

Grassroots' Involvement in Politics: A Requirement for Effective Democratic Representation

Edor J. Edor and Okey Joel Ndifon

Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Calabar, Nigeria

Corresponding author: Edor J. Edor; edorjb2k@gmail.com

Abstract

Man is essentially not accidentally a social animal. This intrinsic social character of man necessitates interactions among men in any particular society or setting. Therefore, man, by his social character, is condemned to living in a society. This goes to justify the 4th century BC Aristotelian dictum espoused in the politics that “man is by nature a political animal”. One category of social interactions is politics or what we shall herein refer to as political interaction. The term politics, though bereft of any definitional homogeneity, is the dynamic activity of acquisition of power and authority which process is done following laid down rules, for the purpose of allocation of resources and benefits. Since it is in the nature of man to be social, since man is by nature a political animal, de facto, every man, at varying degrees, gets involved in politics or some form of political interaction. Total political apathy is anti-thetical to the nature of man. Because political apathy is anti-thetical to the nature of man, it goes with iconoclastic and catastrophic consequences. Very often, that sacred duty of exercise of political authority and power is left on the shoulders of misfits. Political authority and power are fiducial in nature, held in trust for the people of a given society or setting. Therefore, the donors of this authority and power cannot afford to remain aloof in the event of misuse of such authority and power. This implies that the donors of such power and authority, the masses of a given society, the grassroots in a particular setting, in the Nigerian setting the ones that the preambular provisions of the 1999 Constitution refers to as “we the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria...”, cannot adopt the attitude of political apathy. The grassroots must get involved in politics because political authority is held in trust for them, and that it is in the nature of man to be political. It is the case that political apathy in Nigeria is wanton and ubiquitous. Quite a number of causative factors are attributable to the levity and indifference with which the grassroots treat politics in Nigeria. Given the premises adduced earlier on herein, it goes without saying that grassroots' involvement in politics is a *conditio sine qua non* for effective democratic representation. There is a tension here: the necessity of grassroots' involvement in politics, and the widespread political apathy experienced in Nigeria. We therefore recommend political mobilisation for the resolution of the political tension scenario enunciated herein. Political mobilisation is not utopic, it does not exist in Plato's world of forms. Political mobilization is existential, therefore realisable in Nigeria. To buttress the realisability of

political mobilisation, we call in aid the EndSARS Movement, and the ongoing agitation for the adoption of direct primaries for political parties in Nigeria to enhance grassroots participation in political parties.

Keywords; *Politics, Democracy, Grassroots, Political Mobilisation, Endsars, Direct Primaries, and Political Apathy.*

Introduction

Politics is the fulcrum upon which the success of most nations heavily rely on. This is so because through politics and political participation, the government of a particular nation is brought into power, and forthwith, the policies issued by this government affects either positively or negatively the growth and development of the nation. In the case of Nigeria, political participation is driven by democracy, and strengthened by the rule of law. This said, it implies that democracy is at the center of Nigeria's politics. Democracy as Lincoln puts it, is 'a government of the people, for the people, and by the people'. The presupposition here is that every government that practices true democracy must first and foremost capture the interest of the people where herein we refer to as grassroots. This emphasis simply informs us that democracy begins from the grassroots. The pertinent question that borders around this assertion is whether Nigeria practices a true democracy or just lip-serviced democracy.

The above question is premised on the daily experiences where Nigeria as a country has made democracy reflective in their politics only during campaigns and elections, as this is the ample time leaders run down to the electorates who otherwise are called grassroots, for their support to clinch back to power. This too, does not reflect a true democracy because the electorates do not willingly elect candidates of their choice, as they are supervised under whips and caprices directly or indirectly to make their choices, not reflecting the true picture of their minds, but because they just have to do it first to save their heads, and second to benefit from the spontaneous showers of gifts and monies by the politicians.

By logical analysis, we state that people at the grassroot are not fully involved in politics, which is why there seem to be ineffective representation by political office holders in Nigeria. There are two identifiable factors that engender political distancing from people at the grassroot.

Grassroots' Involvement in Politics: A Requirement for Effective Democratic Representation

In choosing elective political office holders in Nigeria, political parties select their candidates through a process of indirect primary elections. This leaves the people at the grassroots with no option of any meaningful contribution in the selection process. Secondly, during the general elections when every person of voting age is directly involved in choosing his/her leaders from the ones the party delegates have presented, they do so under hostility, malevolence, molestation, and a host of other ill practices by political parties and their agents and thugs. Furthermore, this atmosphere of intimidation and molestation during elections is very often perpetuated, or at least facilitated, by the security agencies that are supposed to ensure the peaceful conduct of elections. These have contributed enormously to political apathy in Nigeria.

