem statement, research question, purpose, and research design were considered in the construction of the semi-structured interview instrument. The semi-structure interview guide was sufficient for the data collection by giving room for probing questions, notes taking, and reflective journals which provided further data for the study. Most essentially, it allowed the study participants to give sufficient responses to the questions raised for the study.

For the data collection, the demographic characteristics of every study participant was captured. In addition, a semi-structured interview was employed for the respondents

to comment on the questions exhaustively or satisfactorily within the allotted time for each question as considered necessary. The speaking language for the interview encompass both Yoruba and English that I am versed in speaking and understanding, but the choice of one is subject to the respondent's preference or fluency in speaking, either determined in the course of the interview or chosen by the respondent.

In support of the audio recording, I listened attentively to the respondents and as well took notes of the salient points raised in their comments, except only where the answers are not consistent and coherent, which may require a follow-up or inquiry to further probe the participants deeply for new information. In doing these, I ensured I lose no vital information while capturing the perspectives of the participants. The interview lasted 60 minutes and took place at a mutually agreed upon location and time. Unless a follow up interview is required, each participant was interviewed once. The participant's responses were transcribed and emailed to him/her for more accurate data collection, based on the participant's request for clarity and correctness of the data collection. Before data analysis and findings presentation, any corrections or updates to the data obtained were made.

The recordings were uploaded to a password-protected computer and kept secure, while field notes or journals, as well as consent documents, were preserved in a closed filing cabinet. To collect each participant's details and study outcomes, codenames were used to safeguard the respondents' names. According to Walden University's study protocols, the data will be kept for at least 5 years.

The other sources of data included field notes, journal articles, government gazettes, and other archival materials. I used journal and field notes help to record details of all processes of data collections and observations to serve as a back-up in case of missing information during data coding and analysis. For the other data sources, the selected Yoruba States of Nigeria library facilities, internet or websites addresses, and publications were visited to access the government, governance, citizens' participation, public trust, government performances, and democratic practices in the respective states for a review of supplementary information for the study.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

According to Sargeant (2012), the goal of qualitative analysis is geared towards the interpretation of data and the ensuing themes to give insight into the phenomenon of interest under investigation. Sargeant stated that interpretive analysis of data appears in three stages of deconstruction, interpretation, and reconstruction (Sargeant, 2012). The raw data from qualitative research can become a communicative and trustworthy "story" (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2020), using the Saldana (2016) coding method to process the data. According to Linneberg and Korsgaard, coding is a vital tool used in investigating the consistency of the fraction of a researcher's realistic material, a word, a paragraph, a page, using a short phrase to reduce the meaning of its content. Sutton and Austin (2015) describe coding as the recognition of topics, issues, similarities, and differences, which are shown in the participant's responses to the interview questions and interpreted by the researcher. Coding can be done manually or using an electrical application.

Scholars of the qualitative research method agreed that qualitative inquiry involves an eclectic approach involving various philosophies, methodologies, and paradigms. They also recognized that there are variances in processes used by qualitative researchers to undertake research designs, analytical techniques, and quality issues (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2020). Saldana (2016) define code as words or phrases frequently used to assign summative, salient, essence capturing figuratively, and suggestive characteristic for a part of language-based or visual data. Saldana further provides that data could be in the forms of interview transcripts, participants observation field notes, journals, documents, open-ended survey responses, drawings, artifacts, photographs, video, email correspondence, academic and fictional pieces of literature, etc. (Saldana, 2016).

The excel software method for data analysis has been described by Linneberg and Korsgaard (2020) as the best simple way for a new researcher to undertake the coding of data collected, either for a mechanism, discourses, social constructions, metaphors, or lived experience. The method of coding presents a meaningful skill that allows for deep immersion in the data. It heightens the quality in the development and presentation of findings in the study. They posited that there are numerous ways a researcher can operationalize coding. Colors were used to denote a separate color for each code generated.

The use of word and excel software in coding enable a researcher to use the copy and paste function of the software to copy portions of text or images from the transcript into a new document giving visibility to the data origin. Manual coding using an excel

sheet is a better way to present data for coding. The excel software allows the researcher to demonstrate and distinctly show the interview questions and responses as data for coding. Data collected were transcribed into a word transcript, and from the transcript, each of the items was copied and pasted into the excel spreadsheet for coding. The method of using word and excel software is considered enough, where small amounts of data or research groups are involved. When a more substantial amount of data is required, it is advisable to use dedicated software that is already programmed to use the essential copy-and-paste operation, and which have consistently proved to be useful. According to Linneberg & Korsgaard (2020), the use of the necessary dedicated qualitative data analysis software helps a new researcher to conduct qualitative data analysis and have intensive interaction with the data. It makes the researcher present quality data and findings and achieve trustworthiness on his research results and conclusions. Hence, an NVivo qualitative data analysis software was used to generate themes and categories for data analysis.

### ***Consideration for Choosing QDA Software***

The qualitative data analysis software that I considered for use for the data analysis of my proposed study is NVivo QDA software. The developers stated that the software could analyze and display information with powerful search, query, and visualization tools. The application allows users to organize their material by topic, uncover trends and emerging themes, and create diagrams, charts, or models to present and clarify discoveries. The software has the following features, which are required for

proper data analysis and compatible with the proposed data analysis plan for my study.

The features include the ability to

- view all data coded to a pattern in a single place
- identify frequently occurring terms in data
- conduct precise searches of all or a portion of data
- code data automatically from text search
- display a matrix of codes in data
- visualize data with models and relationships
- capture and analyze social media data from Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter
- import a wide range of data formats

The formats include

Word, Excel, PDF, and rich text

Audio files (mp3, .mp4, .m4a, .wma, or .wav)

Video formats (mpg, .mpeg, mpe, wmv, avi, mov, mp4, qt, .3gp, mts & .m2ts)

Digital image formats (bmp, gif, jpg, jpeg, tif or tiff)

Reference management software files (EndNote, Zotero, or RefWorks)

Evernote or OneNote files

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

Establishing quality and rigor in any qualitative research study entails ensuring the authenticity of the data and the integrity of the data analysis (Sargeant, 2012). Benet (2014) (citing Lincoln and Guba, 1985) notes that the development of trustworthiness has substituted for the use of research validity and reliability in research. Trustworthiness



considers if a research outcome is “worth paying attention to” (p. 1). There are four aspects of trustworthiness including: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

### **Credibility**

Shenton (2004) writes that the internal validity of a study is the concern of the positivist researchers in a qualitative study. A study attains credibility when the data harvested is congruent with the study research question. Credibility allows the research world to trust the findings based on the data used in the study. Burkholder et al. (2016) (citing Guba & Lincoln, 1989), notes that credibility could be established through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, progressive subjectivity, member checking, triangulation, and reflexivity. In conforming to this distinction, every participant was intricately linked to his/her information on the study inquiry by making use of electronic devices to keep the recording of interview progress in support of note pads. This information was transcribed and used accordingly and accurately to form the basis for the conclusion of the study. According to Burkholder et al., triangulation is a process of verifying and confirming a claim and resolving the differences between participants and team members in the study. It is with a view of investigating a conclusion before adopting it for the study.

### **Transferability**

Transferability refers to the situation where the researcher is obliged to provide adequate information about the setting and assumptions of the study. The concern here is to be able to prove that the results of the study can be applied to a broader population

(Shenton, 2004). Thus, the transferability nature of the study is contextual and unique owing to certain factors bothered on the localization of the governance and/or democratic practices and its challenges which is uniquely associated with Nigerian or West African political atmosphere. This might possibly make the result of the study ungeneralizable to the outside world that is either more developing or developed than Nigeria, and not multi-ethnic in nature as it is construed in the study context. This infers that the results of the study may not be applicable to governance or citizen engagement and public trust in United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and even to other regions in Africa like North Africa, South Africa, and Central Africa countries, because it is politically, socially, and economically constructed for Nigerians and their democratic system of governance.

However, the procedural steps to data collection and the description of data gathered from respondents are detailed for duplicability of study, qualitatively taking care of the internal and external validities for the study. According to Burkholder et al. (2016), negative case analysis helps the research to access the prevalence level of negative divergence in the data collected for analysis. The lower the high confidence in the pattern and themes for the study. The strength of the negative difference has vital implications for the research. The above processes were conducted during the interview and data analysis to ensure trustworthiness.

### **Dependability**

Dependability tackles the problem of reliability. To address the problem, the researcher in the qualitative study must provide detailed reports of all the processes leading to the study findings and results. The method allows future replication of the

process in research to obtain a similar conclusion and also enables the target audience to understand the depth of research practices that have been followed in the study (Shenton, 2004). The dependability of this study was ensured by abiding strictly to the procedural steps outlined for the conduct of qualitative study vis-à-vis data collection procedure. It ensured transparency of data or data collection, method, and processes involved for replicability of the study in another environment, even though it is argued that the uniqueness of the Nigerian context of democratic practices in the multi-ethnic socio-political environment could pose distinction to the perceptions of the citizens to governance, public trust, and participation in governance and/or democratic system relative to other countries.

In the improvement of the dependability of the study, a sample data collection from 10 respondents randomly selected outside the study sample was adopted to test run the data, data collection, and methodology, which showed the level of reliability of the study findings and results for other researchers to replicate in another environment. Critical scrutiny of supporting documents that is well-sourced in the secondary sources of data collection was done by me, my supervisor, and other experts in the department of public policy and administration to make sure the study findings are dependable. According to Burkholder et al. (2016), peer debriefing helps confer credibility on qualitative research. I engaged a colleague knowledgeable on the study to critic the study by asking a series of questions. The process helped in reducing my biases and clarified the study findings.

## **Confirmability**

Confirmability, as a concept, predisposes the fact that the findings and results of the study depend on the experiences, ideas, and thoughts of the study participants. The inclinations and character of the researcher should not be visible. The researcher leverages the concept to reveal his or her own biases. Thus, the research must show in detail the process adopted to overcome the prejudices. The detailed description in the study determines the extent to which the study could be considered for acceptance. Generally, confirmability, as a concept, has concerns for objectivity.

The data collected were well-reviewed, transcribed, and interpreted in achieving the study's confirmability. I reiterated to the study participants the essence of honesty, truthfulness, and thorough-thoughtful expression towards the research semi structured questions were posted to them, aimed at finding out the fact on the study problem in the environment. Participants were informed of the standing policy that guarantees their confidentiality. It entails the anonymous nature of the participant's status to safeguard and prevent them from consequences for partaking in the study. The participants were informed of the voluntary consent to partake in the study, and which could be withdrawn at any time in the study. Thus, audit trails, according to Burkholder et al. (2016) describe the data collection method and process, the derivation of categories, how and what decisions were made during the study. I was able to retrieve all this information from the field notes and journals that record the proceedings of the event during the study.

### **Ethical Procedures**

The ethical issue of the study takes care of the confidentiality and respect for the privacy of individuals taking part in the study. The Walden University IRB procedure serves as the standard to provide the privacy of every individual and the record of their participation. Participants were not obligated to commit or forced to participate in the study, reveal their identity or contact, but rather remain anonymous, and withdrawal was permitted at a deviation from any of the commitments without any consequence and risk. Consent for participation was voluntary. The potential conflict of interest was managed by ensuring that no participant with a professional or personal relationship with me was considered for the study. Participant recruitment was non-coercive by visiting universities, political organizations, youth organizations, and other bodies for approval to liaise with their management and staff to document their perceptions on the research objectives.

To further prevent any ethical issue, only redacted transcripts with assigned identifiers other than participant's identity were shared with the university faculty, together with the analysis. The privacy of participants and data collected was assured by committing my signage to a confidentiality agreement, well-read to them that the information will not be used for any other purpose or shared with any person or organization. Data shall be stored securely under safe protection and password protected in my personal computer, and notes taken will be kept in my library safe for at least five years under IRB standard regulation effective from the date of the dissertation. Data disposal will embrace recommended shredding and demagnetizing techniques for both

paper and electronic means of storage respectively. The participants and community stakeholders will have access to the research results upon request. The result will either be sent as email or print, based on their preference, and publishing the results in a reputable journal.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and document the Yoruba perceptions in Nigeria on the concepts of public trust and citizen engagement. This study explored key stakeholders' opinions on Nigerian government in a democratic system with a complex history of diverse religions, ethnicities, and cultural values. The study also examined opinions to suggest if the two concepts of public trust and citizen engagement as tools of democracy might facilitate good governance in Nigeria's democratic system. In addition, it galvanized opinions to suggest if the two concepts of public trust and citizen engagement as tools of democracy can facilitate good governance in Nigeria's democratic system.

For the case study, I adopted a purposeful sampling method using critical case sampling to use the weight of pieces of evidence at my disposal to study only a case among other cases that exist within the sampling sites (Patton, 2015). For the sample and sampling techniques, the study relied on 30 participants randomly selected from the representative groups of participants, which include the two leading political parties in Nigeria [APC and PDP], members of the academia knowledgeable in the topic area, women organization, youth organization, religious leaders, representative of ethnic and

cultural associations from all the six states (Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo) of the Yoruba people of Nigeria for the study.

This was achieved with the help of a purposive sampling technique in selecting the participants from each participating group selected purposively for this study. The criteria for inclusion for the study include age, gender, educational background, knowledge of the topic area. Other sources of data collection were a review of documentary instruments that include field notes, journal textbooks, government gazettes, archival materials, seminar papers, internet, and other library sources. The data collected were analyzed by a NVivo qualitative data analysis software. In Chapter 4, I present the study's setting, data, analysis, result interpretation, and how trustworthiness issues were addressed. In Chapter 5, discussions focus on the study's findings, conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for further research.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore and document the perceptions of the Yoruba in Nigeria on the concepts of public trust and citizen engagement. In this research, I explored the Yoruba people's opinions of the barriers to, and facilitators of, public trust and citizen engagement in Nigeria's democratic system, which has a complex history of diverse religions, ethnicities, and cultural values. The research question was: What are the Yoruba people of Nigeria's perceptions about the barriers to, and facilitators of, public trust and citizen engagement in the Nigerian democratic system? To this end, in this chapter, I discuss the research setting, participant demographics, approach to data collection and data analysis, and means of achieving trustworthiness. Then, I present the results obtained from data analysis. The chapter concludes with a summary of key points.

### **Setting**

On February 18, 2022, I received approval from Walden University's IRB to collect data. I proceeded to recruit participants by contacting institutional authorities (such as universities, political parties, religious societies, and local government authorities) to obtain their authorization to recruit and interview potential study participants in all six Yoruba-speaking Nigerian states. I wished to interview stakeholders who were academics, religious leaders, political leaders, youth leaders, and political analysts. However, institutional requirements for participant recruitment were strict, particularly in educational institutions, which demanded proof of my studentship and



evidence of study conduct, participant anonymity, and nondisruptive teaching and learning activities.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, recruiting and interviewing study participants was difficult. Also, contacting key stakeholders or potential participants to establish a day, time, and location for the interview was difficult due to their busy schedules. As a result, I made phone calls to potential study volunteers at all of the institutions to obtain their email addresses to send the study informed consent and interview guide to them. Following that, I emailed the participants the informed consent form and interview guide. After receiving their completed consent form, I communicated with the participants to schedule dates, times, and locations for their semistructured interview. Participants were asked to provide oral consent prior to the interview to ensure their voluntary participation in the study

### **Demographics**

I purposively selected 28 participants from the six Yoruba speaking states of Nigeria. The participants were comprised of members of the two leading political parties in Nigeria (APC and PDP), academics knowledgeable in the topic area, members of a women's organization and a youth organization, and religious leaders. They were representative of ethnic and cultural associations from all six states of the Yoruba people of Nigeria. The educational backgrounds of the participants ranged from higher national diploma, bachelor's degree, and master's degree to PhD. There were 23 male study participants and five female study participants. The 28 participants were anonymized and

designated as Participant 001 to Participant 028. Tables 1 and 2 show the demographic information of the participants.

**Table 1**

*Overview of Participants' Gender and Education Level (N = 28)*

Demographic variable	N
Gender	
Male	23
Female	5
Total	28
Education	
Higher national diploma	1
Bachelor's degree	5
Master's degree	10
PhD	10
Total	26

**Table 2**

*Breakdown of Participants' Age, Education Level, and Employment Status*

Participant	Gender	Age	Education level	Employment status
001	Male	50+	Master's degree	
002	Male	57	PhD	Employed
003	Female	44	Master's degree	Employed
004	Male	33	Bachelor's degree	Employed
005	Male	65	PhD	Self-employed
006	Male	42	PhD	Employed
007	Male		Master's degree	
008	Female	51	Bachelor's degree	Employed
009	Male	49	PhD	Employed
010	Male	40	MBA	Employed
011	Male	55+	Master's degree	Employed
012	Male	32	Higher national diploma	Employed
013	Male	45		Self-employed
014	Female	51	PhD	Employed
015	Male	59	PhD	Employed
016	Female	63		
017	Male	47	Bachelor's degree	Employed
018	Male	55	PhD	Employed

019	Male	52	Bachelor's degree	Employed
020	Male	62	Master's degree	Retired
021	Male	52	PhD	Employed
022	Male	52	PhD	Employed
023	Male	52	Master's degree	
024	Male	61	Master's degree	Employed
025	Male	60	Master's degree	Employed
026	Female	58	Bachelor's degree	Employed
027	Male	57	PhD	Employed
028	Male	60	Master's degree	Self-employed

### Data Collection

For the data collection, only 28 of the 30 participants who volunteered for the study were available for the final interview sessions as scheduled during the preliminary conversations. The 28 volunteers represented a mixture of targeted institutions from across Nigeria's six Yoruba-speaking states (Lagos, Abeokuta, Ibadan, Osogbo, Akure and Ado-Ekiti). Participants scheduled a meeting at a public library, an institutional library, a personal office, and a café. To avoid scheduling conflicts with interviewees, the interview dates were mutually agreed upon, and no interviewee was interviewed more than once. The interview took between 30 and 40 minutes to complete. I audio recorded the 28 interview sessions using an interview guide with 20 open-ended questions. Each interview lasted between 30 and 40 minutes each. This resulted in 15 hours and 45 minutes of active recording for all of the sessions.

I reminded each participant of the study's voluntary nature prior to the start of the interview process. I also reminded them of additional information in the consent forms they signed, such as their right to withdraw at any time during the interview without prior notice or cause. My iPhone Xr smartphone was used to record the interviews, which were conducted face-to-face. After that, I saved the audio files to my Android tablet (Model

Y10) for safekeeping. A unique identification code was assigned to each of the downloaded audio-recorded interviews, which was unique to the study participants.

In the study data collection, there was no significant variation. However, two individuals were unavailable, causing the study to diverge from the intended 30 participants. Furthermore, a few stakeholders who had been identified for the study interview were unavailable owing to government responsibilities, while others had personal concerns.

### **Data Analysis**

I transferred the transcribed interview responses from the Microsoft Word document to NVivo 12 qualitative software, which I used to organize, code, and analyze the data. I ran a 1,000-word frequency query on the data to see the most frequently occurring words in the data (see Figure 4 below). Also, I produced six overarching themes that aligned to the research question. The overarching themes are political participation, conceptual perceptions of democratic terms, prevailing state of Nigerian democratic governance system, democratic element and fundamental human right in Nigerian democratic governance, barriers in Nigerian democratic governance, and facilitators of Nigerian democratic governance.

