

Civic Engagement in Nigeria: A New Sociopolitical Development Perspective

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Abstract: This study proposed a reframing of Sociopolitical Development Theory (SDT) towards contextualising civic engagement (specifically political participation and human rights activism) in emerging democracies like Nigeria. The modified theory developed from the application of SDT lenses on the analysis of the influence of five sociodemographic factors on 372 participants' civic engagement report. Results showed significant variations across groups – male participants and individuals who have higher education and income were more likely to participate in politics, while male participants and individuals who have higher income were more likely to engage in human rights activism. Human rights activism was also more likely to be engaged in by emerging adults and individuals with secondary education. Generally, based on the SDT, low sociopolitical awareness were found. Analyses of these patterns led to the contextualised SDT that better explained our findings. Using the modified SDT lenses, high sociopolitical awareness with low sociopolitical (civic) action were found, although variations across sociodemographic factors remained consistent with SDT. The implications of these results were discussed in terms of the importance of understanding the nuances of civic engagement in diverse democracies and the relevance of contextualising imported theories. Suggestions for increasing civic engagement towards stronger democracies were also advanced.

Keywords: Citizenship, Civic Engagement, Political Participation, Human Rights Activism, Sociopolitical Development Theory

1. Introduction

Human rights violations, electoral malpractices, poverty, and poor standard of living are rife in Nigeria, where democracy is still emerging (Aluaigba, 2016). Engagement in civic actions could change the status quo since individual benefits like development of skills, self-esteem, and self-development as well as societal benefits like broadened civic activity and contribution to citizenship (Zeldin, Camino, & Calvert, 2003) have been linked to civic engagement. Erlich (2000, p. vi) defined civic engagement as 'working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference'.

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Westheimer & Kahne (2004) identified three types of good citizens as personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented citizens, and each has unique characteristics. Even though the three are mutually inclusive, there is strong consensus that what is emphasised in states, both democratic and non-democratic, is personally responsible citizens (see Banks, 2008; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Torney-Putnam et al., 1999). This is characterised by contributions to the community's welfare and strictly abiding to conventional rules such as voting. Participatory citizens – characterised by right claiming and focus on actualising state goals through other means such as collective actions that may run contrary to existing laws – are emphasised to a much lesser degree. Yet, despite not being emphasised by most states, it is argued that justice oriented or transformative citizens (characterised by autonomy and critically working collectively to challenge existing unjust structures, including state goals and to create social change, sometimes through measures, such as protests and strikes, contested as rebellious or illegal by some state actors) are necessary for the realisation and sustenance of true and strong democracy (Banks, 2008; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Barber, 1989).

Civic actions such as protest against human rights violations and electoral malpractices as well as campaign for election of desired political candidates and informed voting are justice oriented in nature. Considering that justice oriented civic engagement activities have been associated with strong democracy and development, we investigated Nigerian citizens' justice oriented civic engagement (specifically political participation and human rights activism) level and related our findings to existing knowledge on the relationship between sociodemographic factors and civic engagement. The main purpose of the study is to analyse civic engagement levels, towards suggestions for producing more justice-oriented citizens for a stronger democracy and more peaceful society. Existing literature, as reviewed below, suggest that there is low civic engagement in Nigeria, and so we hypothesise that civic engagement levels among Nigerians is low, with no significant variation within and across sociodemographic groups.

We extend knowledge in this field by offering a plausible explanation for low civic engagement among citizens based on Watts et al. (1999) sociopolitical development model, in which the highest stage embodies the characteristics of justice-oriented citizens that are necessary for social reforms. But, since Watts et al.'s (1999) model seems to capture situations where actions for social reforms do not attract further oppressions, we modified the model to suit the realities of most postcolonial weak democracies and authoritarian regimes, with Nigeria as an example. The sociopolitical development theory and its contextualised modification are discussed in the ensuing sections.