By further analysis, some argue that the grassroots are not given the opportunity to participate in democracy, and their reason revolves around their claims that the dividends of democracy are not experienced or enjoyed in the grassroots level. Rather, they are left to pray to God for what the government ought to willingly do. Why should a citizen pray for journey mercies? Because there are bad roads; why should a citizen pray for long life? Because there are unequipped hospitals; why should a citizen pray for security? Because the security agents are not properly trained and equipped; why should a citizen pray for daily bread? Because there is unemployment. The government had made the grassroots lose the sense of democracy, and now they bother God unnecessarily with their prayers. There will still be accidents, there will still be short life, there will still be insecurity, and there will still be hunger if the government does not take up their responsibilities.

The two analyses above bring tension; on the one hand, that of the necessity of grassroots' involvement in politics, and on the other hand, that of widespread political apathy experienced in Nigeria because of the lack of democratic dividends. We therefore recommend political mobilisation for the resolution of the political tension scenario enunciated herein. Political mobilisation has to do with creating awareness, it has to do with a face-to-face interaction between the leaders and the led. Political mobilisation is a form of social movement where the grassroots

are carried along politically, and all political strategies x-rayed to the barest minimum to their understanding and participation. Political mobilisation is not utopic, it does not exist in Plato's world of forms. Political mobilization is existential, therefore realisable in Nigeria. To buttress the realisability of political mobilisation, we call in aid the EndSARS Movement, and the agitation for the adoption of direct primaries for political parties in Nigeria to enhance grassroots participation in political parties during the just concluded review of the Nigerian Electoral Act as amended in 2022.

Political Apathy in Nigeria

A situation whereby citizens deny themselves of their political will, refuse to participate in electioneering processes, limit themselves in political participation and decision-making either directly or indirectly is referred to as political apathy. Through discriminatory policies, and through slow, inefficient or representative bureaucracies, political apathy can arise directly or indirectly. Whether direct or indirect, the result will be that individuals or members of a given community who have been made not to believe in the potency of their votes, begin to have a feeling of being politically disengaged, disenfranchised, and disadvantaged, leading to withdrawal from active political participation.

According to a report in a research carried out by Africa Development Choices, indirect political apathy is caused by several factors, amongst which are; "incompetence of the body which ran the electoral process, unemployment, the political environment, and electoral violence". There is no gain stating the fact that these factors have contributed enormously towards the decline of political participation in Nigeria because there are very glaring. How do you expect voters to come out and vote in an election that is perceivably rigged by INEC who are themselves the organizers of the election? How do you expect voters to come out and vote when they are not sure of their next meal because of lack of employment? How do you expect people to be actively involved in electoral processes when the environment is not conducive enough for such a process? How do you expect electorates to come out and participate in an election in the face of insecurity, poverty, hunger, power tussles and electoral violence? Who wishes to lose his or her life in something he

Grassroots' Involvement in Politics: A Requirement for Effective Democratic Representation

or she assumes to be a failure from the inception of it? The questions above and many more alike are the contributing factors leading to political apathy in Nigeria.

It is very disheartening that while the electorates, in this context, “grassroots” deny themselves of their constitutional and political rights, most Nigerian leaders lacking effective democratic representation are continuously voted back to office by the minority who do not practice political apathy. The reality here is that the electorates (grassroots) who have now become politically apartheid rarely see their lives improve. For not involving in the voting of a credible candidate into office for effective democratic representation, they had succeeded indirectly in voting for a non-credible, unaccountable, and ineffective representative.

Nevertheless, this political apathy, genuine political action and participation could be reengineered within the electorates. To ensure this, there should be political and social reforms, the electoral body, political parties, and citizens will have to work together, to create a safe, enabling, violent free, and approachable environment that demonstrates inclusive democratic involvement, taking into cognizance, the benefit of participating in governance. Those positive impacts of dedicating time and resources in order to become politically engaged must be felt. Importantly, leaders must be accountable, they should take their responsibilities seriously, this is because according to LeVan (2015) quoting Ayee “leadership entails formulating a vision for the future, developing a rational strategy for realizing that vision, and enlisting the support of political actors who can help. Politics is based on a “leader-follower” relationship that is purposeful, interactive, and capable of causation”.