After analyzing the data using the NVivo software, I organized it into categories. The themes were developed as a result of the clustering of the categories. Twenty-one emergent themes emerged from the six overarching themes. The 21 emergent themes were partisan politics; nonpartisan politics; observer and commentator; public trust; citizen engagement; good governance; ethnicity and religion's role on public trust and

citizen engagement; level of citizen engagement; extent of citizens' representation in governance; elected and appointed representatives' performance; trust as an element of democratic practices; extent of citizen trust in governance; freedom of participation; absence of due process and electoral fraud; ethical, moral, and ethno-religion decadence; poor education, judicial malady, and insurgency; education, community, and social amenities provision; justice and judicial reform; due process and equality; trust and active citizen democratic engagement; human rights protection, ethical, and values reorientation; and electoral reform. There were no discrepant cases. Figure 4 is a word cloud of the themes.

Figure 4

*Thematic Word Cloud*



#### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

In qualitative research, the goal of trustworthiness is to justify the claim that the results are "worth paying attention to" (Elo et al., 2014, p. 2). Credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability are four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) for determining the trustworthiness of qualitative research. To further ensure the validity and accuracy of data collected from the study, participants were engaged in the course of the interview to confirm some of their claims to ensure I have a true reflection and understanding of their assertions.

## **Credibility**

In qualitative research, credibility is concerned with the issue of truth value. The levels of confidence that can be put in the research findings' accuracy. The research findings' credibility is determined by whether they represent believable information derived from the participants' raw data and if they are a correct interpretation of the participants' original opinions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), the credibility of a study is proven when coresearchers or readers are presented with the experience and can recognize it. The "matching" between interviewees' perspectives and the researcher's interpretation is referred to as credibility (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Researcher's activities such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, data collection triangulation, researcher triangulation, and member checking were suggested by Lincoln and Guba as ways to address credibility (Irene & Albine, 2018; Nowell et al., 2017). The credibility technique to use is determined by the study's design; however, in circumstances when participants are educated and experienced, all strategies can be used to assure credibility (Irene & Albine, 2018).

Within this context, the recruited participants satisfied the study's inclusion criteria, which included being over the age of 18, educated, and a member of the targeted institutions throughout the six Yoruba Nigerian states. In addition, I informed the research participants that their identities would be protected by the use of an identifier to describe them. Most crucially, their identity would not be revealed to anyone, either knowingly or unknowingly. In the same way, the participants' responses to interview

questions will only be used for this study. Thus, participants were able to provide detailed responses to the semi structured interview questions thanks to these credibility criteria. Furthermore, all participants were interviewed on predetermined dates, at predetermined locations, and at predetermined times, using semi structured interview questions in order to obtain accurate study results. In order to have a detailed record of the proceedings, I audio recorded the participants' comments and took notes on similar and differing perspectives of participants in discussing the findings without being influenced by my personal opinions, instead relying on the participants' perspectives to produce evidence-based findings. To that purpose, member verification was conducted, which helped to verify the accuracy of participants' opinions prior to data analysis.

### **Transferability**

The term transferability refers to the ability to extrapolate. Transferability is the level to which the results may be generalized or transferred to different settings or groups (Elo et al., 2014; Koch, 1994; Polit & Beck, 2012; Nowell et al., 2017). A potential user's ability to judge transferability is aided by the researcher's detailed description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Irene & Albine, 2018). Since the researcher has no way of knowing which scholar or stakeholder that might want to use the findings; therefore, the researcher must provide detailed descriptions so that individuals who want to use the findings can assess transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017).

To this end, I addressed the study's methodology in depth in order to establish the study's transferability – study participants, participant recruitment, data gathering instruction, and approach to data collection and data analysis. To further demonstrate



this, I made certain that the study findings were succinctly described on the basis of evidence, allowing future researchers/readers to make sufficient inferences from the study and/or apply it to another study.

### **Dependability**

Dependability is referred to as participants' assessment of the research's findings, interpretation, and recommendations, all of which are supported by the data gathered from study participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability entails determining whether the analytical procedure adheres to the research's acknowledged standards for a case study design (Irene & Albine, 2018). A study's dependability is high if another scholar can easily trace the originating researcher's decision path (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). According to Whitemore et al. (2001), explicitly of research strategy entails the presentation of rich, vivid, faithful, and creative descriptions that highlight the data's key themes. Regardless of the methodology utilized to communicate the findings, the analysis process should be adequately reported (Moretti et al., 2011; Elo et al., 2014).

In establishing the study's dependability, purposive sampling technique was used to identify participants who satisfied the study's inclusion criteria. In addition, I presented thorough accounts of data gathering and analysis, including research questions to overarching themes, generating codes, defining categories, and clustering categories to develop emergent themes. To that aim, the research findings were based on data collected and analyzed from study participants.

## **Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to neutrality and suggests that the data truly reflect participants' viewpoints on the phenomenon, and that the inquirer did not fabricate the interpretations of those data. The conclusions must reflect the participants' opinions and the circumstances of the investigation, rather than the researcher's prejudices, objectives, or opinions (Irene & Albine, 2018, Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Polit & Beck, 2012). This is one of the reasons why scholars frequently give typical passages from transcribed text (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004), especially to demonstrate a link between the data and the conclusions (Elo et al., 2014). For example, a citation should be used to connect each main theme to the facts. Quotes from many participants serve to confirm the relationship between the outcomes and the data, as well as the data's richness. The systematic use of citations, on the other hand, necessitates caution. Quotations that are at least linked to all major theme and broadly representative of the participants should be chosen. However, there is a risk of overuse of quotations, which could undermine the analysis (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, Kyngäs et al., 2011). For example, if quotations are used excessively in the results section, the findings may be muddled (Elo et al., 2014).

In achieving confirmability, I made certain that the study's conclusions and interpretations were only based on the opinions or facts collected from the participants, not on my fictitious information or prejudice. This suggests that the data being analyzed are the exact perceptions of the participants. This was aided by the use of overarching themes, categories, codes, and data theming in conjunction with the study research

question and/or study phenomena. As a result, the data and analysis were free of researcher manipulation, yielding an accurate outcome or a representative of participants' experiences, ideas, conditions of inquiry, and result – texts (40 words) in quotation or block (more than 40 words) were extracted from participants' transcribed texts to connect the data with the study results.

### Results

I identified six overarching themes and 21 emergent themes based on the review of the research questions and interview questions, as well as a review of transcripts and handwritten notes taken during the interview proceedings. Table 3 shows the orderliness of the overarching themes and emergent themes, the file indicates the number of Participants whose response was coded under each emergent theme while the references highlight the frequency of responses coded under each emergent theme.

**Table 3**

*Overarching Themes and Emergent Themes*

Overarching theme	Emergent theme	File (no.)	Reference (no.)
Political participation	Partisan politics	9	9
	Nonpartisan politics	14	14
	Observer and commentator	5	5
Conceptual perceptions of democratic terms	Public trust	22	23
	Citizen engagement	19	21
	Good governance	15	16
Prevailing state of Nigerian democratic governance system	Ethnicity and religion's role on public trust and citizen engagement	27	46
	Level of citizen engagement	17	28
	Extent of citizen's representation in governance	19	27

	Elected and appointed representatives' performance	16	18
Democratic element and fundamental human right in Nigerian democratic governance	Trust as an element of democratic practices	15	19
	Extent of citizen trust in governance	22	26
	Freedom of participation	21	28
Barriers in Nigerian democratic governance	Absence of due process and electoral fraud	10	11
	Ethical, moral, and ethno-religion decadence	22	24
	Poor education, judicial malady, and insurgency	8	9
Facilitators of Nigerian democratic governance	Education, communication, and social amenities provision	19	23
	Justice and judicial reform	9	10
	Due process and equality	33	36
	Trust and active citizen democratic engagement	5	5
	Human rights protection, ethical and values reorientation	26	32
	Electoral reform	13	19

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The research question formed the basis for exploring research participants' perceptions on the barriers to and/or the facilitators of public trust and citizen engagement in the Nigeria democratic system. Thus, the research question served as the foundation for developing the semi structured interview questions used in gauging the research participants' perceptions on the study phenomenon and explaining the research findings: the six overarching themes and 22 emergent themes were grouped under the overarching themes in support of the discussions. The findings – quotes from transcripts are presented in quotation (less than 40 words) and/or block (40 words and above).

### **Overarching Theme 1: Political Participation**

Political participation is a fundamental right for all citizens in any democratic governance system globally, Nigeria inclusive. To this end, I sought to understand the participants' political participation in providing understanding if they had active or passive participation in political activities.

#### ***Emergent Theme 1: Partisan Politics***

Active citizens' participation in political parties' activities is vital to successful democratic governance system. Within this context, participants were asked a question to know their engagement status in Nigerian political parties over time. According to the respondents – Participant 001 answered that “I have been involved in partisan politics in Nigeria actively since 1999 till date.” Participant 012 stated that “My involvement in politics isn't too deep but it is partisan.” Participant 015 said that “I am involved as a registered voter and an active participant in the electoral process, but as a public servant, I am not supposed to be partisan.” Participant 016 noted that “I would say so, but politics

as it is just any kind because it is not what we want it to be, thinking it is for the hierarchy and for the old men.” Participant 017 commented that “Every human being is a political being. This means politics is imbedded in all created being but as a priest, my involvement in politics is partisan and civic enlightenment of the populace to understand their involvements and expectation from the elected government.” Participant 023 explained that “Yes, I am actively involved in politics, thus a partisan politician. A member of the PDP until recently, but in SDP now.” Participant 026 commented that “My involvement in politics is deep as a civil servant in discussing and providing the necessary leadership on which path to take as a relevant stakeholder.” Participant 028 responded that “Yes, active partisanship. Beginning from being a supervisory counselor, to being a local government chairman, and finally state publicity secretary of one of the major political parties (the PDP).”

### ***Emergent Theme 2: Nonpartisan***

Half of the participants noted that their participation in political activities is non-partisan. This imply that citizens did not have active engagement in political parties’ activities such as party rally, holding political office, maintaining active party membership etc., instead they usually exercised their franchise only – voting for political office aspirants during elections. It could also be inferred that some of these participants’ political parties’ engagement decision was influenced by their professional ethics – guiding conducts on political matters such as a civil servant.

Within this premise, Participant 002 noted that I am “not involved in partisan politics but participate in political process as ordinary citizen.” Participant 003

commented that she only had “marginal involvement, no” partisan politics. Participant 004 explained that “I am neutral in politics and non-partisan”. Participants 006, 007, and 010 noted that they were “Non-partisan”. Participant 008 explained that “I am not a partisan, but I am enthusiastic about effective governance”. Participant 011 said that “My interest in politics is of a nonpartisan nature.” Participant 013 responded that “I am not partisan but, I love Politics.” Participant 018 answered that “My involvement is not fully partisan but participatory. I support candidate(s), vote during elections – as much as possible.” Participant 019 furthered that “My involvement in politics is just during voting or just to enfranchise my right. It is not partisan.” Participant 020 answered that “As a civil servant, I abstained from politics. I am an AGIP member. Any Government in Power.” Participant 021 commented that “I am an active observer; non-partisan.” Participant 022 expressed that “In as much as a partisan is a committed member of a political party, I am not one, but I can vote for any candidate of my choice as a citizen of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.” Participant 025 said that “My involvement in politics is non-partisan.” Participant 027 answered that “I am a regular citizen and I do my part by voting in qualified elections, Is it of a partisan politics? No, I am not partisan.”

### ***Emergent Theme 3: Observer and Commentator***

Almost a quarter of the participants indicated that they were neither into partisan politics nor non-partisan politics. These participants were usually observers who were only interested in the credibility of the exercise – mostly representing either local or international government and non-governmental organizations in monitoring the

electioneering exercise to ascertain if citizens were allowed to exercise their franchise and how free and fair the conduct.

According to Participant 009, “I am an election observer. I conduct research on democratic governance in Nigeria. I also train election observers”.

Participant 014 commented that:

I've never been involved in partisan politics. I am not a card-carrying member of any political party, but I keenly follow political discussions. And I must usually have my leanings, my preference to political parties or individuals that I think are showing potentials or showing some characteristics that can lead us in the country, in states, locality and then in the country.

Participant 005 also stated that

Some decades back, when I was a lot younger, I had a stint in partisan politics as a member of NPN, the ruling party at the Federal level at the time and later became the PDP of today in Nigeria. Lately, I am a keen observer and Commentator of political activities within my local community and the nation at large.

Participant 024 opined that:

Though every human being, reasonably is a political animal, I am not deeply involved in politics. I am a liberal social commentator who watches political events and the trends of things and makes not just remarks but those contributions that could ginger the players up to be abreast of what they put together in their



manifesto to better the life of those they govern or serve irrespective of political affiliation. I am not inclined to any political partisanship.

## **Overarching Theme 2: Conceptual Perceptions of Democratic Terms**

Under this parental node, I explored the participants' perceptions on the three central concepts in democratic governance – public trust, citizen engagement, and good governance, in order to establish the participants understanding of the concepts. Thus, three emergent themes were derived from the research question and respondents' responses.

### ***Emergent Theme 4: Public Trust***

Most interviewees believed that public trust is concomitant to democratic practices – it is the confidence citizens invested in democratic governance under the political party leaders, elected and/or appointed public office holders, party representatives, and other political agents to deliver their mandate to the populace. Public trust provides impetus or encouragement for all citizens to actively partake in political or electoral activities, and this is premised on the elected representatives' performance. However, citizen's disappointment in these democratic governing agents' performances usually cause an erosion of public trust. To this end, the excerpts below are participants' opinions on the concept of public trust.

According to the respondents – Participant 001 responded that “Public Trust in my perception is the ultimate ideal goal of all political cum governmental activities.” Participant 006 asserted that “The concept of public trust in a democratic process simply means the citizens' confidence in political institutions. It can also refer to a conviction in

the legitimacy of political institutions and the regimes they represent.” Participant 007 stated that “It should be the basis for democratic governance.” Participant 015 said that “Public trust should reflect the disposition of the electorates/citizens with respect to the extent to which political office holders fulfill their electoral promises.” Participant 017 answered that “It means having a reliance in both ways (Electorates and the elected) to deliver the good of governance to benefit the environment and society.”

Participant 004 viewed that:

The citizens expect people in authority to perform the function of the office they are in, and very importantly that those in authority be sensitive to the need of the society in law making, initiative taking and providing solution or platform that can provide solution when problems arise.

Participant 005 stated that:

As far as I am concerned, a public office is a public trust. So, anyone so entrusted with public power by the people especially through an electoral process must ensure that ultimately the same people are the beneficiaries of the accruing benefits and not for any personal aggrandizement / benefit.

Participant 008 commented that “Public trust is the drive for cooperative governance of a healthy human society, which involves both the leaders and the led.”

Participant 010 furthered that “When voters believe their votes are important and counted. And elected leaders represent the people's interests.” Thus, “Stakeholders (the people) having the belief that democratic institutions and leaders can always meet their

aspirations for good governance and collective fulfillment, and thus establishing legitimacy for government”, according to Participant 009.

Participant 011 viewed that “Public trust should be very important for effective democratic process for good governance.” Participant 012 explained that “My perception about public trust to democratic process is still far from the reality, the public don’t trust the process, in fact I will say most of them don’t believe there is a democratic process.”

According to Participant 014,

For me as an individual to trust any leader, I must be able to see them holding paramount, peoples’ welfare not tokenistic welfare. A system that takes care of everybody especially those who do not have. I think I have read somewhere and there is a statement that, the society is judged not by the have or by the have not, but by the standard of living of the have not. So, it is about those who do not have – the vulnerable, about how we are taking care of the weak members of the society. As leaders, I expect them to ensure a system that you do not have to be rich to get education. You do not have to be a rich person to get basic necessities of life, food, shelter, accommodation, health, and basics of life in general. So, a leader I would trust would be one that I can say has a system that is taking care of citizens and not the one that is solely around the political – the campaign period like 2019, 2023 or 2027. You see so many of them going around buying stuff and giving to the poor. It is also a society that the leadership style does not say the winner takes it all. There are some persons when they get to power, they only ensure they look out for their people. They do not look out for other people with

skills that can participate. Another characteristic of civil society is a society where everybody can participate, a society where everybody can contribute, where nothing is thrown out or there is no person that is superior to the other. There is no culture that is superior to the other. There is no human being or human group that is superior to the other. So indeed, a leader I will trust is one who will think of the future of our children; those children are not just being born, but they are being born with a sense of purpose, and with a plan, that when they are growing up, they will be properly nurtured. They will not go on the streets. And when they are nurtured, they are also at stake to protect their society to contribute to their societies. So, these values, I would say we do not have.

According to Participant 018,

My perception of the concept of public trust in a democratic process is basically on how much confidence the citizens' have on the ruling class or political institutions elected to govern their affairs in respect of equitable distribution of costs and available resources. I see public trust as being sincere to the public. Sincerity of purpose in a political situation of the democratic process is particularly important. Why? Public trust is important! So, one's position should be seen as stable and reasonable. Even if public do not like it today, they may love it tomorrow!

Participant 019 viewed that "My perception of the concept of public trust in a democratic process is a deceptive one, especially in Nigeria." Participant 020 noted that

“My perception is that we suppose to put governance and the citizenry interests above our own parochial interests. Unfortunately, it is not so in Nigeria.”

Participant 021 stated that:

Public trust is a product of the operation and fulfilment of the contract terms by the government; the fulfilment of campaign promises through good governance. It is akin to legitimacy, which all governments must strive to always acquire. Good performance by government should lead to more reliance and confidence in governmental acts.

Participant 022 commented that:

My perception on the concept of public trust is that since certain natural and cultural resources are preserved for public use, the government that owns these resources must protect and maintain these resources for the public use in a democratic process.

Participant 024 suggested that:

The concept of public trust in a democratic process: In a democratic setting, through the vote cast to elect people to public offices, power is entrusted in elected officials in their role as public officers. This is based on the confidence the electorates repose in the elected persons. In relation to concept of public trust, certain natural and cultural resources are preserved for public use, and by this principle, the government owns and must protect and maintain these resources for the use of the people. In this concept, no preference is specially given to political allies and cronies, associations, one's tribes or gender. Everyone is a bona fide

beneficiary. In a democratic process, the concept of public trust is not partial or partisan while political inclination does not determine who the beneficiaries should be.

According to Participant 025, “My perception of the concept of public trust in a democratic process is to ensure that the elected political office holders become responsible to the electorate and political office holders must ensure the delivery of dividend of democracy.” The participant furthered that “The concept of public trust is very germane in effective democratization process.” Meanwhile, Participant 026 expressed that “My perception of the concept of public trust in a Democratic process is deceptive in the Nigerian political dispensation.” Participant 027 said that “I believe in building public trust to gain support to achieve the goals and objectives of democracy.”

#### ***Emergent Theme 5: Citizen Engagement***

Findings indicated that citizen engagement relates to public participation in democracy – to vote and be voted for. Thus, citizens must fully partake in politics or democracy at all the three tiers of government – local, state, and federal government. Citizen engagement is not limited to electioneering process, but also include decision-making process through government deliberate engagement of the populace in deciding or contributing to governance directions – policy making and goals setting. Thus, this facilitates immediate societal needs to be appropriately communicated, captured, and targeted in government developmental agenda and to be achieved through the right strategies in a holistic and timely manner. Within the context, Participant 001 observed that “My understanding of citizens’ engagement in a democracy is that citizens must be

mobilized and carried along genuinely in the developmental process. Citizens must be mobilized to own the process to guarantee positive result for government policies.”

Participant 002 viewed that “As defined, democracy is government of the people for the people by the people. Essence of democracy besides freedom is a collective governance.”

Participant 003 noted that “Citizens are engaged to partake in decision involving their governance. Have a say in deciding policies”

According to Participant 005,

Going by the definition of democracy as a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, then citizen engagement is key and fundamental in a democracy. Citizen participation starts from the ward level where they are the constituents that basically form the constituency and up in the political gamut.