This study is significant to the field of democracy and citizenship studies as it employs the sociopolitical development theory to explain civic engagement, particularly political participation and human rights activism, in Nigeria. The authors also argue that findings of low civic engagement in Nigeria is explainable by factors beyond psychological (awareness) aspect of sociopolitical development and availability of resources as assumed by sociopolitical development lenses (Watts et al., 1999; Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015). By contextualising the sociopolitical development theory for Nigeria with the advancement of a new model, high levels of psychological (awareness) aspect of sociopolitical development with low civic action were found. Urging researchers to think about contextualising theories and methods, the nuances of democracy, and influences of sociodemographic factors also lends significance to this study.

1.1 Sociopolitical Development Theory (SDT)

Sociopolitical development theory [SDT], as proposed by Watts et al. (1999), is the understanding of the political, economic, cultural, and other systemic forces that shape society and one's status in it, and the associated process of growth in the relevant knowledge, analytical skills, emotional faculties and capacities necessary to engage in institutional reforms. According to the theory's proponents, the process of sociopolitical development is cumulative and occurs in five stages as pictured in Figure 1, beginning at the bottom of the pyramid from relative uninformed inaction on social forces affecting us to one of sustained, informed and strategic action. These stages are:

1. Acritical stage: individuals are unaware of resource asymmetry, and the inequalities in the capabilities of group members are believed to be real or uninfluenced.
2. Adaptive stage: individuals recognize that there may be institutional asymmetry but choose a defeatist attitude because they perceive the institutions behind the asymmetry as unalterable or unchallengeable.
3. Precritical stage: individuals become more concerned about the asymmetries and inequalities that exist and become less complacent.
4. Critical stage: individuals desire to learn more about the inequalities and realise that activism and advocacy are necessary to combat them.
5. Liberation stage: individuals' awareness of inequalities and oppression becomes notorious, adaptive behaviours are shunned, and social and community actions are taken to remedy the situation.

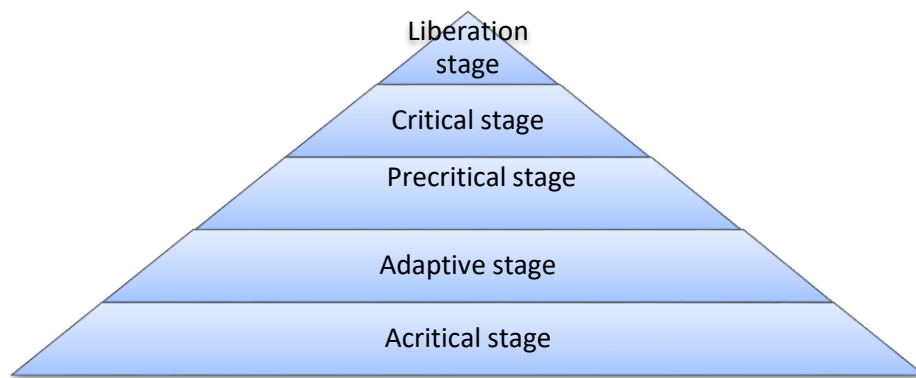


Figure 1: Sociopolitical development model (created from Watts et al., 1999)

Stages 1 – 4 represent the psychological (awareness/concerns) aspect of SDT while the last but highest stage (action for liberation) represents the behavioural aspect of SDT. Although this theory was applied on marginalized African Americans and findings showed that critical awareness and progression through the stages increased among the young male participants in the study when key action questions were asked (Watts et al., 1999), it still exudes Western perspective and thus, does not sufficiently apply in postcolonial weak democracies or authoritarian regimes such as Nigeria. This is because of the country's unique societal structure that affects citizenship and presents different stages of sociopolitical development such that simply becoming critically aware is not sufficient to advance from the base of the pyramid (Figure 1) to the top. This is discussed further in Section 5 below. Even though collective identity, structures, power,