According to Rousseau as quoted by Barber, “what is crucial about democratic community is that it “produces a remarkable change in man”; that is to say, through participation in it, man’s “faculties are exercised and developed, his ideas broadened, his feelings ennobled, and his whole soul elevated” (Barber, 2003). From this line of thought, it could be understood that if political apathy is encouraged, then the goal of grassroots involvement in politics for effective representation would be greatly challenged. For an effective and proper participation of the

grassroots in the politics of Nigeria, they must have to see political participation as their inalienable constitutional right, which if taken away, is tantamount to a justifiable agitation.

3.0. Participatory Democracy

According to Menser, (2018) participatory democracy (PD) is a view about how to collectively share power, whether in government, the economy, or social life. Participatory democracy dates back to the time of the Athenian democracy. According to Wolfe (1985) “the theory of participatory democracy was developed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and later promoted by J.S. Mill and G. D.H. Cole, who argued that political participation is indispensable for the realization of a just society”.

Participatory democracy as developed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau was meant for every citizen of the state to represent his or herself in a given assembly during decision making. This was done by the citizen raising up his hand and saying his mind. This type of democracy was possible because of the few number of the Athenians. Usually, they gathered under a tree and discuss the way forward for their society. The decisions taken there were binding and implemented without bottle necks. This showed as Bateman claimed, that, “the mass of people at the base is the fuel and the fire that drives the system. It is a built-in mechanism that ensures the government will be responsive to the people” (Bateman, 2017). To explain vividly, the Athenian democracy as captured above, Anagnostopoulos and Santas explains thus:

The most revolutionary or remarkable features of Athenian democracy were (a) that every citizen had an equal share in some political offices and an equal opportunity in the remaining ones and (b) that all decisions pertaining to the state were made by the citizens directly, either through their participation in the assembly, of which every citizen was a member for his life-time with an equal vote, or through the council, the court juries, and the numerous committees to which citizens were elected or appointed by lot... This kind of equality in holding office and direct participation of citizens in making all the decisions in public affairs seems to have no parallel in any other political structure (Anagnostopoulos & Santas, 2018).

We can see from the above analysis that the Athenian democracy was indeed participatory

Grassroots' Involvement in Politics: A Requirement for Effective Democratic Representation

because everyone was carried along during decision making. What was practiced in Athens is really lacking in Nigeria's democracy as there is the claim that the grassroots are not fully involved in decision making, and this has brought about political apathy and the agitation for direct primaries. To curb the above, this paper calls for grassroots mobilisation, which will create awareness for partisan politics. It is not as if in the past, there have not been grassroots mobilisation, there have been, but this mobilisation have been characterized with unserious attitudes, laziness, vote buying, and all the negative attributes that frustrates the purpose for which the grassroots mobilization was meant for.

From Anagnostopoulos and Santas' submission, we can state also that participatory democracy thrived because of the few population in Athens. Nigeria with such a population cannot practice participatory democracy, this is why such a democracy evolved into representative democracy where citizens come together to donate their political power to a representative from a particular region, who will stand in for them, speak on their behalves, act in their favour during decision making. But this seems to have failed, and this is why the grassroots who think they are the donors of this political power, wish to be properly involved in the dispensation of this political power, as a requirement for effective representation. Their thinking must have resulted from Kaufman's submission that "participatory democracy represents both a goal of social change and a method of bringing about change. In particular, the community represents a potential locus of change that offers the possibility of bringing together individuals in a unitary way that overcomes divisions based on sex, age, political orientation, and, to a certain extent, class and ethnicity" (Kaufman, 1997).

This paper argues that a refined participatory democracy is more convenient in achieving the dividends of democracy. In this perspective, and as explained above, the grassroots are given the ultimate power to elect their leaders. Instead of involving in an indirect primary where only party delegates elect candidates for elections, the grassroots should be directly involved during these primaries. In this way, the problem of effective representation will be reduced to the barest

minimum. The paper is not oblivious of the disadvantages of a refined participatory democracy, as they would be discussed exhaustively during the analysis of the agitation for direct primaries.