Participant 006 recounted that:

Citizen’s participation and its awareness is a necessary aspect of every democracy. The citizen’s engagement is a form of governance in which citizens control public policy and action by electing persons of their choice to represent them as it is premised on the principles of representation, participation, and accountability. The concept of citizen engagement in a democracy varies from voting of political officials and making them accountable for their actions and inactions during and after leaving the political office because the political officials represent the concerns and ideals of the citizens in government. These are major roles of citizens in democracy, participatory.

Participant 007 noted that “Citizen engagements involve freedom of choice, which is unhindered access to vote and be vote for, and freedom of speech.” Participant 008 commented that “Everyone, leaders and the lead having a stake and ensuring it works for good.” Participant 009 asserted that “Citizen engagement is one of the strong pillars of democracy. It surely provides a fillip to good governance and democratic consolidation.” Participant 010 expressed that “Its starts from electioneering to the passage of legislation and implementation. Citizens must be consulted at all levels.” Participant 011 answered that “The concept of citizen engagement refers to the ability of citizens of a country to build checks and balances through various means in order to make the leadership accountable to the people.” Participant 028 recounted that “When there are free and fair process of choosing public officers.”

According to Participant 012, “I will say it is a way the citizens will know most of the happenings in government where everyone will be properly informed about the affairs of the country.” Participant 017 observed that “It means citizens should play their role in a democracy and also give feedback to the government for good governance.” Participant 019 narrated that “It makes citizens rest assured that the government at the helm of affairs is for them because they have full participation during its process.” Participant 024 explained that “The concept of citizen engagement in a democracy is the interaction of the citizenry with their government through the implementation of government policies and delivery of public services.” The participant furthered that “Yes, citizen engagement is all inclusive in nature, and it is an important element for effective process, based on trust, to facilitate good governance in Nigeria.”



Participant 018 commented that:

To me it means having citizens getting involved in all or as many stages of the democratic process as much as possible. It means having informed citizens, aware citizens, trained and enlightened citizens in the democratic process, knowing that voting is a social responsibility for any person that is 18 years and above etc.

In furtherance, Participant 022 noted that “Not at all. The essence of citizen engagement is to convince citizens to engage and offering them all the necessary information to make well rounded decisions. But our elected representatives have failed to do so. Participant 023 commented that “Citizen’s engagement puts leaders on their toes for maximum and effective performance. The government would sit tight and strive to gain the confidence of the public as this would ensure constant patronage of the voters.”

Participant 027 stated,

When the people are involved, they feel they have a voice. When people have a voice, they can express themselves freely. When they feel comfortable enough to express themselves, they begin to trust the forum and the people who give them that opportunity. Thus, Citizen engagement is when you involve those who are impacted by decision-making in that process before the decision is made.

### ***Emergent Theme 6: Good Governance***

Most of the interviewees revealed that good governance relates to evidence (positive or negative) of governing body activities over a period. It also relates to obedience to the guiding principles of governing activities such as obedience to the rule of law, fundamental human rights protection, accountability, transparency, and equity

among others. It is strongly associated with political institution's provision of social amenities and/or societal needs for the benefits of all and sundry, and/or promotion of enabling environment for the society to thrive within available limited resources.

According to Participant 001, "Good governance is the acceptable positive end result of all activities of government (those elected by the people) for the betterment of the society in synergy with the people who elected them through qualitative engagement and robust public trust."

Participant 002 said that "A governance that meets the needs of the majority of the people, a governance where there is fairness, justice, and equity, a governance that engender human capital and socioeconomic progress." Participant 004 commented that "It is all about meeting the people's need reasonably in a transparent way." Participant 005 answered that "Good governance should be seen to make for basic developmental necessities and infrastructures that make life meaningful and decent." Participant 006 recounted that "Good governance is the process by which the political institutions produce desired results that meet the needs of society while making the best use of available resources at their disposal. The key parameter of good governance is accountability."

Participant 008 noted that "Governance that ensures the well-being of the citizens on either side of governance." Participant 011 commented that "Good governance simply means a responsive government that is accountable to its citizens." Participant 012 said that "Good governance should be about good security and welfarism of the citizens." Participant 016 expressed that "Good governance is a government that makes themselves

available to the masses, open minded, and accountable towards their actions. That is, transparency and accountability” Participant 018 noted that “My perception of good governance is about understanding public service. That is pursuance of pubic good and making interest of the people and nation superior to personal interest or group interest.” Participant 019 added that “My perception of good governance is to allow citizens to participate fully in democratic process and those at the helm of affairs should have to abide with the rules and regulation.” According to Participant 022,

It relates to the political and institutional processes and outcomes that are necessary to achieve the goals of development. The true test of 'good' governance is the degree to which it delivers on the promise of human rights; civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.

Participant 024 stated,

Good Governance has to do with good intention of the leadership for the development and uplifting of the followership. The public institution conducts the public affairs and manages the resources, while the human rights is guaranteed in a manner devoid of abuse and corruption with total respect for the rule of law.

Participant 026 explained that “My perception of good governance is to allow citizens to participate fully in Democratic process and those at the helms of affairs should be made to abide with the rules and regulations.” Participant 027 narrated that “Good governance is the one that involves all stakeholders, especially those impacted by the decision-making process.”

**Overarching Theme 3: Prevailing State of Nigerian Democratic Governance System**

There have been repeated and ongoing debates on the current level of democratic governance in Nigerian states. Part of the debate revolved around the role of ethnicity and religion in the democratic governance. It was argued that politicians use religion and ethnicity to influence government actions such as the zoning of the president's office (Okoi & Iwara, 2021). With this as a backdrop, the goal was to gauge participants' opinions on the role of ethnicity and religion in Nigerian democratic governance, as well as their impacts on public trust and citizen engagement in the democratic governance.

***Emergent Theme 7: Ethnicity and Religion's Role on Public Trust and Citizen Engagement***

Interviewees' responses revealed that ethnicity and religion are twin instruments Nigerian political office holders used as division tools among citizens to obtain political, economic, societal, and cultural personal and/or group interests, and these have had consequential effects which have bastardized Nigeria's democratic governance system and by extension, the economy as a whole.

Substantiating these findings, Participant 001 noted that "Ethnicity and religion has been weaponized by the political elites to advance personal interests and mesmerize the citizens into confusion and sharp divisions without any relative bearing to the citizens' development or national development. The participant furthered that "It is rare to find ethnic and religious platforms being used to mobilize for taxation or national awareness. It is never a platform for healthy competition." Participant 002 asserted that "Plays a critical/major role." Participant 003 corroborated that "Ethnicity and religion

takes major role, and bias for some ethnic and religious groups by the government is perceived.” Participant 004 stated that:

Ethnic and religious affinity plays out in citizens trust in people in government a lot. People of one ethnic or religious affinity are always waiting for the turn of a leader from among them because they believe such leader will protect their interest. Ethnic and religious affinity also plays out in citizens participation with government during elections as people tend to support one of their own and they also blindly support such leader even when he is doing wrong.

Participant 005 explained that:

Ethnic and religious considerations without any gainsay, the politicians in Nigeria have exploited these twin sensitive and highly volatile planks as inroad to gain the trust of the citizens and vice versa. The people have this erroneous belief that when a particular public officer is from their ethnic background, it is as sure as death that development in all ramifications is guaranteed! Whereas there have exceptions with some public office holders: it was expected that Obasanjo would use his tenure as president of Nigeria to fast track infrastructural development in the Southwest, but reverse is the case. But every time a Northerner is a President, to the amazement of Southerners, a greater percentage of developmental programs are unashamedly located in the Northern part of the Federation. Again, in Ekiti State lately for instance, every Governor ensures that a tertiary institution is sited in his hometown! This unhealthy practice in some way is used to secure the trust of the people within the locality and probably to ‘wet the ground’ for future

elections. Religious considerations do not seem to matter so much in the Southern part of the Federation, whereas it is a major consideration in most of the Northern Nigeria.

Participant 006 commented that:

The ethno-religious considerations in Nigeria have adequately played a significant role in democratic processes through its moral and ethical commitment, the values it upholds, its critical approach and its cultural expression. It is playing a major role in Nigeria democracy now most especially from the pre-election activities of 2015 general elections that brought the present government to power.

Participant 009 added that:

Given that political agenda in the democratic process is always predicated on or advanced through the country's fault lines- ethnic, religious, and regional sentiments- citizens have developed more trust in the capacity/reliability of their ethnic and religious associations than the Nigerian government, primarily perceived as an exploitative legal contraption. Ethnic and religious platforms/associations are naturally mobilization bases for politicians in Nigeria.

According to Participant 007, "There should be no role between ethnic and religious considerations in citizens' trust in democratic process. Unfortunately, the Nigerian situation is complicated with ethnic and religious cleavages." Participant 010 recounted that "A ridiculously huge role, as Nigerians are usually more supportive of people from their ethnic group or religion. It affected voters' apathy and candidacy decisions to an extent." Participant 012 submitted that "Major role, almost everyone

wants to represent the interest of their ethnicity or religion in engaging the government.”

Participant 013 narrated that “Right from the events that preceded the Nigeria Civil War of 1967, ethnic and religious considerations have become the basis for government bias in Nigeria democratic process and till date, trust has been lost.”

Participant 011 noted that:

Ethnic and Religious considerations are used by the leaders to deceive people, so they play a big role on citizens’ trust. These two have only worsened the situation in Nigeria. In saner climes, these are issues that should not affect citizens’ participation but in Nigeria, they taint every decision made by citizens.

Participant 014 commented that:

Yes. Religious sentiments, tribal sentiments, they sharpen people and people still cling to that, but I am not seeing them perform in any positive effects. All the people that we are seeing that they are not leading us well, they all belong to one tribe or one religion. If you remove them, you put another one, it is the same thing they do. So, I cannot see any positive contribution. I would say they are also part of the problem because where everyone is coming from, is so selfish oriented. So, I would not say there is the positive contribution or role they are playing, but they are playing a role because people are formed by them. So, it is what those religion, those tribes are putting into people that they come out to play, which is negative as far as I am concerned. Thus, it is a negative role because they go about indoctrinating and selling terrible ideas to people and do all sorts of evil in

the name of religion and tribe so that they can try to do good things. It is just what people eat that they used to say at this time and perpetuate their ideologies.

Participant 015 viewed that “Every ethnic/religious group desire that the government should meet their yearnings and aspirations. When this is not done, the level of citizens' trust diminishes.” Participant 017 opined that “Religion enlightens them about governance, but ethnicity limit their thinking about what governance is all about.” Participant 019 suggested that “The roles played by ethnic and religious considerations are nothing to write home about because of selfishness, self-ego, and religious bigotry in Nigeria. The two factors play a pivot role in Nigeria democratic role.” Participant 020 observed that “Both ethnicity and religious bigotry has a major influence in our electoral system. They are major determinants in any, if not in all of our elections.”

According to Participant 016

No; I would say that is the worst of it all. Who knows maybe that is what has generated all these challenges, because putting in ethnicity and religion into politics should be ruled out. Looking into advanced countries, this does not happen at all. I feel if these two can be pulled out, I think we will make a headway. Generally looking at it, it is awfully bad, and things are getting worse. If we can pull out religion and ethnicity, I am very sure Nigeria will survive without them, because looking at it, everything is all about the religion and where you come from in the sense that everything is all about familiarity and favoritism. If we can take people for who they are, everything will be fine.”



Participant 018 added that:

It plays major roles. In fact, choice of leadership is determined principally by these two major factors! Opportunity parity, which is alien to our tradition, culture and religion will to a greater extent enhance public trust and citizen engagement in Nigeria. Democratic governance structure is not just about a few women for example that are interested in political powers or positions in government. It is about all the women and men being given opportunity to operate freely in every area of the democratic governance structure.

Participant 021 noted that:

The central government mirrors the perspective of a zone in a heterogeneous and religiously divided country that has paled into an amalgam of incompatible social formations. Ethnic and religious bias shape the distribution of power and resources, thereby deepening the cleavages and division. Unity in diversity is made difficult.

Participant 022 explained that:

Many conflicts have both ethnic and religious dimensions. The two play a role of course but these are frequently subordinate. Religion and ethnicity are deeply connected. This helps to cultivate harmonious society, becoming one people. Ever mindful of social strife and racial conflict thus becoming one people, building bonds of trust that bridge our ethnic, social, religious, and cultural differences.

Participant 023 viewed that:

Religious sentiment still plays a lot of roles in Nigeria's democratic firmament as this is obvious in our voting pattern, though most pronounced in the far northern part of Nigeria, Northwest and Northeast geopolitical zones. There seems to be mutual trust among people of the same religious sentiments. A good case are the following states: Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Kaduna & Kogi where if a governorship candidate is a Muslim, his running mate must be a Christian, or vice versa. Kaduna state just broke the rule in 2019. Therefore, the Nigerian public is emotionally attached to religious and ethnic feelings. This has unfortunately affected their sense of objectivity and prevented them from actively engaging the government.

Participant 024

Yes, the concept of public trust where certain natural and cultural resources are preserved for public use, with government's ownership of them, to protect and maintain the resources for public use is an important element for effective democratic process for good governance in Nigeria. However, there should not be any preference for any group, party, association, religion, or gender. Though, there are uneven distribution of the gains of democracy, the government has not done fairly with ethnic and religious considerations. To some extent, there had been unfavorable allocation or allotment to a particular favored ethnic as well as religious groups and this encourages nepotism. This is a minus for a government that may want to succeed. As a result of the perceived bias of the government due

to party affiliation, ethnicity, and religious inclination on the part of the leadership, the citizen is negatively affected.

According to Participant 025, “The Nigeria politics is strongly polarized along religion and ethnic coloration. The role played by the ethnic and religious considerations in citizen engagement with government in Nigerian democracy is very substantial.”

Participant 027 explained that “The involvement of local and faith-based organizations does promote public engagement and public trust. The people already trust their leaders enough to attend their events. They can serve as tools and venues for citizen engagement events.”

Participant 026 said that

The roles played by ethnic and religious consideration are based majorly on deception, self-ego, religious bigotry, and the erosion of the fabric of our core values, ethics, cultural heritage, traditional perceptions, and norms. The two factors play a pivot role in Nigeria’s Democratic process.

Participant 028

Presently, government seems to have lost the trust and confidence of both ethnic and religion groups in Nigeria. When one takes into consideration the spate of violence unleashed on the Northern region by the bandits and terrorists using Islamic reason as the basis for their attacks on innocent citizens.

To a greater degree these two (religion and ethnicity) have been influencing citizens’ participation in our democratic process. For instance, every government has been trying to balance the two in selection/election of principal officers in

government. Hence the principle of federal character and religion balancing i.e., whenever we have a Christian president, we always have a Muslim as vice president and vice versa.

***Emergent Theme 8: Level of Citizen Engagement***

Findings showed that citizens engagement in Nigeria's democratic practices is relatively low. Citizen's participation has nearly been limited to voting exercise, which has been marred with rigging or other electoral frauds. As a result, citizens' trust has been eroded and a reasonable number of citizens have withdrawn from engaging in democratic practices since citizens' engagement relatively have no effect – either positive or negative, as decisions or outcomes of such activities are usually influenced by political office holders who have enslaved the masses for their selfish interests. For instance,

Participant 001 commented that:

There is abysmally low level of citizens' engagement (participation) in the government process in Nigeria due to low level or absence of trust between the political elites mostly seen as predators and the citizens who find themselves as the prey. Abysmally low extent. The relationship is like that of the prey and the predators most times. The citizens have been forced to a state of perpetual distrust for the political elites, nay the government. This is the reason the current Federal Government cannot implement the removal of petroleum subsidy and liberalization of the downstream oil sector.

Participant 004 opined that:

The level of citizen engagement in government in Nigeria is limited to those in government or those that seem to have some element of political, recognized organizations or royal power. The masses are jettisoned, even when you make your point on social media you are either not heard or censored. Therefore, the level of peoples' participation in democratic process is good enough as people are yearning to be heard under the pang of suffering, discrimination, and hunger.

Participant 005 suggested that:

Citizen engagement with the government in Nigeria democracy is not encouraging and the reason is not far-fetched. The level of illiteracy in some parts of the country is being exploited by the ruling class which results in serious marginalization because their voice is not heard or better still some representatives perform their civic duties on their behalf.

According to Participant 006, "It is extremely poor and not encouraging at the moment. It is averagely poor as a result of bad and selfish elected leaders." Participant 010 said that "I would put it at 50 percent." Participant 011 added that "In Nigeria, citizens' participation is not important to government, so people's interests have hardly been met." Participant 012 commented that:

In my opinion, I will say the citizen have left the engagement for the elites. However, things are now presently improving with the help of social media. There has been a lot of improvement since the inception of social media, the

citizen now makes use of this channel to engage the authority and a lot of interest have received positive attention.

Participant 013 noted that “Citizens engage/participate in democracy by voting, volunteering, participating in other state activities etc. By voting, citizens are participating in the democratic process. Citizens vote for leaders to represent them and their ideas, and the leaders support the citizens' interests”. Participant 016 said that “For me, I would say that it is zero. The government is for the few – politicians, and not by the people and for the people.” Participant 019 added that “The level of citizen participation is very limited.”

Participant 020 narrated that:

Majorly what I understood is citizens' participation in elections, is especially through voting. Others can be involved in different advocacy like enlightenment of the public. The non-governmental organization (NGO) should be active in this area. Also, citizens should be able to contest and be voted for on any political platform of their choice. People should also be able to democratically elect representatives of their choice. However, the level of citizens' engagement is exceptionally low. Interactions is only when elections are near. The level of participation is mostly, low. Fear of being attacked on the election day always deterred people from exercising their electoral rights, especially the elderly ones.

Participant 022 explained that:

This is an active participation of a citizen under the law of a Nation discussing and educating themselves in politics and society. Citizens have a set of rights and

responsibilities, including the right to participate in decisions that affect public welfare. Yes, voting is one way to participate in our democracy. Citizens can also contact their officials when they want to support or change a law. Voting in an election and contacting our elected officials are two ways that Nigerians can participate in their democracy. The level is exceptionally low because engaged citizenship refers to active participation of a citizen under the law of a Nation discussing and educating themselves in politics and society, as well as a philosophy espoused by organizations and educational institutions which advocate that individuals, charitable organizations should be wholly involve.

Participant 023 noted that:

There is an apathy. The citizens hardly engage the government, in fact, there is no culture of citizen engagement. What exist is a kind of mild engagement and this is usually from the civil rights organizations and some trade unions like ASUU, NLC, NBA, etc. Just a little on the average side, though with social media, which has brought a great deal of awareness, citizens participation/ engagement, has improved.

Participant 024 asserted that:

The level of citizen engagement with government in Nigeria's democratic process manifests in the involvement of individuals with genuine talents used in various areas. Women and Youths are not left out and all these are stakeholders in governments execution of policies and programs meant for the development of the citizenry.

According to Participant 025, “The extent level of citizen engagement with the government in Nigeria’s democratic process was highly significant. Participant 026 opined that “The level of citizen participation is very limited.” Participant 027 said that “That is hard for me to say. I did research on citizen involvement on disaster management, and I did not get a sense that most citizens are aware of how they can be involved. If they, it is not known to them”

***Emergent Theme 9: Extent of Citizens’ Representation in Governance***

Most interviewees reported that there is no citizen representation in Nigeria’s political environment. This is premised on power recycling within the political cabal or giants who have formed alliances to dominate and/or rule over citizen efforts to either nominate or elect a dependable representative in the democratic governance system. Indeed, at the levels where citizens are represented by elected public office holders, such have consistently failed the electorates by lusting after their own selfish aspirations and so yielding to their political leaders' mandates.