and resources are pointed out as important factors in realising community actions (Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015), suggesting that critical awareness is insufficient for action for liberation, the theory is still inapplicable to weak postcolonial democracies. In substantive terms, the SPD framework is insufficient for the Nigerian context because it presumes that becoming ‘less complacent’ (precritical stage) is an option available to everyone and that individuals can choose to combat inequalities with activism and advocacy. This holds true for advanced democracies but in Nigeria, the deadly repercussions of actions for political and human rights, especially those directed at the government and its institutions, deter people from significantly engaging in action for social reforms. These repercussions of social actions in authoritarian and emerging democracies, which significantly differ from the consequences of activism in Western democracies, are well documented in existing literature (see Igbo, 2017; Dambo et al., 2020). Additionally, the SPD framework fails to capture situations of cul-de-sacs and citizens’ retreat from action; a situation that is pronounced in the Nigerian context due to the deadly repercussions associated with actions for institutional change.

Due to the obvious importance of context and because of their interest in African American activism, Watts, Williams and Jagers (2003) advanced the SDT further ‘to ground the theory in African (American) culture and liberation traditions’ (p. 186). Yet, the dynamics of power and privilege, and relations among citizens and with their government in the United States are very different from postcolonial countries whose democracies are at infancy stages. Also, culture and other components of the SDT were simply emphasised more, rather than a reconceptualization of the theory to fit a unique context. Furthermore, sociopolitical actions discussed in Watts’ works (1999, 2003, 2015) are related to intrapersonal or interpersonal relations or non-political actions in its strict sense (e.g., protesting gender violence, voicing out against racism, starting an economic activity after skills acquisition training, adopting healthy sexual living etc.) that develop or follow people’s participation in participatory research. Pretending that these actions are easily attainable in a weak-security context such as Nigeria, we maintain that SDP framework is inapplicable to authoritarian regimes and weak democracies where sociopolitical action relates to citizens and governments’ relationships as in our study. The foregoing discussion implies that by using SDT’s lenses, the lower stages of socio-political development (acritical and adaptive stages) may consistently be reported for Nigeria, as we analyse later in the discussion section. Thus, a recontextualisation of SDT to suit Nigeria and other postcolonial countries is presented below.

1.2 Towards a Context-Based Sociopolitical Development Theory for Nigeria

Citizenship is not inclusive in Nigeria. Berenschot and van Klinken’s (2018) account of informality, social injustice and everyday life (e.g. a citizen’s enjoyment of his or her rights is dependent on whom he or she knows and the capacity to pay bribe) in Indonesia resonates, to a great extent, with the case with Nigeria. Corrupt practices and unequal distribution of power and resources are ingrained in Nigeria and these foster rivalry and distrust among the over 250 ethnic groups (Falola & Heaton, 2008). Each ethnic group, especially the three with the largest population – Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo – still fear the hegemonic tendencies of the others, and almost everything concerning the nation is viewed from the prism of ethnicity, resulting in a weak social cohesion and national identity whereby most people’s allegiance is to their ethnic group first, and sometimes exclusively (Mustapha, 2004). Complicating this ethnicity issue is the division of the country along geographical and religious lines. Ethnic groups typically occupy particular

geographical locations, for example, Kanuris are found in Yobe and Bornu states in the North-East, Igalas are right in the centre of the country in Kogi state, Igbos are in five states in the South-East, Ibibios are in Akwa Ibom state in the South-South. Also, Northern Nigeria is predominantly Muslim, South-East and South-South are predominantly Christian, and South-West is a mix of Christians and Muslims. These regional divisions result to parochialism, and varying levels of hostility and rivalry towards others.

Moreover, the values and rights of minority groups such as the Niger-Delta people, and marginalized groups such as women and the low socioeconomic class are significantly excluded. Also, in various States in Nigeria, the rights of aborigines exclude that of the 'others' – non-indigenes: for example, different states dismiss non-aboriginal workers from their state service and deport non-productive non-indigenes from their towns. Political and human rights violations are also rife in Nigeria as exemplified by the constant violations of citizens' political will by sitting governments through electoral malpractices including disenfranchisement of opposing party's niches; the continuous encroachment of cattle herders on farmers' lands, which usually result in the death of farmers who challenge the herders; and the maltreatment of the people of the oil-producing regions in the South, whose lands, water, and air are polluted by crude oil mining activities (Aluaigba, 2016).