Participatory democracy is a system or model of democracy in which citizens are given the opportunity to make vital political decisions. We think the agitation of the grassroots have always been that of participatory democracy, although not from the strict sense of the word, where those in the grassroots themselves make direct representation, their agitation is rather an indirect representation where they are given the direct opportunity of being in the round table of decision making for the election of their representatives. That is, where they are properly involved in the election of their representatives. This is exactly why Vértésy holds that:

All modern constitutions and fundamental laws contain and declare the concept and principle of popular sovereignty, which essentially means that the people are the ultimate source of public power or government authority. The concept of popular sovereignty holds simply that in a society organized for political action, the will of the people as a whole is the only right standard of political action. It can be regarded as an important element in the system of the checks and balances, and representative democracy. Therefore, the people are implicitly entitled even to directly participate in the process of law making. This role of linking citizens and their government and legislators is closely related to the concept of legitimacy. The exercise of democratic control over the legislative system and the policy-making process can occur even when the public has only an elementary understanding of the national legislative institution and its membership. Civic education is a vital strategy for strengthening public participation and confidence in the legislative process (Vértésy, 2017).

Vértésy, (2017) have been able to point out a vital ingredient for participatory democracy with the mention of popular sovereignty which made the people the ultimate source of public power or government authority. The author's submission implies that there cannot be any government without the presence of the grassroots participation in democracy. They are imbedded with the task of electing their leaders without fear nor favour. Here, the will of the grassroots supersedes every other thing in the political system. The author also mentioned civic education as a strategy for strengthening public participation, and this is a powerful idea. Civic education is

Grassroots' Involvement in Politics: A Requirement for Effective Democratic Representation

already a subject in our secondary schools, and yet, the grassroots are still aloof of political participation. Either the subject is not well taught by the instructors, or the grassroots are not just bothered about political participation based on their past ugly experiences. The two problems above makes Vertesy's point of civic education lacking in bringing about political participation. It is the adoption of this paper, the need for grassroots mobilisation. Through it, there would be a reminder of what was taught in civic education as well as inform the grassroots once more of the dangers of political apathy, and the advantages of political participation. Through grassroots mobilisation, there would be that practical and demonstrable assurances of how to participate in politics.

With participatory democracy, there will be that appropriate political development because over the years, we have witnessed an inherent democratic deficiency in representative democracy. Again, participatory democracy can be seen as a mediation between direct and representative democracy, here, there will be greater citizen's involvement in politics, there will be popular control of political will and power, and there will be that egalitarian and non-exploitative social relations between the leaders and the led.

Theories of Grassroots Mobilisation

In this section, we will discuss the ENDSARS Movement and the Direct Primaries Agitation as theories of grassroots mobilisation. Remember that this grassroots mobilisation discussed here is not chimerical, it is what is realizable as it has been observed in other climes. Grassroots mobilisation is concrete and factual. The reason for grassroots mobilisation is simply because of the perceived tension arising from the necessity of grassroots' involvement in politics, and the widespread political apathy experienced in Nigeria.

When people who congregate to donate their political power to a representative who is supposed to stand in for them, speak on their behalves, act in their favour during decision making fail to do so, the grassroots who are the donors of this political power, wish to be properly involved in the dispensation of this political power, as a requirement for effective representation, will

develop theories and sometimes very aggressive ones, to achieve their aim. Sometimes, these grassroots develop social movements which will enable them achieve their aim. Bill Moyer as quoted by Ricketts defines a social movement as “collective actions in which the populace is alerted, educated and mobilised, sometimes over years and decades to challenge the powerholders and the whole society to redress social problems or grievances and restore critical social values” (Ricketts, 2012). The above definition of a social movement characterized the EndSARS movement as would be discussed below.

The EndSARS Movement Scenario in Focus

In Nigeria, we witnessed a great revolution to police brutality, and subsequently, demands for good governance. These are indications that there is a near failure of democracy. This revolution which turned out to be bloody, was maybe the last strategy which was adopted by the grassroots to showcase their worries. Under the nomenclature ‘EndSARS’, the movement agitated primarily for the disbandment of Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) a section of the Nigeria’s police force which was described by many as corrupt. According to Ekwunife et al, (2021) EndSARS is “a sweeping campaign led by Nigerian youths in October 2020, agitating against the operations of the special anti-robbery squad. Allegorically, ENDSARS is a metaphor to end bad governance/leadership in Nigeria” (Ekwunife et al, 2021). Amnesty International captures the above succinctly:

The notorious Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) in Nigeria has enjoyed impunity for the continued use of torture and other ill-treatment to execute, punish and extract information from suspects. More and more victims of the SARS have made the news these past years sparking each time a lot of indignation on social media and sometimes protests. In recent years, the Nigerian authorities made promises to take care of the issue and disband SARS. However, the members of SARS continued to extort, rape, torture, and kill. On 14th October 2020, a video went viral showing SARS officers dragging two men from a hotel and shooting one of them outside. A few days later, protests erupted across Nigeria. On 11th October, SARS was disbanded. But it was the 5th time since 2015 that the Nigerian authorities pledged to reform the police and disband SARS. Protests

Grassroots' Involvement in Politics: A Requirement for Effective Democratic Representation

continued demanding more than empty promises. On 20th October, the Nigerian army violently repressed a peaceful protest at the Lekki toll gate, shooting at the protesters and killing at least 12 people. Since that day, the Nigerian authorities have tried to cover up the events of the Lekki Toll Gate Shooting. They froze protests leaders' bank accounts and fined news agencies who diffused videos of the shooting (online).