According to Participant 001, “To the extent that elections are held periodically to elect representatives to the executive and legislative arms of the various tiers of government, it will be said to be democratic in principle. Participant 002 added that “It is extremely poor and very important. It is not representative, because its highly influenced by money, representative is by who is the highest bidder.” Participant 003 commented that “There is barely citizen representation. Only voting process and it is not a trustworthy process and has not met the interest of people.” Participant 005 viewed that “Taking into consideration the spread of the wards in each local government, it can be



said that there is a fair level of representation of the citizens in the Nigeria democratic process.” Participant 007 opined that “Representation is low, if we consider the population versus number of registered voters and those who voted in the last general elections.” Participant 008 said that “In principle, there is representation to a reasonable extent; however, in practice, it is to no avail.”

Participant 009 recounted that “Technically, citizens are adequately represented in government across all state/federal constituencies in Nigeria through electioneering. However, citizens’ needs, and aspirations do not receive adequate attention from representatives in government.” Participant 011 commented that “It is abysmally low. The so-called representatives of the people at all levels have continuously failed the citizens they represent.” Participant 012 said that “Well, it depends on which class of representation, but the elites have taken over the representation more than the commoners.” Participant 014 noted that “It does not. Even the children in Nigeria are complaining about everything in Nigeria except those that are feeding fat on the resources of the country. Those are the only people that have to do with the country.” Participant 016 explained that “I would say the extent is of the hierarchy. They have not met with the interest of the people by not allowing them to participate in government No. There is a low rate of active representation in Nigeria democracy.”

Participant 015 suggested that:

It is low; there has been observed apathy in recent times due to the abysmal performance of political office holders. There has been observed recycling of past

leaders and/or their families, as well as overt marginalization of the minority groups and the less privileged.

Participant 022 explained that:

Citizens vote for leaders to represent them and their ideas, and the leaders support the citizens' interests. Young adults will be empowered, self-determination increased, and they will be given the skills and self-confidence they need to enter the workforce.

Participant 024 narrated that:

The level of representation of the citizens in Nigeria democratic process is still not encouraging in view of marginalization and non-consideration of some groups, tribes, or gender in the affairs of governance. For instance, those who are physically challenged must be duly involved, women and youths must not be side-tracked and neglected and even representation of tribes and religions must be put into consideration. Those in government believe in recycling of themselves, supposedly representing the electorates, with their family members and cronies and this amounts to setback or cog.

Participant 025 said that:

The citizens must be practically involved in the process that governs them and this is what refers to a participating democracy. The representation of the citizens in Nigeria's democratic process are not committed to the electorate, self-aggrandizement takes prominence.

Participant 019 opined that “The interest of the people has not been fully met with the engagement of citizens in Nigerian democracy. The level of citizens' representation in Nigeria democratic process is abysmally poor.” Participant 026 added that “The interest of the people has not been at all times fully met with the engagement of citizens in Nigeria Democracy.” Participant 027 said that “it is extremely low. I do not have the statistics to show the extent.” Participant 028 recounted that “Those elected or selected into public office should see themselves as caretakers of the people's collective patrimony, instead of seeing the public patrimony as their inheritance. As the case is presently among our public office holders.”

***Emergent Theme 10: Performance of Elected and Appointed Representatives***

Nearly all the interviewees explained that majority of the elected and appointed political representatives have disappointed Nigerians in their governance conducts. Overall assessment revealed that they have performed far below electorates expectations, and this has led to a myriad of challenges such as insecurity, high inflation, high unemployment, increasing poverty level etc. These outcomes have caused a stir and frustrations in the citizens towards the governing bodies or institutions for their mass failures. Within this context, Participant 005 commented that “Frankly speaking some elected representatives of the people are clueless while the others are on top of the assignment sponsoring various bills to develop their constituencies in particular and Nigeria in general.” Participant 009 said that “People’s interests are not met in governance. It is a self-serving engagement for the governing elite” Participant 010 stated that “30% do, 70% don’t.” Participant 011 added “No. Once they become elected,

majority of them feel it's an avenue to share in the national cake.” Participant 017 viewed that “No. They are selfish, myopic and self-centered” Participant 018 opined that “They in fact worsen it! They represent themselves and not the people they should be representing. They do not help to facilitate public trust and citizen engagement.” According to Participant 016,

The government should come down to the grassroots level and take things according to what the masses want. If this is not done and they do not fulfill the promises made to provide amenities for the masses, then this does not make any sense.

Participant 019 explained that “No, they have not encouraged the people to have the Public trust and full participation.” Participant 023 suggested that “This has also been on the average. Just a few of the elected representatives have encouraged citizen engagement.” Participant 025 expressed that “The governments were not responsive towards meeting the interest of the people.” The Participant furthered that “Not to a greater extent, because the process of recalling elected political office holders are cumbersome.” Participant 028 posited that “It has not because people have lost faith in the government due to insecurities, downturn in the economy, flagrant display of illicit wealth by the public officials, ineffective government machinery etc.”

Participant 022 narrated that:

It is quite simple. The obligation of governing authorities is to have respect for human rights in that they must refrain from interfering with or curtailing the enjoyment of human rights. They are required to protect individuals and groups

against human right abuses. Human rights belong to everyone, and it can tolerate its violations in any form. Values of tolerance, equality and respect can help reduce friction within the society.

Participant 026 recounted that “It facilitates good governance if people are fully involved, and they are assured of the engagements in every stratum. No. They have not encouraged the people to have the public trust and full participation.” Participant 027 noted that “No. I think the representatives only care about the people when they need their votes.”

#### **Overarching Theme 4: Democratic Element and Fundamental Human Right in Nigerian Democratic Governance**

There is no doubt that Nigerian governments understand the fundamentals of human rights and democracy (Ofoegbu, 2014). Therefore, it is important to gauge participants on how far Nigerian governments have followed the principles in fulfilling their responsibilities to the public, and how has this influenced public trust and citizen engagement.

#### ***Emergent Theme 11: Trust as an Element of Democratic Practices***

More than half of the Participants believed that trust is a two-way communication, and it is at the heart of democratic engagements which could help both the elected and the electorate to have maximum satisfaction in democratic governance. However, Nigerian democratic experience is devoid of trust and shattered by distrust and unethical practices by the elected. Within this context, Participant 001 explained that:

Sure. The concept of Public Trust is so important an element to democracy and good governance that without it, our politics is a charade and that is what it has been for most of the time since the beginning of this Fourth republic: governments operating without the peoples' trust. The current political class and the prevailing system are antithetical to public trust building let alone constructive citizens' engagement. It is a prey and predator system.

Participant 004 stated that:

Yes, the concept of public trust is even entrenched in the Nigeria constitution chapter 2 (s. 13-24) titled fundamental objectives and directives principles of state policy, unfortunately they are justiciable but they are not enforceable in Nigeria's courts. Yes, but the people must be assured that their resolves or agreement will be final and respected like that of American jury.

Participant 005 said that "Oh yes, the concept of public trust is a major ingredient for effective democratic process for good governance. There is an irony here; some of those public officers are not trustworthy as they are all out for their pecuniary gains."

Participant 009 noted that "Active and meaningful involvement of the citizens in decisions that affect their lives with a view to engendering sense of belonging and ownership of the process." Participant 013 commented that "Citizens do not trust any tier or arm of the government in Nigeria." Participant 015 asserted that "Yes; Genuine democratic governance is people-centered and people-driven." Participant 016 viewed that "No. I do not trust them in performing their responsibilities. There is no trust. Even the politicians do not trust themselves." Participant 020 suggested that "It will, especially

when there is no intimidation of citizens and election results reflects the yearning and aspirations of the citizenry.” Participant 021 added that “Public trust is key because it underscores a critical feedback, approval and disapproval of government or governmental activities.” According to Participant 022,

Democratic process entails people being prepared to serve a government by the people through voting and understanding governmental structures, but such trust is not applicable and practicable in our country, Nigeria because citizens do not have or retain the confidence in the Nigeria system of Governance.

Participant 023 noted that “Yes, it is. A society that builds good trust in her leadership thrives. There is maximum compliance with the law and public order in such system.” Participant 025 explained that “To a greater extent, this will enhance public trust in the political office holders.” Participant 027 recounted that “Nigerians still find it difficult to trust the democratic process and rightfully so. Nothing is transparent. Even though it is a democracy, things are still being run as if we are still under military regime.” Participant 028 expressed that “Absolutely yes. It encourages the citizens to obey and comply with whatever policy frameworks that the government may bring up.”

***Emergent Theme 12: Extent of Citizens Trust in Governance***

Most interviewees have low trust perception in democratic governance. They were assertive that government demeanor to citizens is depressing, and citizens have been subjected to various hardships. This ethical and moral deficiency has eroded public trust in governance beyond the limit or elastic point. Within this context, Participant 001 commented that “Citizens’ trust unfortunately is absolutely lacking in the Nigeria

Government.” Participant 003 answered “Barely trusted the elected representatives.”

Participant 004 suggested that “The Nigerian citizens trust in people in government to perform their duties is astronomically low as Nigerians are adaptive people always adjusting to whatever comes their ways even in the face of non-performance of public duty.” Participant 005 explained that:

In fact, the citizens totally trust the government to do the business of governance fairly and judiciously in carrying out its civic responsibilities for the benefit of the generality of the people. But unfortunately, the Nigerian democratic process has been such that the electorate are always left disillusioned and disenfranchised almost immediately after winners are sworn into office. The masses are often short-changed and feel morally raped and deceived. Lately such political immorality and impunity encourage the constant change of political parties especially at the State level because the shortcomings of the incumbent become the campaign platform for the opposition. Ekiti State is a typical example of such, APC today, PDP tomorrow!

Participant 006 noted that “As at today, most citizens in Nigeria do not trust the government as a result of serial failure of leaders elected in democratic positions from 1999 till date. The trust has eroded completely.” Participant 010 added that “Not much trust.” Participant 011 revealed that “In a normal democracy, there should be public trust but unfortunately citizens do not trust any democratic process in Nigeria anymore. No iota of trust. Government has continuously failed citizens so there is no public trust anymore.” Participant 013 stated that “The public used to have considerable level of trust



in democratic process only the player citizens do not consider trustworthy.” According to Participant 009:

Overtime, particularly in the two decades of democratic experiment in Nigeria, there appears to be a disconnect between the people and the government. Indeed, the mass of the people are alienated from governance deliverables and decision-making process. To many Nigerians, successive democratic governments have failed in meeting their individual/collective needs. Hence, trust in government to perform its responsibilities is a mirage in Nigeria.

Participant 014 explained that “There has to be a scale to be graded to determine to what extent. No, I do not trust them. Mistrust is remarkably high.” Participant 015 noted that “Yes; Citizens desire that those who can be trusted to make life meaningful for them should be in charge of governance.” Participant 019 recounted that “Citizens just have low percentage trust in government performance within Nigerian democratic process.”

Participant 016 narrated that:

Right now, in Nigeria, trust is misplaced; there is no more public trust in politics in Nigeria. It is all about people's mindset and people are reluctant to come out to actually vote, why do you have to go out and vote when they already know that the results were already determined, and they really know those who are winning so we cannot waste our time because no matter how the masses try to participate during the elections, they always feel their votes will never count. This feelings by the citizen have made them to lose trust in Nigerian politics.

As for public trust, for example, you Mr. Ojo aspired to become a governor and you come out and tell us that when you get into office, this you will do for us. You ask all the groups to write out for you their needs which you promised to do, but you did not. You come out to canvass for our vote with a promise of fulfilling your duties, but you did not. This has created a lot of trust issue. We put in all this, and things will never happen; they are just under the table. So, all these promises made throughout the tenure were not fulfilled. Instead, you fund your families, friends, girlfriends, and whatever, and even building houses and making all the money for yourself and which is not good. Thus, for the citizens to have trust in the democratic process, government should concern themselves to service delivery in view of the masses.

Participant 017 viewed that “Zero trust from the citizens to the government and the gap keeps widening. Public trust has been destroyed.” Participant 028 recounted that “Citizens' trust in governments' pronouncement and policies is at the lowest level in Nigeria presently.”

Participant 018 narrated that:

It depends on the type of responsibilities. In terms of (a) Employment 10%, and payment of salaries the trust level is around 75%, (b) National Security and security during elections and the democratic process trust level around 30%, (c) Service delivery and infrastructure provisioning – 45% trust by my estimates. Citizen trust in government performing its responsibilities within the Nigerian democratic process is exceptionally low.

Participant 020 answered that:

I do not believe that there is any trust between the citizens and the government.

Generally, it is only a handful of people that believe that the electoral system will produce responsible leaders that will honor the terms and conditions of good governance

Participant 021 commented that:

Public trust is waning due to negative score cards of government at the three levels. The elders are full of nostalgia because of the performance of early governments at regional levels. Youths are disconnected from governmental structures that cannot guarantee employment. Most basic amenities are provided by households themselves. These are detrimental to trust building.

Participant 022 added that:

I cannot tell because of my nonpartisanship. But the bottom line is that citizen participation contributes to democratic citizenship; it had positive effect on individuals' development of knowledge, skills, and virtues but to me the number of people becoming involved represents a relatively small portion of the population and particular groups are often underrepresented.

Participant 023 suggested that:

As a result of the poor performance of government in the past, the trust which the public hold on the government has weaned down considerably in Nigeria. A disconnect which has existed between the government and the governed has occasioned this development.

Participant 024 observed that:

Ethnic and religious leadership play much role in giving credence to the Nigerian democratic process. This is in relation to credible leaders in different milieux.

These leaderships control large followership, and they are viable tools in building the citizen's trust in the government. This is done through sensitization and awareness creation where the individuals are enlightened and educated on government policies and programs.

***Emergent Theme 13: Freedom of Participation***

Most interviewees submitted that elected representatives have tactically withdrawn and/or denied the electorates the freedom of participation in Nigeria's democratic governance. This denial is beyond voting, participating in decision making process, referendum etc., to legislating an Act – Hate Speech Act, which restricts electorates from open correction, comment, or rebuke of selfish or wrong policy of Nigerian governments. Thus, Participants viewed that contemporary Nigerian democratic governance is only restricted to the high-class politicians who have enthroned themselves in the seat of power thereby recycling themselves or exchanging governance within the class with or without any influence of voting exercise. The democratic conduct is disempowered by election fraud, corruption, monetization etc. in Nigeria. Within this context, Participant 001 stated that “The freedom of participation has been circumscribed by the monetization of politics. Only rogues and people who have had access to the public treasury continue to recycle themselves to continue the pillage and hence the dearth of public trust.” Participant 007 opined that “To a large extent in my own opinion,

there is freedom of participation at all levels for all citizens within the Nigerian democratic public space.” Participant 013 commented that “With the recent enactment of Hate Speech Act, the Act that negates Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Information Acts, I am not seeing any freedom of participation in sight not to talk of enhancing public trust.”

Participant 004 said that:

Freedom of participation or better still independent candidacy will change nothing because there is a rigid system and culture in Nigerian politics that will perpetuate the sense of being in government to be served and not to serve the people. That participation in governance for the citizens does not stop at voting for one’s candidate but policies, program, laws, directive and even law passed and interpreted are tracked and monitored by citizen so as to be sure it is tailored toward the needs of a reasonable society.

Participant 005 explained that:

Ideally freedom of participation should be a major ingredient of the democratic process, but it is common knowledge that best candidates have been sabotaged and clueless stooges are presented. There are many reasons for this. Some incumbents want to perpetuate themselves in office and rule by proxy, whenever this happen, it is a treachery against the people and a grand design to scuttle any free and fair democratic process. Sometimes outright imposition of candidates is the order of the day.

Participant 006 noted that:

Democracy has over time proved to be the best framework for freedom of conscience and participation. In a nascent democracy, freedom of participation is expected to influence and enhance the public trust of government but unfortunately this has not been manifested and demonstrated in Nigeria because of maladministration and lack of capacity and distrust among the elected political leaders.

Participation of people in the democratic institutions is a basic human right and very essential for sustainable development and good governance. When citizens are adequately participative in the electoral process then good governance is inevitable, hence the need for due process and administration of justice.

Unfortunately, these two ingredients of good governance (due process and administration of justice) are substantially lacking in Nigeria's democratic process.

Participant 014 explained that:

You know freedom of participation is very loaded and it is very subjective because while going by the book, it says everybody is free to participate. But when you are going to the ingredients, what will make the participation functional, how possible it is to participate? You know, it is just lip service. Yes, we all know participation just like I said at the beginning, that part of the critical elements of an egalitarian society is the fact that people are able to participate. Even the one that you think that are not good enough, they also have their voice. They say democracy is a situation where the majority have the vote, the voice for

the minority. I would say there is no participation, except if you look at participation in terms of poverty is endemic and it is so bad people are bought and when they are bought, they go out and play to the people. So, I would not call that participation. I would not call it sincere and objective participation. Of course, they keep bringing out votes. Six billion eight million people voted; but how do they get this number of voters? who are they? do they know? And those individuals who are there today do they understand the importance of the society? Do they vote to say no to what is not good for them? They vote and they are being punished. So, when you buy their vote with whatever price, they go ahead and decide. So really, I do not think we have to say participation, the participation we have now is being doctored by the elites. Those who have lost their participation and those who might have ideas and have skills to contribute to the media and the party, most of the money go to godfatherism. So, there is really no participation. Yes, I agree that if there is genuine freedom of participation. This can enhance public trust in government.

According to Participant 015, “Freedom of participation irrespective of geographical or socio-economic barriers, and sincerity of political leaders will greatly enhance public trust.” Participant 016 noted that “I feel the government should come down to the masses level and bring up ideas, educate and allow freedom because if freedom is allowed, the masses will be able to relate with the system and not just the hierarchy approach that is coming to the grassroot level because without this act, things cannot work out. Participant 018 commented that “It will to a large extent really help. For

example, use of NIN, Permanent Voter's Card (PVC), Electronic Transmission of Election Results etc. and independence of judiciary and provision for independent candidates through legislations. Participant 019 opined that "I think if there is freedom of participation and governing authority towards Nigeria's democratic process, this will go a long way in the nation."

Participant 021 explained that:

Participation crisis is a fundamental challenge in a developing nation-state. Inclusion, instead of exclusion, in power distribution and judicious allocation of resources, amenities, infrastructure, based on equity, justice and fair play may engender trust. Participation is about the involvement of stakeholders, political class, electorate, youths, women, internally displaced persons, people with disabilities. Voting is an element, the public power to bring leaders into accountability is another. When policies and programs are informed by need analysis, it is a cardinal aspect of participation. Access to government and adjudication process is also a guarantor. Government of the people, by the people and for the people. Without participation, it is skewed, a tall order and a mere civil rule. Voting is key, especially the election of legislators who make law and do oversight functions on behalf of the electorate.

Participant 022 said that:

Since this involves the freedom to engage in political activity individually or through political parties and other organizations, freedom to debate public affairs, to hold peaceful demonstrations and meetings, to criticize and oppose, to publish



political materials, to campaign for election and to advertise political ideas, such freedom if allowed in Nigeria's democratic process will go a long way to make our democracy tenable.