Yet, despite the level of social injustice and inequalities ravaging the country, civic action is not pronounced in today's Nigeria. That is, whereas behavioural aspect of sociopolitical development (action for social reform which political participation falls under) is low as explained by our revised framework of the SPD model, the psychological aspect of sociopolitical development is high, and we explained this based on the Nigerian context where unlike in the original theory's US context, high awareness aspect of sociopolitical development may not lead to action. One possible reason is that civic action characterised as disobedience is highly destructive and repressive: media and public attempts to protest government actions and inactions are met with repression and destructive reprisals. This presumably has plunged citizens into what Cvetkovich (2012) called 'political depression' – a feeling that conventional forms of political responses, such as activism, are no longer effective – thereby resulting to a decline in civic actions, political mistrust and apathy in Nigeria. For example, voter turnout since 1999 has generally been low, hovering around 50% or slightly below, and there is a wide gender disparity gap with very low representation of women (Omotola & Aiyedogbon, 2012).

Another reason could be reliance on what Berenschot and van Klinken (2018) termed informal citizenship – a form of citizenship whereby citizens rely on their informal connections, such as political personalities, ethnic affiliates etc., to realise their rights and 'participate voluntarily in government community programmes partly out of a desire to develop useful connections with influential bureaucrats' (p. 105). They observed that citizens took to informality not by choice but as 'a pragmatic response to the weakly institutionalised state institutions' (p. 105) and that informality 'is shaped by social inequality [and] also reproduces these inequalities' (p. 107). They further argued that dependency on informal connections often discourages contentious collective action, and yet, proposed that informal citizenship be recognized as constitutive dimension of citizenship. Although we understand their frustration, there are several difficulties with their proposal: it undermines the major aim of education, change, and promotes social Darwinism legitimising social injustice.

Consequently, SDT's stages of sociopolitical development does not smoothly fit the current Nigerian context. Only the first three stages appear relevant, especially the second: 'it is clear to individuals that there are institutional asymmetries or injustices but many choose a defeatist attitude' because active protest could result to their death, as evident from past events. For example, Ken Saro-Wiwa was executed for protesting the environmental injustices in Ogoni land; Dele Giwa was assassinated for questioning government policies; Igbos were massacred for demanding secession from the country due to their maltreatment by the ruling ethnic group; Odi people were massacred, with all private buildings in the village burnt down, for demanding environmental and indigenous resources rights; and most recently, the #EndSARS protesters were killed by state security officials under the Nigerian governments' order.

Thus, we have developed a more fitting and context-based 5Rs sociopolitical development model for Nigeria (Figure 2). Just like Figure 1, the bottom of the pyramid is the earliest stage but here, significantly fewer people get to the top (the final stage) because of the associated risks. The stages of the modified SDT are:

1. Recognition stage: individuals are aware that there are significant differences in resources based on group membership and they do not have complete control over their place in society.
2. Reaction stage: individuals are concerned and attempt to combat inequalities.
3. Realisation stage: individuals realise that their attempts are futile and pose risks to their lives and those of family and associates.
4. Retreat stage: individuals choose a defeatist attitude and retreat to inaction.
5. Resistance stage: individuals become angry, ignore potential and obvious negative consequences, revolt, and take actions to create awareness and combat inequalities.