The EndSARS started as an online protest in 2017, with the hashtag #EndSARS and later in October 2020 during the COVID 19 lockdown, it developed into full physical and massive protest, later to be described as a movement. It had no leader, and their popular slogan was *soro soke*, a Yoruba term translated to mean 'speak out' in English language.

According to Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) (2021), there are three lessons to be learnt from the EndSars movement thus:

The social movement was not only a rallying call for comprehensive police reform, but also became a symbol of hope and change, teaching participants three key lessons.

The #EndSARS movement primarily demonstrated freedom from the ethno-religious tensions that usually plague the framing of Nigeria's domestic security and political issues. Young Nigerians in all six geopolitical zones united around a common goal to end police intimidation, oppression, and brutality...

Secondly, it showed young Nigerians that it was possible to have an accountable and transparent civil society that is responsive to the needs of its citizens...

Thirdly, with about half of the registered voters in Nigeria aged between 18-35, the movement highlighted the need for more young people to exercise their civil and political rights to speak out against injustices and to demand change from state leaders elected to serve the needs of the populace (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), (2021).

The lessons of the EndSARS movement as presented above by ACLED makes the movement become a theory of grassroots mobilisation, it is important to note that this movement was characterized with painful experiences. Devoid these experiences, it is believed that it passed

a message to the government that the grassroots can be united to fight their cause. Even though most of their demands have not been met, it is satisfactory amongst the movement agents that the public is fully aware of the crisis faced through bad governance in Nigeria. Through this movement, the grassroots have in them the motivation that any leader who does not give a good democratic representation can be voted out according to the unity and resilience experienced during the EndSARS movement.

An Analysis of the Direct Primaries Agitations

To start with, “political parties are defined as formally organised organisations whose members share certain common values, ideals and aspirations about how society should be politically, socio-culturally and economically organised for the common good and aspire to translate these ideals and values through the control of government by placing their representatives in a competitive free, fair and honestly conducted elections, without harassment, intimidation and threat of violence” (Kura 2011). Party primaries are generally carried out by political parties though supervised by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

Muinat and Ambali (2017) quoting Obianyo and Alumona (2022) defines party primaries as “the initial electoral contest amongst candidates for the purpose of winning the nominations of their parties for the general contest” (Obianyo & Alumona, 2022). They went further to categorise party primaries into closed, semi-closed and open system. In explaining this categorisation they wrote further; “while in the closed system, only registered members of the party are allowed to vote, registered members and independent members are allowed to vote in the semi-closed system. The open system thus allows the party members and also members of the rival party to vote, which may thus be subject to abuse and contradictions” (Obianyo & Alumona, 2022).

The categorization of party primaries by Aluoma et al as quoted by Muinat and Ambali does not reflect the current practice in Nigeria’s democracy, it nevertheless gives an insight of how party primaries look like. Encyclopaedia Britannica (2020) however divides party primaries into two thus; “primaries may be direct or indirect. A direct primary, which is now used in some form in all U.S. states, functions as a preliminary election whereby voters decide their party’s

Grassroots' Involvement in Politics: A Requirement for Effective Democratic Representation

candidates. In an indirect primary, voters elect delegates who choose the party's candidates at a nominating convention".

The Nigerian system of primary election is not different from that of the U.S. as encapsulated in Encyclopaedia Britannica. Indirect primaries which had been dominant for a long period of time in the history of Nigeria's democracy deals with the nomination of party delegates who congregate within a specified period of time and venue, to nominate a candidate to be presented to INEC for the purpose of the general elections. This exercise is dispensed by the party's national working committee, although not outside the ambience of the law embodied in the party's constitution, and as established by the electoral body, (in Nigeria's case; Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)). The results of the primaries can within a period specified, be subjected for a proper reconsideration by judges of a competent court of law as the law establishes, with factual evidences, by an aggrieved aspirant, if the primaries have been perceived or suspected to be maliciously done by either the delegates or the national working committee.