Participant 023 viewed that:

Public trust in the Nigerian democratic process would be better enhanced if freedom of participation is expressly guaranteed in the provisions of the law and in actual practice. If the elections are free and fair, then electorates can choose freely, and merit will be entrenched into the system

Participant 024 recounted that:

Freedom of participation is a right of individuals, where coercion is not encouraged. It gives citizens the opportunity to make rightful choices. That is what democracy is all about. This freedom as enhanced by the Nigerian Constitution has helped the governing authority to have public trust in all the activities and programs of the government. No democratic government succeeds where views and freedom are gagged.

According to Participant 025, "There is no doubt about it, there is freedom of participation. The public trust is elusive because of insincerity of public office holders in the course of performing their primary functions." Participant 026 narrated that "I am of the view that if there is freedom of participation in all spheres of our political processes and engagements, Nigeria will be better for it." Participant 028 submitted that:

Presently, there is a reasonable level of freedom of participation in the democratic system, but the citizens, having been bogged down with unimaginable level of

insecurities, couple with economic hardship seems not to trust the government at all levels. This is still not being done. What we are witnessing is indirect participation, a situation where elected few are representing the majority at the legislative arms and selected few are representing the majority at the bequest of another elected few governors and president.

### **Overarching Theme 5: Barriers in Nigerian Democratic Governance**

Nigerian governments have been unable to foster sustainable development in their developmental programs despite practicing democratic governance (Lord-Mallam & Mijah, 2019). To this end, participants were probed on their perspectives on the present and emerging barriers to Nigeria's democratic governance.

#### ***Emergent Theme 14: Absence of Due Process and Electoral Fraud***

Respondents revealed that the Nigerian governance system suffers the absence of due process as political office holders and appointed public servants have misused their authority to influence public decisions, overrule law and order. among others to their favor. Also, this has been employed to perpetuate electoral fraud significantly in the country. Within this context, according to Participant 002, “Absence of due process leads to corruption of democratic process, which operates by depriving people of their legitimate rights, and defeats the essence of democratic process.” Participant 005 added that “Lack of due process and justice is a veritable way to polarize any political party and injuries arising from such *show of power* takes a rather long time to heal and/or leads to break away and decamp to another party!” Participant 009 said that “It is abysmally low, particularly in post electioneering period”

Participant 028 explained that:

Due process and effective judicial process are parts of the ingredients that can promote effective participation by the citizens in governance. Unfortunately, these two are still lacking behind in our democratic process. What we are having now is imposition of our public officers either directly by the party leadership or indirectly through a skewed party congress/convention.

Participant 012 commented that “It is a big man syndrome.” Participant 006 answered that “Lack of inclusiveness and inequality between the poor and the elites. Once the political officials are elected to offices in Nigeria, they forget the electorates and do their selfish bids. It is really saddening and unfortunate!”

Participant 002 said that “Nontransparent electoral process, electoral process that is heavily money influenced, ignorance (poor literacy level) poverty, lack of public trust.” Participant 020 viewed that “Lack of trust, manipulation of electoral results to perpetuate themselves in power, corruption etc.”

***Emergent Theme 15: Ethical, Moral, and Ethno-Religion Decadence***

Interviewees were unanimous in their condemnation of the degrading morality displayed by elected public officials in governance since the introduction of the current democratic administration. This has allowed corruption to infiltrate the Nigerian democratic system from scratch. Corruption, which has turned into a cankerworm that has spread across the system, has harmed morality, values, and ethical governance practices. This is supported by the excerpt below.

Participant 004 stated that “Corruption, nepotism and the failure of the citizens to punish misdeed of those with public trust.” Participant 007 said that “Barriers: injustice, impunity, money politics, ethnic and religious politics, corruption at all levels of governance.” The Participant further explained that “I cannot see any direct relationship between respect for human right and public trust in Nigeria. There is a complete absence of virtues that support public trust.” The Participant also added that “Most participants are driven by the illusion that public service is a means to improve their personal financial/social standing.”

Participant 015 commented that “Greed and corruption, ethnic and religious chauvinism.” Participant 017 said “Bribery, corruption, deception, poverty etc.” Participant 024 viewed that “Religious fundamentalism and ethnic bias.” Participant 026 opined that “The barriers are basically and intrinsically gender, age, ethnicity, and religious consideration.” Participant 012 mentioned “Unfair treatment of the commoners etc.” Participant 016 said that “A lot of favoritism and godfatherism serves as hindrance and this serves as a mess; speaking from past experience whereby everything is all about lobbying – it is a give and take situation.” Participant 001 explained that:

In my opinion the barriers among others will include poor communication strategies by the government, low quality of the political leadership class, erosion of values over time, the national calamity of military rule for nearly four decades, the natural resource economy as against tax driven economy, corruption, endemic corruption, and indiscipline.

Participant 018 said that “Excessive indirect information flow (Government-to-Citizen and Citizen-to-Government), involvement of too many third parties that tamper with information flow, too much fake news etc.” Participant 010 commented that “Personal interest and deceit facilitators.” Participant 011 recounted that “The major barrier of public trust in Nigeria is government insincerity. No facilitator for now.” Participant 015 viewed that “Lies and deception, favoritism.”

***Emergent Theme 16: Poor Education, Judicial Malady, and Insurgency***

Findings revealed that there is increasing low educational level and poor access to information. These disadvantage the people, particularly in matters of governance, and as a result, political elites savor the opportunity to promote their own interests. Justice interference, which involves delaying justice in order to affect political outcomes, is far more serious. Furthermore, insurgency has evolved into a tool for political benefit, with politicians directly or indirectly sponsoring insurgents to win points against their opponents during election campaigns. Within this context, Participant 004 said that “The judicial dispensation of justice or punishment to violators is so weak both in law and sentencing.” Participant 012 commented that “Poor justice system (Judgement delayed is justice denied).” Participants 015 and 024 mentioned that “Insincerity; insurgency and militancy.” Participant 018 said that “Poor education.” Participant 022 stated that “Lack of public awareness.”

Participant 014 explained that

No education, bad judicial system, poverty, and others. Some people are rich, but their mind is poor. So, it is a psychological problem of greed and wickedness

because those rich politicians behave inhumane to poor people; they just don't understand the concept of humanistic feeling.

Participant 028 stated that:

Our judicial process is too slow to a level that a declared winner whose election is being challenged would have finished his/her tenure before the election is overturned by the judicial process. Judgments for cash is another problem of our judicial process.

### **Overarching Theme 6: Facilitators of Nigerian Democratic Governance**

Scholars, development artists, and politicians are stepping up their efforts to combat the barriers to Nigerian democratic governance (Okoi & Iwara, 2021). This overarching theme gave participants the opportunity to suggest ways to address and/or mitigate the issues.

### ***Emergent Theme 17: Education, Communication, and Social Amenities Provision***

Almost all interviewees agreed that education is important for democratic progress and strong democratic administration. The ability of the governing body to inform the people, interact with them through suitable channels about political developments, and promote all-inclusive participatory governance is a facilitator of democratic government. This has the ability to spur sporadic social, structural, and infrastructural development.

Within this context, Participant 001 stated that “Political education and enlightenment on all fours particularly by the civil societies; a more transparent and trusted electoral system, criminalization of political offences such as electoral fraud,

breach of public trust, and a dependable judicial system.” The Participant furthered that “Citizens must be mobilized to stand up for their rights rather than wait to be served a la carte. When the citizens prove that they are awake to their rights, the political class will have no option than to serve or risk been sacked.” Participant 002 commented that “Electorate education, reducing level of ignorance, and an electoral process that is accessible to all.” Participant 005 said that “Whereas responsiveness of government, transparency, proper political education/communication, clearly specified policies are facilitators of public trust and citizen engagement with the government in Nigeria’s democratic process.” The Participant added that “Local dialects may have to be introduced to the various Assemblies as acceptable language of communication. This will enhance understanding and fluency of ideas from elected representatives whose level of spoken English is poor and/or introduce translators.” Participant 007 revealed that “The least in the society should have access to the basic issues of life; good food and portable water, livable environment, basic education up to secondary school level, affordable health services.”

According to Participant 014, “New research like this can be published and things might change. Also, if poverty is reduced, people would not be monetized. Others include improving the living standard of people, transparency, and accountability.” Participant 015 viewed that “Public enlightenment and political/civil education.” Participant 018 said “Awareness training, getting people informed, infrastructure provisioning, assurance of government to citizens and citizens to government direct exchanges, intelligence gathering and crime prevention, punishment of bad behavior(s) through lawful means.”

Participant 019 commented that “There should be sensitization program towards good governance and the leaders should entrust themselves with justice.” Participant 023 opined that “Effective and efficient delivery of democratic dividends. Better life for the populace, protection of constitutional rights and good order in the society.”

Participant 025 explained that “Governance must be citizen oriented and focused on the yearning and aspiration of the citizenry. It must focus on making life bearable for the entire citizens.” Participant 026 said that “There should be sensitization program towards good governance and leaders should entrust themselves with justice.” Participant 004 noted that “Some are trying by convening town hall meeting.” Participant 027 added that “Yes, it is. When the people you govern can come to you with their views and perceptions freely without the fear of being persecuted afterwards, you would have their trust.”

Participant 027 narrated that:

Most often the venue, not enough information, not enough time given, and no means of transportation, among other things. Public opinion polls, survey questionnaires, comments boxes, town hall meetings, and most importantly education of the leaders to understand the importance of public involvement.

Participant 028 explained that:

When basic needs of the people are made accessible to them i.e., food, shelter, security, basic health facilities, employment opportunities for working class, opportunity for basic education, good laws to protect and guide people's conduct and unbiased/effective judicial system that dispenses justice. Also, regular



sensitizations of the people about their rights and obligations under the law, coupled with effective/unbiased judicial system.

Participant 022 suggested that:

Measures to be put in place is to encourage citizens to discuss and contribute to projects. Citizens should be empowered to let their voices be heard and weigh in on the way their community is governed. I suggest a Citizen's Assembly, a group of citizens that is called upon to deliberate on a course of action and formulate policy recommendations.

### ***Emergent Theme 18: Justice and Judicial Reform***

Judicial reform is a remarkable development in the Nigerian judicial system. This is due to the fact that judicial malfeasance is thought to have harbored a high level of irregularities and immoralities, which empowers those who administer justice and/or allow election fraud to go unpunished. According to Participant 002, “A judicial system that is easy and accessible to seek redress, and public enlightenment process.” Participant 003 commented that “Rule of law and justice to be promoted.” Participant 004 answered that “Accelerated court hearings, and non-delayed payment of awarded damages” Participant 005 submitted that “There is need to improve the judicial system to make the rule of law functional as it should in order to deal with all political/other cases with alacrity.” Participant 006 added that “And also build a system that has respect for rule of law and justice.” Participant 012 revealed that “By ensuring proper justice system since the court of competent jurisdictions is the last hope of the common man.”

Participant 014 explained that:

Yes, when people have done what is wrong, and they bring them to justice, People will be encouraged. But when you see people who they say are guilty, and they are testified to, they do not see it as stealing relating to embezzlement because it's the rich that give all the time to by open up those who ask to make their lives better and make use of the collective thinking individualism. So, since there is no justice, there cannot be a good society.

According to Participant 016, “Due justice can very much also ensure public trust whereby politicians who are found wanting for crime not just in the case of bribery and corruption are properly dealt with.” Participant 020 commented that “Need for more advocacy, justice must not be determined based on personalities, who you know or the party one belongs to etc. The Participant added that “The judiciary system must be up and doing. The security agencies, especially the police must not be an appendage of the ruling class or the elites.”

### ***Emergent Theme 18: Justice and Due Process***

The findings revealed that obtaining public trust requires justice and due process. When the marginalized, destitute, and socially excluded’ care and concerns are properly addressed in governance programs, it can stimulate public trust and a healthy society based on oneness and equal opportunity for all. The excerpt below attest to the discussion as follows:

Participant 001 expressed that “due process (fair play) and justice are critical to winning the citizens confidence and their free participation in the political engineering

process of any nation, nay Nigeria.” Participant 004 commented that “With the due process and justice been practice in governance no part of Nigeria will feel marginalized and in turn citizens from different coloration will have a sense of belonging and equality.” The Participant furthered that “It will bring about a level playing ground for those with intent to represent the interest of their people in government which will signal the end of marginalization.” Participant 009 stated that “If due process and justice are perceived to be entrenched in governance, there is a high tendency that citizen engagement in Nigeria’s democratic process will be enhanced.” Participant 010 viewed that “A great deal as it would build confidence in the democratic process therefore increasing citizens’ participation.” Participant 011 suggested that “If due process and effective justice are present in Nigeria, it will affect citizens’ participation. Unfortunately, they do not exist.” The Participant added that “Let us have a weak center and strong regions. This will ensure equality and each region will develop at its own pace.”

Participant 005 noted that:

Where due process is not allowed, justice and fair play will be wanting; impunity therefore reigns supreme. Effectively, the aggrieved party will want to take back their pound of flesh in retaliation especially in a situation where political sagacity is not quickly employed and deployed by the leadership.

According to Participant 012, “The enforcer of due process and justice should be fair to all by considering equality where judgement will be done to all irrespective of color, religion, political affiliation, class etc.” The Participant furthered that “Equality is the key and that will change the agitations of unfair treatment, secession, and

marginalization from some quarters.” Participant 013 noted that “Due Process and Citizens’ engagement can certainly bring back the long-lost trust and glory of Nigeria.” The Participant furthered that “Equity, Fairness and Justice should be promoted. However complex Nigeria could be, if everyone is treated as belonging to a common parentage and heritage, Nigeria will become Eldorado.” Participant 014 explained that:

Let them choose their leaders from the grassroots to the top, then they should participate. People who they know and can reach out to, not an individual dropping people on them. Let them choose people from the community, people that they see working for them, people who understand them, and those individuals will also be able to open their minds, to get skills from people who can support them, and not to chase money. People they know in the community where they choose, they choose because they are given the money they need to recoup. The money they get there is to go to recoup their money. So, participation is not just about knowing people in the community and putting it first. It is about understanding the concepts that it is whoever you choose to represent you that determines your future. And if you take from that person, the person is taking from godfatherism proceeds to ensure you know him enough to give him the coffers or pots of money, then it is your future at stake. So, it is about openness and everybody being open to want to change the system for the better.

Participant 019 commented that “Citizen participation will be more entrenched if there is due process or justice at work. Governing authorities could have respect for human rights if they could follow due process and make justice strive.” The Participant

furthered that “If equality is being followed in Nigeria, it will enhance public trust and citizen participation to a full extent.” Participant 026 noted that “Citizen’s participation will be more entrenched if there is due process and justice at work for all to see and appreciate.” The Participant added that “If equality is being followed religiously, it will enhance public trust and citizen participation to a full extent.” Participant 028 stated that “Enforcement of due process in selection process of public officials, free and fair selection process, and effective/unbiased judicial system.”

Participant 021 explained that:

Due process is a broad term. But the summary is the absence of processes that make people to cut corners, undermine or subvert procedure. Due process, in part, is a leveler and guarantor of equity and fairness. It is non-discriminatory.

Participant 022 noted that:

Clearly stated, due process is designed to ensure fairness in the criminal justice system. Without due process, individuals could be detained and deprived of their freedom and life without just cause. If a criminal defendant is deprived of their civil rights, they can challenge the State on those grounds.

Participant 023 expressed that:

This will be to a large extent. If due process and justice system are efficiently guaranteed, the public will freely engage the government without any fear, threat, or intimidation. This will be beneficial to the public on one side and to the government on the other.

Participant 027 suggested that:

Due process is different, but it gives people the chance to fair treatment. It promotes fairness in justice. This can be a way to gain trust when people feel like the government, or the justice system cares about them and their opinion. Also, equality needs to be specifically defined here. For the purposes of public involvement, when the governed feel they are treated as equals with those who govern, then they will trust the structure.

Participant 006 said that “No doubt, equality in democratic governance structure will greatly enhance the public trust in Nigeria. Once every citizen is seen equal before the law, the citizen engagement and public trust will begin to gain momentum.”

Participant 015 commented that “To a large extent, equality/equity is a mark of recognition/relevance, which has the tendency to boost active citizenship participation in the democratic process.”

Participant 014 stated that:

Yes, true participation means inclusion and inclusion means equality. Equality also means fairness, giving everybody a chance to participate, bringing all your best to the table. Equality is equality in terms of what are the needs of everybody to participate, to contribute, to bring out their best and work the system well.

Participant 016 explained that:

I would say we Africans are greedy and very selfish people. In Nigeria as a country, everyone tends to be greedy and selfish with favoritism also being in place. But if there is equality and respect for one another, things will perfectly be fine.

According to Participant 017, “Strongly Agreed. It could make the structure function better which will enhance the dividends of democracy to the people.” Participant 020 commented that “There can never be any equality in the electoral dispensation in Nigeria. Is there anywhere in the world where we have such a thing?” Participant 023 added that “This will be to a very large extent as equality in democratic governance will promote fairness in a multi and complex democratic system like ours in Nigeria.” Participant 025 commented that “When the governance and/or political office holders are responsive to the needs and well beings of the citizenry, when corruption, nepotism and ethnicity are eradicated; then equality in democratic governance structure can enhance public trust.”

Participant 022 explained that:

Truly Nigeria is a complex democratic Nation, but the fact remains that equality and democracy are intricately linked with each other. Political equality is the quality of a society whose members are of equal standing in terms of political power and influence. Equal citizenship constitutes the core of political egalitarianism.

Participant 024 narrated that:

Where there is fair play and even distribution of resources, the citizenry’s rights are protected and ensured. In the Nigerian democratic process, there are instances for adherence to resolving legal matters according to established rules and principles, though there are lapses that hinder fair treatment of individuals to some certain extent. The Equality in democratic governance Structure can enhance public trust

and citizen engagement only when there is good leadership that has zero tolerance for corruption in all facets of life of a Nation.

***Emergent Theme 19: Trust and Active Citizen Democratic Engagement***

Evidence revealed that trust and active citizen engagement in governance or democratic practices are embedded in each other such that, trust is a facilitator of citizen engagement and in democratic governance processes and this portrays a reliable and just outcome such as free and fair election conduct. According to the Participants, Participant 002 commented that “In democratic process the citizens must have confidence and trust in the system and leadership.” Participant 015 noted that “Active involvement in lawful activities in the entire democratic process.” Participant 019 answered that “Yes, if citizens are fully engaged effectively, this will facilitate good governance.” Participant 025 commented that “There should be true democracy, election must be made credible, free, and fair. The power of incumbency must be eradicated.” Participant 002 opined that “Of course. Success of governance depends on public motivation and active participation by citizens.”

***Emergent Theme 20: Human Rights Protection, Ethical, and Value Reorientation***

Participants revealed that human rights protection is in despair from the untold hardship citizens experience from Nigeria’s political atmosphere. Thus, the need for governing bodies to orient themselves, improve their value system, and rework ethical governing conducts by laying emphasis on it and putting modalities for other strengthening plan to further democratic governance.



On this backdrop, Participant 004 stated that “Freedom of speech and peaceful protest should be allowed and guaranteed.” Participant 016 noted that “Governing authorities can have respect for human right to promote public trust and citizen engagement that will enhance communal obligation in Nigeria’s democratic process only if we have Godfearing leaders in place.” Participant 018 said that “By electing and appointing quality type government authorities and removing from authority those elements that have no respect for human rights and are not promoting public trust and citizen engagement.” Participant 024 expressed that “To ensure governing authorities have respect for human rights, there should be a well-coordinated Retreat and Orientation in form of induction where elected officers are enlightened and educated on good governance and the requirements of the law.” Participant 026 suggested that “Governing authorities could have respect for human rights when they follow due process and making justice thrive.”