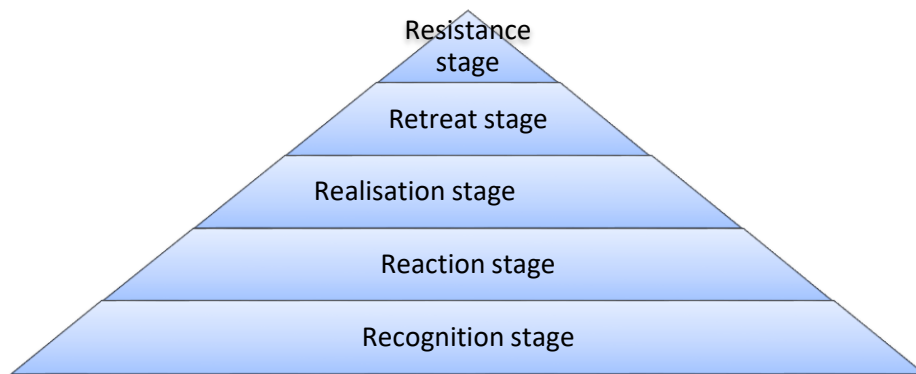


Figure 2: Modified sociopolitical development model

Many Nigerians get to Watts et al.'s (1999) theory's stage 3 (precritical stage) before experiencing the stage 2 (adaptive stage) that they may not advance beyond, which would be interpreted as low sociopolitical development, and consequently low political participation and human rights activism. Yet, Watts et al.'s (1999) theory's stage 2 is similar to the modified model's stage 4 (retreat stage), which implies high sociopolitical development, albeit with defeated activist spirit and without action. The absence of action is not due to innate developmental inabilities or unwillingness but due to the established nature of institutionalized and overt oppression and lethal suppression of action. The revised framework

is a reformulation of the SPD theory as both of them are generally progressions from a state of unawareness of inequalities and/or injustice to recognition of the problem, increased concerns, and action. However, they are also different because in Watt's SPD model, the stages are smoothly progressive and the highest stage is freely attainable and denote higher awareness and action while in our revised framework, the stages are retrogressive and even though higher stages also denote higher awareness, the highest stage is destructive/less attainable in postcolonial Nigeria since citizens' political and human rights actions are usually met with lethal resistance by government forces or political thugs. However, owing to the manifestation of inequalities in different contexts (e.g., gender, location and socioeconomic status), we suspect that sociodemographic factors would influence the level of civic engagement of Nigerian citizenry. It is important, therefore, to review previous literature on the relationship between civic engagement and sociodemographic factors to identify patterns of relationship between the two as this would make observable a change of pattern in our context and thus, guide our informed discussion of findings. We now turn to previous literature on the relationship between the two concepts.

2. Civic Engagement and Sociodemographic Factors: Relevant Literature

In this study, we construe civic engagement as active and justice oriented political participation and human rights activism and used it interchangeably with civic actions. On the one hand, political participation is understood as a key instrument in the longevity of democratic systems or disruption of non-democratic systems and serves as a tool (through voting in elections or referendums, boycotts, mass protests, political rallies, lobbying, etc.) that the citizenry uses to influence governmental structure, policies, and decisions as well as hold their government accountable. Human rights activism on the other hand, is very important and complementary to political participation in Nigeria because of the rampant abuse of human rights in the country, especially by political elites.

Previous studies have found gender to influence political participation. For instance, a recurring finding with respect to political participation has been gender gap, with men being more politically engaged and motivated than women (e.g., Omotola & Aiyedogbon, 2012; Cicognania, et al., 2011; Hooghe, & Stolle, 2004; Mayer & Schmidt, 2004; Ogundare, 1991). However, the much that is known about gender and political participation in Nigeria is about voting and political positions and not engagement in civic actions (e.g. Ogbonna, 2016; Agbalajobi, 2010). Literature has also shown that the more income one has, the more politically engaged that person is likely to be (Waterson & Moffa, 2017; Levin-Waldman, 2013; Lott, 2006). Also, adolescents, just like adults, have been found by studies as generally not actively involved in political participation and varying reasons ranging from lack of trust in politicians and the government to age limitation have been offered as the setbacks (cf. Flanagan, 2003; Crocetti, Jahromi, & Meeus, 2012).