The direct primaries, which is the current agitation of Nigerians is that which undo's the party delegates, and redo the grassroots. Here, the pictures of the aspirants are placed apart from each other, and party members queue in front of their desired aspirant while the counting commences. The aspirant with the highest electorates on queue upon counting, emerges the winner of the primaries, and is then presented by the party to INEC for the general election as the party's candidate. Though this method of primaries is time and energy consuming, the agitators of it argue that it is the sure way of ensuring grassroots' participation in politics, as well as the first call of electing credible candidates of their choice, before the second call, which is the general election.

Iwu, (2020) gives an analogy of direct primaries and drawing some implications thus:

Direct primary in the form of political party primaries guarantee that ordinary party members have a direct influence on who emerges as their party flag bearer (s). Two perspectives can be identified in the explanation of direct primaries. One holds that it is a device for transferring control of nominations from the party

leadership to the rank-and-file members. The problem, in this case, is that the rank-and-file members have a resigned fate that the political godfathers will pay them some amount of money to vote in the party primaries. The other perspective sees it as shifting control from the party to the state. That is, its processes rest on state law. In that instance, it is an official election held at public expense on a date set by the legislature and is supervised by public officials.

Lukman, who is the director-general of the Progressives Governors Forum (PGF), argues that the amendment of the electoral act compelling all political parties to adopt the direct mode of primary election is vague and leaves room for manipulations. The author gives the pros and cons of a direct primary election. According to the author:

While the agitation for direct primaries could be because party members have lost confidence in their parties, there is the need to properly outline a clear administrative framework under the law. For instance, the only thing that exists as means of identification of party members is an ordinary piece of paper and records of members exist only in hard copies available, perhaps to only ward officials and the national secretariat of the party. It leaves much room for manipulation and extraneous practices. Beyond the sentiments in favour of direct primary, therefore, there is the need to properly outline a clear administrative framework under the law. This will guide the process and guarantee that all the bad practices associated with the indirect method of electing party candidates are eliminated. In several respects, the issue of compelling parties to use direct method for internal party elections as part of the Electoral Act is also popular perhaps, because increasingly many political party members and leaders have lost confidence that parties can on their own adopt internal rules that can truly allow for direct primary (The Cable, November 13, 2021).

Salihu's arguments and position above is an example of what the agitation is for the proponents and opponents of direct primaries in Nigeria. For the grassroots who maybe the proponents of direct primaries, they feel they have been cheated, rendered useless in politics, cut short of decision making, not having an effective democratic representation, not gaining the dividends of democracy, and almost cut in political apathy. As such, to be effectively and properly involved in politics and democracy, to be relevant, to be politically active, to make their voices heard, and make for an effective democratic representation, the only option is direct primaries.

Grassroots' Involvement in Politics: A Requirement for Effective Democratic Representation

Through this means, the power to elect leaders for effective democratic representation will be vested on the grassroots. Their accorded respect would be regained, and politicians would be held accountable, and forced to deliver on their promises, with the awareness that in four or three years as it applies, they will return to the grassroots seeking yet another term. For those in government who may be the opponents of direct primaries, it may not be of favour to them, because the era of the prodigal son may just be coming to an end. They know, that the era of embezzlement may just be coming to an end, they know that power is now returning to the people, they know they will have to show their performances or their score card must be presented to the grassroots before they can be reelected.

Though direct primaries will be challenging to manage because of the crisis that may be experienced, it is still the best for grassroots involvement in democracy. Though a few grassroots maybe bribed to go against their conscience to vote for a non-credible candidate, it also gives room for eye ball to eye ball system of election. Although it will be expensive and capital intensive to run, it will at the same time reduce the level of corruption among the party delegates.

The Need for Grassroots' Involvement in Politics in Nigeria

We begin this section by quoting Stout (2010) statements on Grassroots Democracy which appears very important to the development of grassroots involvement in politics. Stout writes thus:

Grassroots democracy is an evolving collection of practices intended to perfect the exercise of political responsibility by citizens in a republic that officially aspires to be democratic. As such, grassroots democracy is essentially social, as well as essentially embodied in action. It takes shape in activities that link citizens together organizationally and relate them in various ways to government institutions and corporations, to officials and political parties, and to the general public. The activities are undertaken self-consciously, in light of value-laden conceptions of what democracy and democratic citizenship are. To the extent that the activities are successful, by the lights of the citizens participating in them, the activities embodies an ideal of democratic citizenship and an ideal of democratic association.