Participant 014 explained that:

I feel whoever does not receive love cannot give love. The citizens have not been receiving love from people leading them. So, they are not able to share love amongst themselves. People are killing themselves because of the bitterness and how they are being treated inhumanely. So, the first thing is if the system can show an iota of love and concern. If people see examples of good leadership, they will be able to follow their example.

According to Participant 021,

Before generalizing however, internal democracy within political parties is especially important. Voting is important. Citizens should also be at liberty in exercising the power of recall. For the executive, an unwise or unruly governor can be voted out to pave the way for the true choice of the people.

Participant 001 narrated that:

In my opinion, potential facilitators of public trust and citizens' engagement in the Nigerian governance system will include among others: ethical and values reorientation, de-classification of the political class from the novae-rich to transparent public service cadre, transparency and accountability in the governance particularly the procurement process, more deployment of ICT solutions in service delivery, a more efficient and target driven civil service and an efficient and fair justice delivery system.

Participant 003 suggested that "Transparency of governance process, justice, and equity for all persons." Participant 005 expressed that "Whereas responsiveness of government, transparency, proper political education/communication, clearly specified policies are facilitators of public trust and citizen engagement with the government in Nigeria's democratic process." The Participant furthered that "The stakes for transparency, accountability and integrity must as a matter of urgency be raised in order to reduce or put a stop to corrupt tendencies hitherto unchecked."

Participant 006 opined that "The only way to achieve it in Nigeria is by making the elected officials accountable while in office." Participant 009 commented that

“Holding public office holders accountable.” Participant 010 said that “Transparency, fairness, and constituency consultations. When those in government are accountable to the people and conduct their functions in accordance with the law. By holding them accountable and enforcing the law.” Participant 012 added that “Fairness with equitable distribution of public fund to all.” Participant 013 explained that “By holding government responsible for the state of the nation, making them render the account of their stewardship from time to time and ensure the bad ones amongst them are recalled through the laid down democratic process.”

According to Participant 016, “I personally feel if the overall government can come up with a system that is transparent, accountable, and offers justice, then everything will be perfectly ok.” Participant 015 commented that “Political leadership that is people-centered, welfare-oriented, and guided by the constitution. Also, strict adherence to the rule of law.” Participant 020 added that “Good governance must include respect for the rule of law, accountability and freedom of citizens to freely participate without any form of intimidation etc., amongst other things.” Participant 021 stated that “Laws exist for regulation of conduct. Adherence to laws, constitution and judicial verdict can foster due process.” Participant 023 suggested “Promotion of rule of law, especially independence of the judiciary.” Participant 025 viewed that “There should be respect for rule of law at all levels.” Participant 020 added that:

Public trust can only enhance public trust if there's accountabilities. Everyone needs to pay for their misdeeds while in office. It is only this that can enhance public trust in Nigeria's democratic process. However, it has to go along with

accountabilities, dedication etc. to the rules of the game. No one, no matter his responsibility, must be above boards.

***Emergent Theme 21: Electoral Reform***

Findings revealed that electoral reform will go a long way in reinventing the Nigerian political ideology and approach. Issues such as youth involvement in politics, electoral fraud, self-agitation, etc. should be critically discussed using bottom top approach. To this effect, Participant 002 stated that “One key factor that next electoral reform must address. Since electoral process is heavily influenced by money, it creates inequality in capacity to seek for representation and deprives citizens of good representation!” Participant 004 viewed that “By removing immunity of state officials and making public office less juicy.” Participant 006 expressed that “Engagement of young people in government to participate in policy making. Others include building of trust and transparency in the electoral processes, capacity and efficiency in public sector management, accountability, legal framework for development, information, and transparency.” Participant 007 suggested that “Representation should be made part time and corruption/breach of public trust by public/elected officers should carry capital punishment.”

Participant 005 recounted that

The political system in Nigeria is heavily monetized; therefore, it has to be reduced to the barest minimum.” Imposition of candidates must be discouraged especially at primary election so as to allow all contestants prove their worth and/or clout.

According to Participant 008, “The national interest should be channeled towards a better political platform to move the nation forward.” Participant 010 explained that “Grassroots consultations, cheaper election expenses, transparent and fair democratic systems.” Participant 011 opined that “Until our electoral processes become more open, nothing will change. When institutions are reformed and the right leaders get into positions, it will be seamless.”

Participant 014 explained that:

I would say it is a lot. There are basic tenets which one is, letting the vote count first. Let us demonetize. The whole situation is monetized. The vote does not count. So, if they first allow the vote to count by citing the electoral bill, this innovation will make our system work. It will in turn make the votes to count, but the present governance system is not allowing it. So, for me, it is even useless going to vote because you are just wasting your time as the result gotten is not the result expected. Let them demonetized politics; but how do you ensure that? I do not know. Also, if there is a sound electoral system and institutions that will ensure the system is extraordinarily strong, then government can be trusted.

Participant 024 narrated that

To achieve effective representation in Nigeria’s democratic process for good governance, monetization of elective offices must be discouraged in order not to make it look like the governance is exclusively for the rich, who have money to dole out. There should be an all-inclusive representation and corruption, or

manipulation must be met with stiff penalty and higher or tougher punitive measures.

### **Summary**

Based on the findings, the majority of participants engaged in nonpartisan politics, while a few engaged in partisan politics, and others were spectators and commenters. Furthermore, interviewees' responses revealed that ethnicity and religion are twin instruments used by Nigerian political office holders to divide citizens in order to obtain political, economic, societal, cultural, personal and/or group interests. These have had negative consequences that has harmed Nigeria's democratic governance system and, by extension, the economy.

Further evidence revealed that citizens' participation in Nigeria's democratic activities is also minimal. Citizens' participation has mostly been restricted to voting, which has been hampered by manipulation and other forms of electoral fraud. Additionally, the majority of interviewees stated that there is no citizen representation in the Nigerian political system. This is based on power recycling among the political cabal or giants who have banded together to dominate and/or rule public efforts to nominate or elect a trustworthy representative in the democratic governance system. In Chapter 5, I will discuss the interpretation of the findings, study limitations, recommendations, implications for a positive social change, and conclusions.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore and document the Yoruba people's opinions on the concepts, barriers, and facilitators of public trust and citizen engagement in Nigeria's democratic system, which has a complex history of diverse religions, ethnicities, and cultural values. I used a qualitative nonexperimental case study method described by experts (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002; Rudestam & Newton, 2007) as the most effective method for answering the research question. The research question aligned with the study's purpose and topic (see Viswambharan & Priya, 2016).

I surmised that the qualitative case study technique was appropriate for understanding the two concepts of public trust and citizen engagement as democratic tools for good governance. The approach enabled me to gauge study participants' perceptions of what factors impact and determine their level of trust and participation in the government. In a society with complex and different ethnic groups and cultural values, answers to these questions may help to increase understanding on the ideas of public trust, citizen involvement, and good governance. Further understanding may accelerate social change initiatives for sustainable development (Viswambharan & Priya, 2016).

For this case study, I conducted semi structured interviews with 28 participants. The study's participants were purposively recruited from the study's geographic area. I purposefully selected 30 volunteers from Nigeria's six Yoruba-speaking states; two of the

individuals could not participate, resulting in a final sample size of 28. Members of the two leading political parties in Nigeria (APC and PDP), academia, women's organizations, youth organizations, religious leaders, and other ethnic and cultural associations from all six states of the Yoruba people of Nigeria were among the participants. I processed data collected by transcribing and/or cleaning it in Microsoft Word. I established six overarching themes under the study question. Thereafter, I used NVivo qualitative software to code and categorize the data. Then, I clustered the categories into emerging themes, following the theme approach to data analysis.

I conducted this study to fill a gap in the body of knowledge on the concept of public trust and citizen engagement as democratic tools for good governance in Nigeria. The study was conducted to suggest to all Nigerian political leaders and elected representatives at all strata of governance, factors that could be considered to facilitate good governance in the country. The suggested factors could also strengthen the state institutions to perform their obligations to the society and ensure that Nigeria continues to provide leadership in Africa and protects democracy from military incursions in other African states.

Based on the findings, most participants were engaged in nonpartisan politics, a few were engaged in partisan politics, and others were spectators and commenters. Furthermore, ethnicity and religion are twin instruments used by Nigerian political office holders to divide citizens to obtain political, economic, societal, cultural, personal, and/or group interests. These have had negative consequences that have harmed Nigeria's



democratic governance system and, by extension, the economy (Chiamogu & Chiamogu, 2020).

Further evidence revealed that citizens' participation in Nigerian democratic activities is also minimal. Citizens' participation has mostly been restricted to voting, which has been hampered by manipulation and other forms of electoral fraud. In addition, most interviewees stated that there is no citizen representation in the Nigerian political system. This is based on the prevalence of power rotation among the political cabal or giants who have banded together to dominate and/or rule public efforts to nominate or elect a trustworthy representative in the democratic governance system. To this end, in this chapter, I interpret the study's findings within the context of the peer-reviewed literature and the theoretical framework, discuss the study's limitations, and proffer recommendations and implications for policy and positive social change, and finally draw a conclusion.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

In this section, I present and confirm the study findings with existing evidence from the peer-reviewed literature and Benet's (2019) polarities of democracy theoretical framework.

#### **Findings in the Context of Peer-Reviewed Literature**

In this subsection, I present the study findings in comparison to the peer-reviewed literature. In discussing the findings, I hope to confirm, disconfirm, or extend knowledge in the discipline, in relation to the evidence in the peer-reviewed literature as discussed in the literature review.

***Finding 1***

The study findings revealed that most of the participants were nonpartisan in their politics. As a result, they did not participate actively in political party activities such as rallies, holding political office, maintaining active party membership, among others. They solely used their right to vote in elections for political office candidates. Also, there were election observers and commentators. These participants were only concerned with the exercise' credibility, as they were mostly representing local or international governments and nongovernmental organizations that were monitoring the electioneering process to see if citizens were allowed to exercise their right to vote and how free and fair the election process.

Participant 008 explained that “I am not a partisan, but I am passionate about effective governance.” Participants 006, 007, and 010 noted that they were nonpartisan. According to Participant 009, “I am an election observer. I conduct research on democratic governance in Nigeria. I also train election observers.” Participant 003 commented that she only had “marginal involvement, no” partisan politics. Participant 004 explained that “I am neutral in politics and non-partisan.” Participant 002 noted that “I am not involved in partisan politics but participate in political process as an ordinary citizen.” Participant 016 noted that “I would say so, but politics as it is just somehow because it is not what we want it to be. I think it is for the hierarchy and the old men.”

According to Falade (2014), only 35% of eligible voters participated in the 2011 general election voting process. The prevalence of electoral apathy in Nigeria is no longer debatable and knowing that politics is viewed in negative terms must be extremely

damaging. However, there is no other reason for this beyond Nigeria's political system's undemocratic processes, disenchantment, abuse, and uncertainty. The trend demonstrates poor voter turnout in the election, despite high levels of enthusiasm in the polls.

Thus, citizens' participation in Nigeria's political system can be categorized as follows:

- inactive people (citizens who do not engage in any political action),
- electoral specialists (with a strong interest in voting alone and who have no other political commitment),
- parochial participants (who do not vote or participate in any other political activity that does not affect their interests), and
- those who are highly involved in all political activities (e.g., exercising their franchise, party campaign, communal services, and contacting public officials).

The economic, social, cultural, political, religious, and demographic features of people decide citizen participation in Nigeria's democratic practices (Falade, 2008). Scholars such as Falade (2007, 2014) and Odo (2015) commented on politics as bad and full of hate, snuggness, and resentment. Judicial corruption, electoral disruption, wars, killings, buying and selling of votes, incomplete commitments, social tension, money laundering, political slavery, and other abuses have skewed interests. These character traits in the Nigerian democracy have contributed to the level of mistrust many Nigerians hold in the capacities and political will of Nigeria's political leaders to keep their promises to the country's citizens, which has resulted in low participation and engagement in the Nigerian

democracy. The low level of Nigerian citizen participation in Nigerian democracy runs contrary to ideals inherent in the participation and representation pair of polarities of democracy theory (Benet, 2019).

### ***Finding 2***

The study indicates that public trust is linked to democratic processes: It is citizens' trust in political party leaders, elected and/or appointed public officials, party representatives, and other political agents to carry out their mandates. Public trust motivates or encourages all citizens to participate actively in political or electoral activities, and it is based on the performance of elected officials. Citizens' dissatisfaction with these democratic governing agents' performance, on the other hand, frequently results in a loss of public trust. For example, Participant 006 asserted that “The concept of public trust in a democratic process simply means the citizens’ confidence in political institutions. It can also refer to a conviction in the legitimacy of political institutions and the regimes they represent.” Participant 009 commented that “stakeholders (the people) having the belief that democratic institutions and leaders can always meet their aspirations for good governance and collective fulfillment, and thus establishing legitimacy for government.” These imply that public trust in a government is influenced by the government’s performance in meeting the societal needs or expectations. It gives impetus for citizen participation in democratic process such as elections.

This finding is consistent with existing literature on citizens' perceptions of public trust. The citizens’ conceptualization of public trust is based on social and political trust in the democratic system of government. According to Kumagai and Ilorio (2020) and

Van der Meer (2017), the loss of trust in government is considered a "democratic crisis" with immediate and significant implications. Public trust is determined by citizens' perceptions and interpretations of what are good and equitable, as well as what is wrong. Social and political trusts are the two main pillars of public trust. Citizens' preferences have a big role in determining how much faith they have in the government. If citizens' expectations develop faster than actual results, trust and satisfaction may decrease. According to the OECD (2013), government trust is a cornerstone for the legitimacy and survival of democratic systems. For government agencies to operate fairly and effectively, they must have a high degree of confidence. Public trust has the potential to influence individual actions in ways that endorse policy goals.

### ***Finding 3***

The study suggests that citizen engagement is linked to public participation in democracy - the ability to vote and be voted for. Citizens must participate substantially in politics or democracy at all three levels of government: local, state, and federal. Citizen engagement does not always refer to electioneering; it also refers to the government's deliberate engagement of the public in deciding or contributing to governance directions – policy making and goal setting. As a result, it is easier for immediate societal needs to be effectively expressed, captured, and targeted in the government's developmental agenda, and for the necessary methods to be implemented in a holistic and timely manner. According to the Participants, Participant 010 expressed that “Its starts from electioneering to the passage of legislation and implementation. Citizens must be consulted at all levels.” Participant 011 answered that “The concept of citizen

engagement refers to the ability of citizens of a country to build checks and balances through various means in order to make the leadership accountable to the people.”

This finding is coherent with existing literature in which it is argued that people's participation can be divided into five stages: informing, consulting, involving, or deciding together, collaborating, or acting together, and empowering. Informing, consulting, involving or collaboration, and assigning or control are the ordinary and universal steps of citizen engagement (Bishop & Davis, 2002; International Association for Public Participation [IAPP], 2003; LGA, 2007). UNDP (2006) found that countries' tools for promoting greater direct citizen engagement in governance processes are improving. People are not allowed to engage in government policy creation and decision-making in many nations, resulting in poor governance. Thus, citizen participation is the redistribution of power to give way to the have-not citizens excluded from the political and economic processes. It is how they can induce significant social reform that enables them to share the affluent society's benefit. Citizen engagement is the act of any person taking part in public affairs (Mead, 2018).

#### ***Finding 4***

Most interviewees stated that good governance is a positive indication of governing body operations throughout time. It also refers to adherence to governmental ideals such as the rule of law, preservation of fundamental human rights, accountability, transparency, and equity, to name a few. It is strongly related with the supply of social amenities and/or societal requirements for the benefit of all, and/or the creation of an enabling environment for society to prosper within available finite resources through

political institutions. To buttress this finding, Participant 005 answered that “Good governance should be seen to make for basic developmental necessities and infrastructures that make life meaningful and decent.” Participant 006 recounted that “Good governance is the process by which the political institutions produce desired results that meet the needs of society while making the best use of available resources at their disposal. The key parameter of good governance is accountability.”

This finding is consistent with existing research findings in which good governance is conceptualized as government interaction with the citizens and their involvement in the process (Alaaraj & Ibrahim, 2014). It uses transformative, administrative, political, social, and economic authorities to meet the law's requirements (ANAO, 2003; Ferguson & Popescu, 2006; UNESCAP, 2012). Good governance is the governance that is transparent and accountable to the masses. It ensures zero tolerance for corrupt practices, consideration of minorities' views, and attentiveness to the voice of the most vulnerable in the society for decision making activities (Governance Pro, 2017; Kimutai & Aluvi, 2018; OECD, 2001). According to Kimutai and Aluvi (2018), good governance includes transparency, consensus oriented, citizens participatory, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, equitability and inclusivity, and obedience to the rule of law. It gives confidence to their responsiveness to society's needs both at present and future times.

### ***Finding 5***

The interviewees stated that ethnicity and religion are twin instruments used by Nigerian political office holders to divide citizens to obtain political, economic, societal,

cultural, personal and/or group interests, and that these have had consequences that have harmed Nigeria's democratic governance system and, by extension, the economy. From my research, Participant 001 noted that “Ethnicity and religion has been weaponized by the political elites to advance personal interests and mesmerize the citizens into confusion and sharp divisions without any relative bearing to the citizens’ development or national development”. According to Participant 007, “There should be no role between ethnic and religious considerations in citizens’ trust in democratic process. Unfortunately, the Nigerian situation is complicated with ethnic and religious cleavages.” Participant 003 corroborated that “Ethnicity and religion takes major role, and bias for some ethnic and religious groups by the government is perceived.”

This finding is consistent with existing literature in which scholars found that ethnic groupings were the decision makers that rejected the nation's constitutional agreement not long after the democratic government began in 1999. The unsatisfactory citizenship status has aided the rise of various ethnic militias opposed to inequality, marginalization, and poor government. The parties are considered to be in the Yoruba people ethnic group, the Supreme Egbesu Assembly (SEA), the Northern Arewa People's Congress (APC), the Igbo/Ijaw Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra, and the Bakassi Boys Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC), Niger Delta Liberation Movement (MEND), among others. The difference in good governance, and democratic practice has been widened in Nigeria further by race (Omosho, 2013).



***Finding 6***

The study indicates that elected and appointed political officials have disappointed Nigerians in their governance conducts. Overall, they have performed significantly below the citizens' expectation, which has resulted in several problems such as insecurity, high inflation, high unemployment, rising poverty levels, and so on. These outcomes have sparked outrage and resentment among citizens, who blame the government or institutions for their systemic failures.

According to the Participants, Participant 005 commented that "Frankly speaking some elected representatives of the people are clueless while the others are on top of the assignment sponsoring various bills to develop their constituencies in particular and Nigeria in general." Participant 009 said that "People's interests are not met in governance. It is a self-serving engagement for the governing elite" Participant 010 stated that "30% do, 70% don't." Participant 011 added "No. Once they become elected, majority of them feel it is an avenue to share in the national cake." Participant 017 viewed that "No. They are selfish, myopic and self-centered." Participant 018 opined that "They in fact worsen it! They represent themselves and not the people they should be representing. They do not help to facilitate public trust and citizen engagement."

This finding is consistent with existing literature regarding the performance of the elected and appointed public office holders in Nigeria. According to Akubo (2016), sixty years after independence, Nigeria continues to lag behind in all socioeconomic indices, including life expectancy, death rate, access to water, poverty rate, mortality rate, and

crime rate, and is still classified as a developing economy (UNDP, 2018). The country was recently branded the world's poverty capital (Iheonu & Urama, 2019).

### ***Finding 7***

Interviewees were unified in their denunciation of elected public officials' eroding morality in governance since the establishment of the current democratic administration. As a result, corruption has been able to enter the Nigerian democratic system. Corruption has undermined morality, values, and ethical governance practices by turning into a cankerworm that has spread across the system.