For education, studies have verified a seemingly strong assumption that education influences political participation (Larreguy & Marshall, 2017; Arnot et al., 2009). However, Berinsky and Lenz (2011), McIntosh, Hart and Youniss (2007), and Finkel and Ernst (2005) showed that when other variables (social factors such as family political discussion and the student's own level of media exposure and prior political interest) are taken into account, civic education had weaker attitudinal and skill than knowledge effect. Surprisingly, education was found to decrease political participation in Zimbabwe, as better-educated citizens deliberately disengaged from voting, engaging in community meetings, and contacting politicians (Croke et al., 2016). However, this unexpected finding may be attributed to the country's electoral

authoritarian regime. Unlike previous studies, the present study is based in Nigeria and is focused on understanding how sociodemographic factors influence civic engagement through the lenses of sociopolitical development theory.

Literature on individual human rights attitudes or perceptions (such as endorsement, restriction, and enforcement of human rights ideologies, principles or movements) and the determinants of such attitudes abound (see Crowson, 2004; Amowitz et al., 2003; Diaz-Veizades et al., 1995; Cohrs et al., 2007). But literature on human rights activism is scarce, especially for Nigeria. A Nigerian literature on human rights actions (Williams-Elegbe, 2015) only described initiatives created to fight irresponsible leadership, and citizens' participation in selected mass protests against human rights violations (such as Occupy Nigeria of 2012, Bring Back Our Girls of 2015). Shavit, Lahav, and Shahrabani (2014) investigated the factors that affected people's decision to participate in Israel's 2011 social justice protest against the continuous rise in living costs. They found no significant difference in sociodemographic factors like age, employment status, and income between those who participated and those who did not. However, women tended to participate more than men, and this was assumed to be because women instigated the protest; Israeli women in general are more active in public life; and also because demonstrations have become less disruptive. To understand these sociodemographic patterns in Nigeria, this study focused on civic engagement as defined by general and consistent political actions and participation in human rights protection.

3. Method

This study's design is descriptive research, specifically employing the survey method. The rationale for this method is that we seek to investigate the relationship between two civic engagement variables (political participation and human rights activism) and five sociodemographic variables, as reported by a sample drawn from the Nigerian population. The study is guided by the following questions:

1. What is the level of civic engagement in Nigeria (political participation and human rights activism)?
2. How do sociodemographic factors influence civic engagement (political participation and human rights activism) in Nigeria?

3.1 Participants

This study's participants comprised 372 people with the various confounding variables of the study drawn from postgraduate and undergraduate University of Nigeria's students (sandwich and regular programmes), and community dwellers. Many sociodemographic variables were collected from participants but, gender (Male and Female), location (Urban and Rural), age (emerging adults: 18-25 years; young adults: 26-35 years; and older adults: 36-50 years; $M_{age} = 32.38$, $SD = 8.88$), educational qualification (Group 1: Primary Education; Group 2: Secondary Education; and Group 3: Tertiary Education), and income level (Group 1: <₦50,000; Group 2: ₦50,000 – ₦99,000; Group 3: ₦100,000 – ₦149,000; and Group 4: ≥ ₦150,000) were used for this study. However, some of the participants have at least one dependant indicating that income may not have a direct effect. See Table 1 for the compositions of the sample's variables. Consent was first sought and obtained from the participants.

Table 1: Profile of study participants (n = 372)

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	220	59.1
	Female	152	40.9
Location	Urban	242	65.1
	Rural	130	34.9
Age	18 – 25	100	29.9
	26 – 35	132	35.5
	36 – 50	140	37.6
Education (Highest level)	Primary Education	22	5.9
	Secondary Education	129	34.7
	Tertiary Education	221	59.4
Monthly Income	Less than ₦50,000 (< \$138.8)	157	42.2
	₦50,000 – ₦99,000 (\$138.8 – \$275)	96	25.8
	₦100,000 – 149,000 (\$277.7 – \$413.8)	44	11.8
	₦150,000 & Above (\$416.6)	75	20.2

To ensure sufficient representation of age groups, location, income and educational background, participants were sourced by approaching different ‘kporakpos’ (i.e. town unions – communal or ethnic clubs or unions formed outside the immediate community or ethnic group) of different age groups among undergraduate and post-graduate students of regular and sandwich programmes in the University of Nigeria, as well as communities in Nsukka Metropolis and rural areas.