Democracy as it is known is the politics that involves the participation of the citizens of a nation, and this is why Stout further holds the following: "...a republic is democratic insofar as it: (1) removes arbitrary restrictions on who counts as a citizen, (2) opens up sufficient opportunities for citizens to influence and contest official decisions and laws, and (3) is animated by a spirit of mutual recognition and accountability" (Stout 2010). From this analysis, one is poised to ask; how can the grassroots properly function in Nigeria's politics?

The need for grassroots to be involved in politics in Nigeria is very important to the development of Nigeria's democracy. This involvement is necessary because it helps to foster inclusive politics, where the grassroots will be carried along in every political decision. Many in the grassroots feel they are cheated because their opinions are not sought after before major decisions are taken. This for them does not promote an equal share of the dividends of democracy. It is for this reason that those in power relegate them from occupying political offices. The increasing need for participatory democracy becomes necessary because it will help the grassroots to build momentum for leadership positions. Once there is that involvement of the grassroots in politics, it will help to build in them courage, charisma, enthusiasm, objectivity, and other forms of leadership qualities to enable them take up leadership positions. This is why Behrend, (2015) holds that "a more fruitful approach to gaining partisan support is through face-to-face politicking, particularly in contentious local elections" (Behrend, 2015).

However, the grassroots involvement in politics in Nigeria will not come so juicy. They must prove themselves worthy of such involvement. The grassroots are to equip themselves with the full knowledge of democracy, the party's constitution, the Nigeria's constitution, and other relevant literatures of democracy if they are to function effectively in decision making. This means that those in the grassroots must prove their wisdom, and not just announcing a self-acclaimed wisdom.

To be fully involved in the politics of Nigeria, the grassroots must purge themselves of those qualities, behaviours, and practices that erupts corruption, because corruption has been the

Grassroots' Involvement in Politics: A Requirement for Effective Democratic Representation

biggest challenge and threat to effective democracy. To be properly involved in democracy, the grassroots must be resilient, optimistic, strong-willed, brave, and resistant to all attempts by the leaders to buy their consciences, their votes, and their political will and rights. One way of doing this is for the grassroots to be committed and united amongst themselves. Their fight should not be their involvement in politics, this is because whether they like it or not, they are involved in it directly or indirectly. Rather, they should concern themselves with how they can function properly in politics in Nigeria. They should not think of how they can seize power because that will be an upheaval, an almost impossible journey, which if it is to be achieved, it will take lives upon lives as witness during the EndSARS movement. They should rather think of how they can elect proper leaders devoid of party sentiments or political godfatherism and bigotry, especially now that it seems INEC's decisions are beginning to be in their favour. As mentioned earlier in this paper, the grassroots must hold their leaders accountable, and they must ensure that periodically, they meet to review the performances of their leaders from time to time.

Conclusion

The focus of this work was to analyse grassroots' involvement in politics as a requirement for effective democratic representation. In doing this, we defined democracy as a form of governance which revolved around the people. This understanding was adopted from the definition of democracy by Abraham Lincoln as the government of the people, by the people, and for the people. From this perspective, we encapsulated grassroots democracy to mean a system where the ultimate power of political decision is handled by individuals from the lowest cadre in politics. This is not meant to diminish grassroots because even the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is amongst those referred to as the grassroots when it comes to voting. He, however, goes above this title after elections whence he becomes a leader.

Political apathy in this article is seen as a threat to democracy and political participation. It is further posited that political apathy is a deliberate or indeliberate act of exempting oneself from partisan politics. The factors fostering this apathy and the ways of remediation were discussed

herein. To be taken into cognizance is the fact that with political apathy, the sacred duty of exercising political authority and power is left on the shoulders of misfits, who will elect leaders with poor or no leadership qualities. The remedy to this, as contained in this research, is active grassroots political mobilisation, involvement and participation.

The perceived tension arising from the necessity of grassroots' involvement in politics, and the widespread political apathy experienced in Nigeria informed the paper's discussion on theories of grassroots mobilisation. For an effective democratic representation, grassroots must be properly involved in politics, and this is by belonging to a registered political party, getting their permanent voter cards, exercising their constitutional rights to vote and be voted for, detesting all corrupt electioneering practices, and being resilient and optimistic of a restructured and better Nigeria. The citizens have other rights/powers that inure to them to that they could use to guarantee effective democratic representation. These include the power to recall erring legislative members in both the National Assembly, and the State Houses of Assembly, petitioning political office holders to anti-graft agencies, etc.