Thus, this study participants' perceptions corroborate scholarly evidence which revealed that Nigerian leaders have been robbing, stealing, and wasting public funds, as well as inflating contracts and padding payrolls (Odo, 2015). The Nigerian political elites selected kleptocracy (the rule of thieves) as their governance system (Fredlound, 2001; Odo, 2015; Okau, 2014). According to Kwasau (2013), these corrupt activities in the Nigerian economy are functioning to fuel the nation's scandal; oil-related corruption of N1.7 trillion between 1999 and 2011; NNPC's 20 billion dollars scandal in 2014; the Police Pension Fund fraud scandal; James Ibori, one time governor of Delta State conviction in a London court on corrupt Case of Money Laundering of about 450 billion Naira.

### **Findings in the Context of the Theoretical Framework**

#### ***Finding 1***

According to Benet (2006, 2012, 2013, 2019), the effective leveraging of the participation and representation pair of polarities of democracy theory requires citizen's

active participation in democratic government in order for a nation to truly achieve democracy. Citizens must be partisan in their political participation to have an influence in choices made or decisions taken at the party level, such as the nomination of public office holders. This will increase their trust in Nigeria's democratic government and encourage them to exercise their right to vote in the country's democratic development.

However, findings suggest that in Nigeria, the negative aspects of the participation and representation pair of polarities of democracy theory are being found. Participants stated that they were disinterested in participating in Nigerian politics. From the interviews I conducted, Participant 011 said that “My interest in politics is of a nonpartisan nature.” Participant 013 responded that “I am not partisan but, I love politics.” Participant 018 answered that “My involvement is not fully partisan but participatory. I support candidate(s), vote during elections – as much as possible.” Participant 019 furthered that “My involvement in politics is just during voting or just to enfranchise my right. It is not partisan.” Participant 020 answered that “As a civil servant, I abstain from politics. I am an ‘Any Government in Power (AGIP)’ member.” Participant 021 commented that “I am an active observer; nonpartisan.” Participant 022 expressed that “In as much as a partisan is a committed member of a political party, I am not one, but I can vote for any candidate of my choice as a citizen of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.”

Participant 014 commented that:

I have never been involved in partisan politics. I am not a card-carrying member of any political party, but I keenly follow political discussions. And I most usually

have my leanings, my preference to political parties or individuals that I think are showing potentials or showing some characteristics that can lead us in the country, in states, locality and then in the country.

Participant 005 also stated that

Some decades back, when I was a lot younger, I had a stint in partisan politics as a member of NPN, the ruling party at the Federal level at the time which later became the PDP of today in Nigeria. Lately, I am a keen observer and commentator of political activities within my local community and the nation at large.

Participant 024 opined that:

Though every human being, reasonably is a political animal, I am not deeply involved in politics. I am a liberal social commentator who watches political events and the trends of things and makes not just remarks but those contributions that could ginger the players up to be abreast of what they put together in their manifesto to better the life of those they govern or serve, irrespective of political affiliation. I am not inclined to any political partisanship.

### ***Finding 2***

The polarities of democracy theory argued that the characteristic of democracy is trust, which lies at the heart of representation and participation in democratic systems, as presented in the representative and participation pairs (Benet, 2012). However, findings revealed that Nigeria is exhibiting the negative attributes of the participation and representation pair of the polarities of democracy theory. Nigerian democratic experience

is devoid of trust and shattered by distrust and unethical practices by the elected.

Nigeria's political office holders have strayed from moral conduct or public ethics to corruption, embezzlement of public funds, mismanagement, and assassinations or attacks on political rivals, all of which have eroded public trust and generated a lack of trust in government operations.

According to the Participants, Participant 012 explained that "My perception about public trust to democratic process is still far from the reality, the public does not trust the process, in fact I will say most of them do not believe there is a democratic process." Participant 013 commented that "Citizens do not trust any tier or arm of the government in Nigeria." Participant 016 viewed that "No. I do not trust them in performing their responsibilities. There is no trust. Even the politicians do not trust themselves."

According to Participant 014,

For me as an individual to trust any leader, I must be able to see them holding paramount, peoples' welfare not tokenistic welfare. A system that takes care of everybody, especially those who do not have. I think I have read somewhere and there is a statement that, the society is judged not by the have or by the have not, but by the standard of living of the have not. So, it is about those who do not have – the vulnerable, about how are we taking care of the weak members of the society. As leaders, I expect them to ensure a system that you do not have to be rich to get education. You do not have to be a rich person to get basic necessities of life, food, shelter, accommodation, health, and basics of life in general. So, a

leader I would trust would be one that I can say has a system that is taking care of citizens and not the one that is solely around the politics – the campaign period like 2019, 2023 or 2027. You see so many of them going around buying stuff and giving to the poor. It is also a society that the leadership style does not say the winner takes it all. There are some persons when they get to power, they only ensure they look out for their people. They do not look out for other people with skills that can participate. Another characteristic of civil society is a society where everybody can participate, a society where everybody can contribute, where nothing is thrown out or there is no person that is superior to the other. There is no culture that is superior to the other. There is no human being or human group that is superior to the other. So indeed, a leader I will trust is one who will think of the future of our children; those children are not just being born, but they are being born with a sense of purpose, and with a plan, that when they are growing up, they will be properly nurtured. They will not go on the streets. And when they are nurtured, they are also at stake to protect their society, to contribute to their societies. So, these values, I would say we do not have.

Participant 004 stated that:

Yes, the concept of public trust is even entrenched in the Nigerian constitution chapter 2 (s. 13-24) titled fundamental objectives and directives principles of state policy, unfortunately they are justiciable butt they are not enforceable in Nigerian courts. Yes, but the people must be assured that their resolves or agreement will be final and respected like that of American jury.

This finding is not consistent with the positive aspects of the participation and representation pair of the polarities of democracy theory. According to Benet (2019), the values inherent in the participation and representation pair of the polarities of democracy theory are very crucial to the concept of public trust. It provides people with the certainty and hope of fulfillment, as well as the assurance that the leaders are trustworthy and will be committed to the society through providing efficient leadership. It also promises a boost in citizen engagement and trust in elected authorities. The trustor earns trust by acting in a well-coordinated, determined, and moral manner toward the trustee (the elected and the electorate). These are cultivated by democratic governance systems that encourage strict adherence to societal norms, codes of behavior, or governance standards that are universally accepted in the democratic system.

### ***Finding 3***

The study indicates that citizen participation in Nigerian democratic practices is limited. Citizens' participation has mostly been restricted to voting, which has been hampered by manipulation and other forms of electoral fraud. As a result, citizens' trust has been eroded, and a significant number of citizens have stopped participating in democratic practices because citizens' participation has little positive impact as decisions or outcomes of such activities are usually influenced by politicians who have enslaved the masses for their own selfish interests. This finding is closely related to the negative aspects of the participation and representation pair of the polarities of democracy theory. Excerpts from participations' perceptions showed the following:

Participant 001 commented that:

There is abysmally low level of citizens' engagement (participation) in the government process in Nigeria due to low level or absence of trust between the political elites mostly seen as predators and the citizens who find themselves as the prey. Abysmally low extent. The relationship is like that of the prey and the predators most times. The citizens have been forced to a state of perpetual distrust for the political elites, nay the government. This is the reason the current Federal Government cannot implement the removal of petroleum subsidy and liberalization of the downstream oil sector.

Participant 004 opined that:

The level of citizen engagement in government in Nigeria is limited to those in government or those that seem to have some element of political, recognized organizations or royal power. The masses are jettisoned, even when you make your point on social media you are either not heard or censored. Therefore, the level of peoples' participation in democratic process is good enough as people are yearning to be heard under the pang of suffering, discrimination, and hunger.

Participant 005 suggested that:

Citizen engagement with the government in Nigeria's democracy is not encouraging and the reason is not farfetched. The level of illiteracy in some parts of the country is being exploited by the ruling class which results in serious marginalization because their voice is not heard or better still some representatives perform their civic duties on their behalf.



According to Benet's (2019) polarities of democracy, citizen participation in democratic activities is an exercise of franchise, as articulated in the human rights and communal obligations polarity pairs. Thus, good governance encourages citizen participation through several methods, including but not limited to voting. Citizen participation fosters democratic government norms and standards, as well as equal rights and participation in democratic processes. It is a democratic right to exercise to improve governance, and it is often acclaimed for its good governance and democratic actions. Citizenship confers legal rights to people, and each state is required to safeguard individuals and the exercise of rights such as political, civic, economic, cultural, and social engagement. Participating in decision making and participating in political public actions are examples of citizen involvement. Decentralization of authority is a direct way to encourage citizen engagement in governing policy and decision-making while also providing a boost to growth and development. This aligns with Benet's polarities of democracy which claims that democratic methods are either/or solutions to oppression based on man's experience, but that good administration requires effectively leveraging the five polarity pairs that are contained in the polarities of democracy theory.

***Finding 4***

The study suggests that good governance relates to evidence (positive or negative) of governing body activities over a period of time. It also relates to obedience to the guiding principles of governing activities such as obedience to the rule of law, fundamental human rights protection, accountability, transparency, equity etc. According to the Participants - Participant 016 expressed that "Good governance is a government

that makes themselves available to the masses, open minded, and accountable towards their actions, that is, “transparency and accountability”. Participant 018 noted that “My perception of good governance is about understanding public service. That is pursuance of public good and making interest of the people and nation superior to personal interest or group interest.” Participant 019 added that “My perception of good governance is to allow citizens to participate fully in democratic process and those at the helm of affairs should have to abide with the rules and regulation.

This finding is inconsistent with Benet’s (2013, 2019) polarities of democracy theory, that good governance fosters democracy and Benet’s polarities of democracy theory propose 10 values (freedom and authority, justice and due process, diversity and equality, human rights and communal obligations, and participation and representation) to successfully manage their relationship pairs of interrelated polarities. Good governance refers to how the government interacts with citizens and how they participate in the process. Thus, governance refers to how power is used to manage a country's economic and social resources to promote growth. Citizen participation, people-centered governance, accountability to the masses, transparency in decision-making, rule and regulation enforcement, responsive, effective, and efficient resource utilization, meeting societal needs, equitable and inclusive to all citizens, guided and conform to the rules and regulations for fairness and justice are all characteristics of good governance.

### ***Finding 5***

The findings indicate that politicians exploit ethnicity and religion as twin instruments to sow divisions among Nigerians to advance their own desired objectives,

whether within the party, locality, state, or federal level. The implication is that Nigeria's tribes, ethnic groups, regions, states, and zones are no longer united, and democratic aims have shifted to tribal, regional, state, and zonal interests rather than national development. This can be seen in today's state and federal development programs, where one ethnic group is prioritized or favored over another within the same government, state, or nation. Nigeria's national diversity has been abused to the detriment of one ethnic community for another to thrive. Thus, the findings affirm that Nigeria is not attaining the positive aspects of equality and diversity pair of the polarities of democracy theory. The democratic system is being operated in ways that attain the negative aspects of equality and diversity pair of the polarities of democracy theory for good governance, as advocated by Benet (2019).

According to the Participants – Participant 001 noted that “Ethnicity and religion has been weaponized by the political elites to advance personal interests and mesmerize the citizens into confusion and sharp divisions without any relative bearing to the citizens’ development or national development. The participant furthered that “It is rare to find ethnic and religious platforms being used to mobilize for taxation or national awareness. It is never a platform for healthy competition.”

Participant 005 explained that:

Ethnic and religious considerations without any gainsay, the politicians in Nigeria have exploited these twin sensitive and highly volatile planks as inroad to gain the trust of the citizens and vice versa. The people have this erroneous belief that when a particular public officer is from their ethnic background, it is as sure as

death that development in all ramifications is guaranteed! Whereas there have been exceptions with some public office holders: it was expected that Obasanjo would use his tenure as president of Nigeria to fast track infrastructural development in the Southwest, but the reverse was the case. But every time a Northerner is a President, to the amazement of Southerners, a greater percentage of developmental programs are unashamedly located in the Northern part of the Federation. Again, in Ekiti State lately for instance, every Governor ensures that a tertiary institution is sited in his hometown! This unhealthy practice in some way is used to secure the trust of the people within the locality and probably to 'wet the ground' for future elections. Religious considerations do not seem to matter so much in the Southern part of the Federation, whereas it is a major consideration in most of the Northern Nigeria.

Thus, Benet (2006, 2012, 2013, 2019) maintained that democracy should be an either/or solution to the oppression – tribalism and inequality; the results suggest that the ruling class in Nigeria has not effectively leveraged on the diversity and equality pair of the polarities of democracy theory in Nigeria democratic practices for Nigerians to be united and equal, regardless of ethnic differences. That is why all Nigerians, regardless of tribe, ethnicity, state, or region, must recognize themselves as one. National diversity should create impetus for growth through equality and diversity of culture, tribe, education, religion, and beliefs in all developmental programs at all local, state, and federal levels for national development.

***Finding 6***

The study suggests that there is no citizen representation. This is premised on power recycling within the political cabal or giants who have formed alliance to dominate and/or rule over citizen efforts to either nominate or elect a dependable representative in the democratic governance system. Indeed, at the levels where citizens are represented by elected public office holders, such have consistently failed the electorates by lusting after their own selfish aspirations and so yielding to their political leaders' mandates. Thus, this evidence suggests that the electorates have not been fairly represented by the political office holders in Nigeria's democratic system. This relates to the negative aspects of participation and representation pair of the polarities of democracy theory.

According to the Participants, Participant 007 opined that "Representation is low, if we consider the population versus the number of registered voters and those who voted in the last general elections." Participant 008 said that "In principle, there is representation to a reasonable extent; however, in practice, it is to no avail." Participant 011 commented that "It is abysmally low. The so-called representatives of the people at all levels have continuously failed the citizens they represent." Participant 012 said that "Well, it depends on which class of representation, but the elites have taken over the representation more than the commoners." Participant 016 explained that "I would say the extent is of the hierarchy. They have not met with the interest of the people by not allowing them to participate in government, No. There is a low rate of active representation in Nigeria democracy."

According to Benet's (2019) polarities of democracy, human rights and communal responsibility pairings are interrelated with participation and representation pairs. It was established that good representation in public offices encourages citizens to exercise their franchise (to vote and/or be voted for) and/or participate in democratic processes, both (participation and representation) of which are linked to human rights and communal responsibility. Citizens' democratic engagements, such as voting and involvement in political parties, are human rights and an obligation to one's community to contribute to national growth.

***Finding 7***

This study indicates that elected officials in Nigeria have strategically withheld and/or denied citizens the right to participate in democratic governance. The elected public officers passed the Hate Speech Act, which prohibits electorates from openly criticizing, commenting on, or rebuking selfish or wrongdoing/policy of the Nigerian government. This means that the polarity pair of freedom and authority is undercut or threatened in Nigeria's democratic practices through denying citizens' the freedom of expression, right to vote, participation in decision making processes, referendums, and so on. This finding is strongly tied to the negative aspects of the freedom and authority pair of Benet's (2021) polarities of democracy theory.

According to the Participants – Participant 013 commented that “With the recent enactment of Hate Speech Act, the Act that negates Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Information Acts, I am not seeing any freedom of participation in sight not to talk of enhancing public trust.” Participant 016 noted that “I feel the government should come

down to the masses level and bring up ideas, educate and allow freedom because if freedom is allowed, the masses will be able to relate with the system and not just the hierarchy approach that is coming to the grassroot level because without this act, things cannot work out.”

According to Benet's (2019) polarities of democracy theory, the freedom and authority pair advocate for citizens' freedom and this is a core component of democracy that every democratic government or authority must preserve. Benet (2021) suggests that democratic power must establish an atmosphere that allows citizens to exercise their freedom, and that this must be respected at all times.

### ***Finding 8***

The analysis indicates that Nigerian democratic practices are devoid of due process. The legal and procedural steps leading to executive, judicial, and legislative choices and/or functions were frequently sabotaged and subjugated to the self-guided decisions or interests of public officers. As a result, laws and legal proceedings are commonly limited, obstructing people's right to fairness, justice, and liberty in the democratic system. The performance of tasks and implementation of developmental programs, particularly at the executive arm of government, is routinely performed without following due process, which violates the rule of law. Government activities, such as funds disbursement to subdivision levels, provision of basic infrastructure, and provision of social amenities, are usually conducted without due process observance. All these are perpetrated without any justice or redress, even when noticed or caught and sought for redress. This result, which contrasts the positive aspects of the justice and due

process pair of the polarities of democracy theory, suggests that the Nigerian government has neglected to observe due process and justice.

According to Participant 002, “Absence of due process leads to corruption of democratic process, which operates by depriving people of their legitimate rights, and defeats the essence of democratic process.” Participant 005 added that “Lack of due process and justice is a veritable way to polarize any political party and injuries arising from such *show of power* takes a rather long time to heal and or leads to break away and decamp to another party!” Participant 006 answered that “Lack of inclusiveness and inequality between the poor and the elites. Once the political officials are elected to offices in Nigeria, they forget the electorates and do their selfish bids. It is really saddening and unfortunate!”

According to Benet’s (2019) polarities of democracy theory, justice and due process pair asserts that democratic proceedings must preserve Nigeria’s constitutional charter, and the rule of law must hold and shape every democratic course of action at all times. This is also critical for seeking redress or justice when public officials break the law, in order to maintain a just society based on the rule of law. This highlights the fundamentals of democracy required for the Nigerian democratic system to thrive and deliver the desired results to the country's teeming population.

### **Finding 9**

The study suggests that there are barriers impeding Nigeria's democratic system's developing potentials in achieving sustainable development. These impediments are multi-dimensional and emanate from government officials' moral degradation, which has



allowed corruption to infiltrate the system. National values are eroding, bribery is rampant, fraudulent transactions are widespread, and government projects are over inflationary, to name a few issues. Citizens' applause for corrupt government officials and their fraudulent activities is even more degrading, as it has turned into a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the system. As a result, politicians no longer have the willpower or drive to pursue patriotic principles that lead to national growth, and corrupt officials are recycled into the system while newcomers and citizens are frustrated and desperate for wealth.

According to the Participants – Participant 004 stated that “Corruption, nepotism and the failure of the citizen to punish misdeed of those with public trust.” Participant 007 said that “Barriers: injustice, impunity, money politics, ethnic and religious politics, corruption at all levels of governance.” Participant 016 said that “A lot of favoritism and godfatherism serves as hindrance and this serves as a mess; speaking from past experience whereby everything is all about lobbying – it is a give and take situation.” Participants 015 and 024 mentioned that “Insincerity; insurgency and militancy.” Participant 018 said that “Poor education.” Participant 022 stated that “Lack of public awareness.”

The polarities of democracy theory recognize that "there is an ongoing dilemma" in democratic practices — these are unsolvable issues that are deeply entangled in democratic government (Benet, 2013, p.31). These issues are multi-dimensional and interdependent, necessitating more than a single solution. As a result, the 10 values of the polarities of democracy theory are required for addressing and/or controlling problems.

Further, the 10 values exist as five polarity pairs that must be effectively leveraged to maximize the positive aspects of each value and minimize the negative aspects.

***Finding 10***

The study indicates that democratic governance facilitators and/or values of good education and open communication are required to drive purposeful activities toward national goals and objectives for long-term development. The ability of the governing body to inform the people about political developments, connect with them through appropriate channels, and foster all-inclusive participatory government is crucial. It is necessary for governing bodies to orient themselves, develop their value systems, and rework ethical governing conducts by putting an emphasis on it and establishing mechanisms for other strengthening plans to further democratic government.