Recommendations for policy directions

Following from the findings of this work, it is herein recommended as follows:

1. There should be townhall meetings, or seminars organized periodically by groups, associations, NGOs, CSOs, etc. for the sensitization of Nigerians on their powers, rights, and duties. This will leave the citizens with the full consciousness of the powers that they statutorily and politically have.
2. There should be more and easy access to education in Nigeria. This will formally and systematically expose the citizens to their rights and privileges as Nigerians. When so exposed, it will be easy to hold political office holders to account.
3. Security agencies and electoral officials who compromise the integrity of the electoral process should be made to face the law. This will serve as a deterrent to other others who may wish to engage in acts capable of compromising the electoral process.
4. Community and opinion leaders should get patriotically involved in all electoral processes, and

Grassroots' Involvement in Politics: A Requirement for Effective Democratic Representation

processes of public accountability. The involvement of these categories of persons will instill confidence, courage, and determination in the grassroots. This will significantly guarantee the integrity of the electoral process, and public accountability.

The joint and/or combined effect of the recommendations above will come like a seismic impact on democratic representation.

References

- African Development Choices. <https://africandevdevelopmentchoices.org/political-apathy/> retrieved on December 7th 2021 at 2:30am.
- Amnesty Nigeria. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2021/02/nigeria-end-impunity-for-police-violence-by-sars-endsars/> retrieved on December 8th 2021 at 6:12am.
- Anagnostopoulos, G. & Santas, G. (2021). Introduction. In *Democracy, Justice, and Equality in Ancient Greece: Historical and Philosophical Perspectives*. Anagnostopoulos, G. & Santas, G. (Eds). Springer International Publishing AG, 2018. 1-14.
- Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) (2021). *Lessons from the #EndSARS Movement in Nigeria*. Acleddata.com 2021.
- Barber, B. R. (2003). *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*. University of California Press, 2003.
- Bateman, G. (2017). Thomas Jefferson's Vision of Participation. *By The People: Participatory Democracy, Civic Engagement, and Citizenship Education*. Won, N. A. B. & Schugurensky, D. (ed.). Participatory Governance Initiative Arizona State University, 2017. Pp 18-24.
- Behrend, J. (2015). *Reconstructing Democracy: Grassroots Black Politics in the Deep South after the Civil War*. The University of Georgia Press.
- Ekwunife, R. A., Oparah, O. A., Akpan, R. F. & Thomas, H. S. (2021). EndSARS Protest and Centralized Police System in Nigeria. In *Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance*. Farasmand, A. (ed). Springer Nature, Switzerland, https://www.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-31816-5_4353-1
- Encyclopaedia Britannica (2020). "primary election". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 22 May 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/primary-election>. Accessed 11 April 2022.

- Iwu, N. H. (2020). "Party Primaries and the Quest for Accountability in Governance in Nigeria". *Canadian Social Science*. 17(1):30-37.
- Kaufman, M. (1997). *Community Power, Grassroots Democracy, and the Transformation of Social Life*. *Community Power, Grassroots Democracy, and the Transformation of Social Life*. Edited by Michael Kaufman and Haroldo Dilla Alfonso. Zed Books Ltd, Pp 1-26.
- Kura, S.Y. B. (2011). Political Parties and Democracy in Nigeria: Candidate Selection, Campaign and Party Financing in People's Democratic Party. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 13(6): 2011, pp 268-298.
- LeVan, C. (2015). *A Dictators and Democracy in African Development: The Political Economy of Good Governance in Nigeria*. Cambridge University Press.
- Menser, M., (2018). *We Decide: Theories and Cases in Participatory Democracy*. Temple University Press, 2018.
- Muinat, A. A. & Ambali, A. (201). "Party Primaries, Candidate Selection and Intra-Party Conflict in Nigeria: PDP in Perspective". *International Journal of Politics and Good Governance*. Vol. VIII, No. 8.2 Quarter II, 2017. Pp 1-36.
- Ricketts, A. (2012). *The Activists' Handbook: A Step-by-Step Guide to Participatory Democracy*. Zed Books.
- Stout, J. (2010). *Blessed are the Organized: Grassroots Democracy in America*. Princeton University Press, 2010.
- The Cable (2021). <https://www.thecable.ng/sali-hu-lukman-direct-primaries-leave-room-for-manipulations> retrieved on December 7th 2021 at 2:44am.
- Vértesy, L. (2017). The Public Participation in the Drafting of Legislation in Hungary. *Central European Public Administration Review*. 14(4) 4, 2017, pp 115–135.
- Wolfe, J.D (1985). A Defense of Participatory Democracy. *The Review of Politics*. 47(3), July, 1985. Pp 370–389.