According to the Participants, Participant 001 stated that “Political education and enlightenment on all fours particularly by the civil societies.” The Participant furthered that “Citizens must be mobilized to stand up for their rights rather than wait to be served a la carte. When the citizens prove that they are awake to their rights, the political class will have no option than to serve or risk being sacked.” Participant 002 commented that “Electorate education helps in reducing the level of ignorance and an electoral process that is accessible to all is expedient.” Participant 003 noted that “Whereas responsiveness of government, transparency, proper political education/communication, clearly specified policies are facilitators of public trust and citizen engagement with the government in Nigeria’s democratic process.” Participant 014 said that “New research like this can be published and things might change.” Participant 018 answered that “Awareness training,

getting people informed, infrastructure provisioning, assurance of government to citizens and citizens to government direct exchanges, intelligence gathering and crime prevention, punishment of bad behavior(s) through lawful means.” Participant 019 commented that “There should be sensitization program towards good governance and the leaders should entrust themselves with justice.” Participant 027 opined that “Public opinion polls, survey questionnaires, comments boxes, town hall meetings, and most importantly education of the leaders to understand the importance of public involvement.” Participant 005 added that “Local dialects may have to be introduced to the various assemblies as acceptable language of communication. This will enhance understanding and fluency of ideas from elected representatives whose level of spoken English is poor and/or introduce translators.”

According to the polarities of democracy theory's human right and communal obligation pair, human rights are an extension of mutually held collective responsibilities. Benet (2006) argued that human right and communal responsibility should be practiced in democracy based on the altruistic and selfish tendencies of people. Democracy makes the supposition that people are inherently moral, logical, and capable of self-control. To put it another way, democracy protects human rights. Human rights are a part of democracy since it is based on the fundamental rights that everyone has the right to live in peace and freedom. In general, human rights encompass the protections provided by the Constitution for an individual's right to life, liberty, property, and security. The freedom of assembly and freedom of speech were highlighted by Benet (2006) as rights and obligations included in the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution. This indicates that

citizens have a right to participate in democratic processes through influencing the formulation of public policy. Thus, Nigerian government is better positioned to exploit the polarities of democracy theory as a whole and the human rights and communal obligations pair in particular.

### ***Finding 11***

The study suggests that accountability and transparency are the two key principles and/or facilitators of democratic government that help a country move toward sustainable development. Government representatives must make choices in a transparent manner and answer to the people for their actions. In order for them to provide input, citizens actually need to be completely aware of the decisions officials are making or plan to make. This gives citizens a way to learn about improvements in governance or results, as well as the steps taken to attain such developmental successes. Participant 001 agitated for “A more transparent and trusted electoral system, criminalization of political offences such as political or electoral fraud, breach of public trust etc.”

Thus, a government's commitment to be as transparent, responsible, accountable, and honest with its citizens as possible is known as government transparency. This implies that a government must be transparent about its operations and the use of the state tax funds. In contemporary time where bribes, swindles, scandals, and fraudulent activities are perpetuated by government, transparency and accountability in government help boosts citizens trust in governmental activities and decision-making. This aids in lowering the level of mistrust toward governments. Human rights are an extension of mutually shared collective obligations, claims the communal obligation and human rights

pair of the polarity of democracy theory. Based on human tendencies toward altruism and selfishness, Benet (2006) contended that democracy should uphold human rights and social responsibilities. Since democracy is based on the fundamental right of citizens to be informed about government operations, human rights are an integral part of democracy. Government must be transparent by providing the public with the information they need to make educated decisions and hold elected officials accountable for pursuance of the state's developmental activities.

### ***Finding 12***

The study indicates that social amenities play a role in facilitating democratic governance. Citizens expect Nigerian governments to provide basic social amenities or infrastructures not just to ensure their happiness and welfare but also to advance national security and economic progress. Social amenities are therefore essential to a citizen's existence, societal development, and economic advancement, and the government is best able to offer these through citizen taxation. Railways, waterways, housing, portable water, power, security, and job creation are just a few examples.

Participant 007 revealed that "That the least in the society should have access to the basic issues of life; good food and portable water, livable environment, basic education up to secondary school level, affordable health services." Participant 014 expressed that "If poverty is reduced, people would not be monetized." The Participant further asked for "Improvement of the living standard of people, transparency, and accountability." Participant 023 commented that "Effective and efficient delivery of democratic dividends. Better life for the populace, protection of constitutional rights and

good order in the society.” Participant 028 said that “When basic needs of the people are made accessible to them i.e., food, shelter, security, basic health facilities, employment opportunities for working class, opportunity for basic education.” According to Benet's (2019) polarities of democracy theory, the ongoing dilemma requires the 10 values of polarity pairs to be managed effectively. These are human rights and communal obligations polarity pair, justice and due process polarity pair, participation and representation polarity pair, freedom and authority polarity pair, and diversity and equality polarity pair, and when applied and managed effectively, will help society reap the benefits of democratic governance.

Benet (2019) said that that the polarity of democracy theory aims to provide the best alternative solution by merging both sides or considering the polarity pairs, while avoiding the limitations of each relationship (Benet, 2013). Benet further said that democracy, which pervades the workplace and society, is the answer to oppression in man's history, rather than a polarity to manage. However, to promote democracy and the democratization process, both the people and government representatives are responsible for successfully managing the 10 values or polarities pairs of the polarities of democracy theory (Benet, 2006, 2012b). To achieve this, the good aspects of each pair of the polarities of democracy theory must be enhanced while the bad aspects of each value must be minimized, in order to work toward successful democratic process or democracy management (Benet, 2013).

***Finding 13***

The study suggests that justice or judicial reform facilitates the country's development potential realization. The Nigerian judicial system reform provides a platform for a more comprehensive reform of the nation's political system. This entails reforming the court system to address to seek redress timely, monitor judges' punctuality, judge and magistrate attendance rates, funding for the implementation of an automated, transparent, and real-time system of recording, as well as reporting records of court sessions.

Participant 002, "A judicial system that is easy and accessible to seek redress, and public enlightenment process." Participant 028 commented that "Good laws to protect and guide people's conduct and unbiased/effective judicial system that dispenses justice." The Participant furthered that "Regular sensitization of the people about their rights and obligations under the law, coupled with effective/unbiased judicial system." Participant 005 stated that "There is need to improve the judicial system so as to make the rule of law functional as it should be, in order to deal with all political/other cases with alacrity." Participant 004 commented that "Accelerated court hearing cum immediate execution of awarded damages." Participant 012 said that "By ensuring proper justice system since the court of competent jurisdictions is the last hope of common man." Participant stated that "There is need for more advocacy, justice must not be determined based on personalities, whom you know or the party one belongs to etc." The Participant further said that "The judiciary system must be up and doing. The security agencies, especially the police must not be an appendage of the ruling class or the elites." According to Participant 014,

Yes, when people have done what is wrong, and they bring them to justice, people will be encouraged. But when you see people who they say are guilty, and they are testified to, they do not see it as stealing relating to embezzlement because it's the rich that give all the time to by open up those who ask to make their lives better and make use of the collective thinking individualism. So, since there is no justice, there cannot be good a society.

It is argued that due process can result in good behavioral changes, such as when people who act in an unlawful way are punished. The violation of people's rights in society, especially in the application of justice without due process is the negative aspect of justice and due process (Benet, 2006). This implies that a free and just society is attainable in Nigeria's democratic system by effectively leveraging on the positive aspects of the due process and justice pair of the polarities of democracy theory.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This qualitative case study recruited only educated Nigerians from the six Yoruba-speaking states. As a result of this limitation, the study excluded uneducated people whether their perceptions matched or differed from those of educated people. The study's recruitment of volunteers was challenged by the potential participants' work schedules and other responsibilities. However, the study was able to overcome this hurdle by maintaining persistent conversations with the study's purposefully selected potential participants.

Furthermore, the study increased the number of possible participants to ensure that reasonable volunteers are recruited in the event of any uncontrollable circumstances



that may complicate participant recruitment and are beyond my (the researcher's) control. The participants were also given the option of scheduling the interview on a day, location, and time that suited their schedules while ensuring that they were comfortable with participating in the study. This was accomplished by informing them that their identities would be kept private and that the study findings would be represented with identifiers that would mask their identities. As a result, their identities will not be exposed to anyone, either intentionally or mistakenly, and the information they provide will only be used for this study.

The scope of this research is limited to the perspectives of Nigerian Yoruba speakers in all the six Yoruba states on the concepts of public trust and citizen engagement as tools of democracy for successful governance. Therefore, other ethnic groups in Nigeria's state are not included in the study's findings. As a result, generalizing the study's findings to Nigeria's greater population was difficult.

### **Recommendations**

This research studied only the perceptions of the Yoruba people in the six States of the Southwest Nigerian about the concepts of public trust and citizen engagement (participation) as democratic tools for good governance in Nigeria. As a result, more research on the study phenomenon is recommended, focusing on other Nigeria ethnic groups, notably Ibo and Hausa/Fulani, who constituted the other two major ethnic groups that live in Nigeria's remaining 30 states, including the Federal Capital Territory. This would aid in achieving a common understanding among all Nigerians of the concepts of public trust and citizen engagement as democratic tools for good governance.

Future studies on the study phenomenon in Nigeria could combine both educated and non-educated participants in the sample selection to capture all Nigerian perspectives regardless of educational attainment, because the study phenomenon has more deepening challenges for the non-educated, who are typically indigents, than the educated. This would aid in the exploration of their lived experiences of vulnerability to politicians' antics and tactics in the democratic system, as well as the development of strategies to address these issues to enhance Nigerian democracy.

This qualitative case study is a first-of-its-kind investigation exploring public trust and citizen engagement in Nigeria. Therefore, it is suggested that future studies employ other research approaches on the phenomenon. This will enable future researchers to undertake comparative analyses of the study phenomenon inside Nigeria, the African continent, and beyond. Researchers will be able to recruit individuals, gauge responses, and analyze data using a combination of approaches, resulting in more convincing and accurate results in the future.

## **Implications**

### **Implications for Policy**

The study findings indicate that there are obstacles to Nigeria's democratic growth and sustainable development. Moral decay, bribery, corruption, monetization of elections, electoral fraud, injustice and other issues are tied to elected and appointed public office holders. These difficulties necessitate immediate policy changes and the application of the rule of law to all subjects, regardless of socioeconomic class or position in

government or governance. The achievement might be exploited in the implementation of the polarities of democracy theory's 10 values.

### **Implications for Positive Social Change**

The findings suggest an establishment of a special court to deal with corruption matters in order to avoid prolonged trials and prosecution of corrupt crimes in a regular court. There is need for the government to relaunch the war against indiscipline with the purpose of achieving a more disciplined society that is amendable to obeying rules and regulations. Also, the capacity of the Code of Conduct Bureau and Economic Financial Crime Commission should be enhanced with proper laws to enable the organization to perform their jobs of curtailing and reducing all incidences of corruptions in the country. This is to ensure any public official caught embezzling public fund face the full weight of the law, which includes a full sentence in jail without any option of fine, and the forfeiture of their property to the government. Also, whistle blowing for corrupt actions of public officials should be made legal as a means of halting this moral decay.

The findings suggest the creation of a commission to oversee political education provided by political parties to ensure that their members are well-informed of their rights and know when and how to utilize their voting rights. In order to elect the best candidate, voters must be informed about the importance of political involvement and the advantages it offers to both them and the democratic system. This provides citizens with more than just one chance to propose someone for qualified representation; it also gives them the chance to vote and be voted. More importantly, only active partisan

participation in politics or democratic procedures will result in corrupt politicians being removed from office and/or held accountable at all levels of the democratic system.

Findings also suggest that the creation of platforms that will enable the citizens to express their desires or concerns about democratic procedures could help to strengthen the relationship between authority and freedom. Democratic procedures must be fluid, iterative, and dynamic rather than rigid and static to promote an open environment. This suggests allowing citizens to tender and reframe initiatives towards their needs and interests. Giving citizens a voice in decision-making is also essential to building support for such democratic platforms. It may also be possible to build such a democratic environment by, among other things, being notably active, and open to all citizens, including minorities and those without the right to vote, and by trying to systematically resolve power imbalances.

The findings suggest that Nigeria's judicial system needs to be reformed to ensure that the rule of law operates as it should and that all political and other disputes may be resolved quickly. This will boost citizens confidence in the justice system and the governing body. Citizens' participation in Nigeria's democratic process is likely to increase if due process and justice are seen as being deeply ingrained in both justice system and governance. Impunity rules where due process is not granted, leaving justice and fair play lacking.

Findings indicate that electoral reforms are necessary. It should be forbidden to use money to influence elections in Nigeria, especially to buy votes from voters. Any political candidate who shares money during the campaigning period should have their

candidacy revoked or disqualified. Additionally, any person who is found to have collected money from political candidates or party agents at voting center should face legal repercussions. This will counteract Nigeria's political system's heavy commercialization. Furthermore, imposing a candidate or a consensus candidate on political parties violates democratic principles and prevents delegates from choosing appropriate candidates for leadership or government. It is also important to note that, in order to ensure that a wider population is adequately represented in the decision-making process, the number of delegates used to choose the presidential party's flag bearer should be increased.

The study suggests that federalism model should be upheld in Nigerian governance system, hence constitutional reform should be given top priority. This should aim at eliminating the unitary system of government practiced inside the federalism structure in order to quell ethnics and religious prejudice that permeates the democratic governance practices. Thus, this will encourage equal representation for all tribes in the federalism system, which would also guarantee uniform development across the nation's six geopolitical zones.

### **Conclusion**

The behavior and actions of political leaders and elected representatives have resulted in a deterioration of public trust and citizen disengagement in the Nigeria democratic system, which has become a source of concern for both local and international observers since independence in 1960. According to Iroghama (2012), Nigeria's public trust and citizen engagement began to deteriorate after the 2007 general

elections. The situation is a societal issue that has resulted in widespread national cynicism, which some interest groups have taken advantage of for their own narrow interests (Odo, 2015).

Thus, this qualitative case study investigated public trust and citizen engagement as democratic system mechanisms in Nigeria. Most of the participants are nonpartisan, which is due to governments in the country failing to meet expectations, as well as restrictive policies enacted by political office holders that constrained electorates from taking more decisive actions, such as strategic restrictions on electorate voting, and the passage of the Hate Speech Act, which constrained or prevented citizens from openly condemning public officials for corrupt or fraudulent practices. It's also disappointing that citizens are contributing to the moral decay by celebrating corrupt public officials and/or promoting and supporting such candidates for reelection.

The theory of polarities of democracy maintained that democratic norm is the answer to oppression throughout human history rather than being a polarity to manage. The 10 values, on the other hand, have to be successfully managed with their related polarity relationship pairs to advance democracy and the democratic process (Benet, 2006, 2012b, 2013, 2019). To strive toward a successful democratic process or the effective management of the polarities of democracy, the beneficial features of each value of the theory must be reinforced while the unfavorable characteristics of each value must be minimized (Benet, 2019). Thus, Nigerian democratic system should embrace and successfully implement the five polarities of democracy pairs to pave the way for public trust and citizen engagement as democratic tools for good governance.

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### Appendix A: Invitation Letter

This serves to invite you as a participant in this doctoral study. The invitation is to seek and document your opinion on the concepts of public trust and citizen engagement as tools of democracy might facilitate good governance in Nigeria's democratic system. The study is conducted as a requirement for the fulfillment of my doctoral study in Walden University. For this, a semi-structured interview guide has been constructed to intimate with you on the phenomenon of the study.

The conduct of this interview might likely take between 30-45 minutes of your time. It will be audio-recorded to assist in documenting every detail of the discussion without any omission. I will be more than happy to receive your questions at any time during the interview. You can also have a follow up discussion with me after this interview session, in case you want to furnish me with further information or clarification of information on the study, on phone or email. The data you provided will be transcribed, coded, and analyzed. You are privileged to a copy of the interview recording, and transcript, at your request. Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the interview at any point your right is threatened or violated, without any consequence on you. There is no risk to you in participating in the study, either now or later.

Please kindly be aware that your privacy is highly guaranteed. Your identity will be concealed or held confidential, both in the transcripts and data analysis. The data will be stored in a password-protected computer and will be saved for a period of 5years

before it will be disposed by shredding and demagnetizing techniques for both paper and electronic means of storage respectively as laid down by Walden University.

## Appendix B: Interview Protocol

### Introduction

My name is Ojo Gilbert Olukayode. I am a PhD scholar of Walden University. I sincerely appreciate you for your willingness to participate in this study. This study seeks to investigate the concept of public trust and citizen engagement as democratic tools to facilitate good governance in Nigeria. To achieve this, the study will explore and document the perceptions of the Yoruba people of Nigeria regarding the barriers to and/or the facilitators of the concepts of public trust and citizen engagement as democratic tools to improve governance in Nigeria.

Please kindly note that you are not obligated to partake in this study, and you are free to withdraw whenever you feel your right is threatened or violated.

Please permit me to remind you that the consent attests to the interview proceeding to be recorded in audio format to enable me capture in detail your responses. Notwithstanding, please, kindly do not hesitate to tell me to turn off the audio recording at any point you do not want your responses to be recorded. I am obliged to you to keep your identity confidential throughout this study.

As we are moving into the interview section, please feel free to ask questions at any point of the interview proceeding, I would be more than happy to answer you, thanks.

### Interview Questions

- 1) Please, tell me about your background – name, gender, age, education, state of origin, and occupation?
- 2) How would you describe your involvement in politics? Is it of a partisan politics?

- 3) What are your perceptions of the concept of public trust in a democratic process?
- 4) To what extent do citizen trust the government to perform its responsibilities within the Nigerian democratic process?
- 5) What role do you perceive, that ethnic and religious considerations played in citizen's trust in government in Nigeria's democratic process?
- 6) To what extent do you think freedom of participation and governing authority can enhanced public trust in Nigeria's democratic process?
- 7) Do you think the concept of public trust is an important element for effective democratic process for good governance in Nigeria?
- 8) What do you understand by the concept of citizen engagement (Participation) in a democracy?
- 9) To what extent can due process and justice promote citizen's engagement(participation) in governance in Nigeria's democratic process?
- 10) To what extent is the level of citizen engagement (Participation) with the government in Nigeria's democratic process?
- 11) What role do you perceive that ethnic and religious considerations played in citizen engagement (Participation) with government in Nigerian democracy?
- 12) To what extent has citizen engagement (Participation) with government in Nigeria meet the interest of the people?
- 13) What are the barriers and/or facilitators of public trust and citizen engagement (Participation) with the government in Nigeria's democratic process?

- 14) Do you think citizen engagement (Participation) is an important element for effective democratic process to facilitate good governance in Nigeria?
- 15) What are your perceptions of good governance?
- 16) To what extent is the level of representation of the citizens in Nigeria's democratic process?
- 17) Do you think the elected representatives of the people in Nigeria's democratic process help to facilitate public trust and citizen engagement (Participation) with government?
- 18) What measures should be put in place to achieve effective representation in Nigeria's democratic process for good governance?
- 19) How can we ensure governing authorities have respect for human rights to promote public trust and citizen engagement that will enhance communal obligations in Nigeria democratic process?
- 20) To what extent do you think that equality in democratic governance structure can enhance public trust and citizen engagement in a naturally complex democratic nation like Nigeria?

### Conclusion

I once again appreciate you for committing your time to furnish this study with relevant information, to make it a success. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any additional information to supply for this study, or to clarify information or ask any question, within the next two weeks. I am reachable on email: [redacted] and phone number [redacted]. Thanks exceedingly.