3.2 Measure

The measurement instrument was Civic Engagement Scale [CES]. Developed by the first author, it is comprised of ten items with four subscales (dependent variables): political participation, community volunteerism, environmental civility, and human rights activism subscale rated on a 5-point scale (4 = very much, 3 = much, 2 = little, 1 = very little, 0 = not at all). 0 constitutes one of the ordinal scores in the scale, so the number 4 is the highest point on our 5-point scale. This study reports only the results of the responses to political participation subscale measured with four items (e.g. I vote in elections, I participate in political rallies, political protests, etc.) and human rights activism subscale measured with two items (‘I protest human rights violation through social media, public rallies, or petition signing’ and ‘I report cases of human rights violation to the appropriate authority’).

Three experts face validated the instrument. It was further trial tested on 73 respondents. The reliability test on their responses yielded a Cronbach alpha of .78 and the items loaded from as low as .57 to .79 when subjected to a simple Principal Component Analysis. The instrument was adopted and administered on 386 people, which was reduced to 372 using listwise deletion method to eliminate incomplete responses. Participants completed the measure on the spot for an average of 40 minutes. The researcher and her assistants collected the completed measure.

A rotation principal component analysis was conducted on the responses of the 372 participants using Varimax with Kaiser Normalization and all the items loaded heavily (from .40 to .92) on one or more of the four factors with eigen values higher than 1 and a cumulative variance percentage of 66.61 of the total variance among the items (see Table 2 for details).

Table 2: Rotated principal component analysis of civic engagement items using Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

Items		Factors			
		1	2	3	4
1	(Vote in Elections)	.409			
2	(Participating in political campaigns)	.917			
3	(Discussing politics)	.477	.376		.348
4	(Protesting electoral malpractices)	.902			
5	(Protesting Human Rights Violations)				.801
6	(Reporting Human Rights Violations)		.717		
Eigenvalue (Rotated)		2.12	1.53	1.51	1.44
Percentage of Variance (Rotated)		21.19	15.37	15.11	14.49

Note: Factors above .30 are reported; Percentage of Cumulative Variance is 66.17; Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy is .58; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant at (Chi-Square = 867.192; df = 45) $p < .001$

In addition, item-total correlation was done on all the items and the result showed significant correlations ranging from .29 to .46 (see Table 3 for details).

Table 3: Frequency distribution and corrected item-total correlations for civic engagement scale items

Items	Description	VM	M	L	VL	NAA	r_{i-t}
1	I vote in elections	27	107	124	100	14	.285**
2	I participate in political campaigns and rallies	2	11	67	59	233	.340**
3	I discuss politics or political issues on face-to-face interactions or on social media	2	57	121	95	97	.392**
4	I participate in legal public protests to disapprove electoral malpractices	2	10	75	89	196	.350**
5	I protest human rights violations through social medias, public rallies, or petition signing	0	7	85	105	175	.464**
6	I report cases of human rights violations like violence against children to the appropriate authorities such as the police	0	0	2	34	336	.374**

Note: ** correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The instrument yielded a Cronbach coefficient alpha of .61. Alpha coefficients of .50 to .70 are sufficient and acceptable levels of internal consistency (Hinton, McMurray, & Brownlow, 2014). Each civic engagement component is the average of the items measuring it (e.g. political participation is the average of the 4 items measuring it) and the middle of the 5-point scale is defined as possession of a measured factor (see Krosnick & Presser, 2010).

3.3 Method of Analysis

Descriptive analysis of the participants' (as categorized) scores on all measured reported factors was done, followed by variance analysis using different variance statistics to determine if statistical differences exist between or among categorical variables.

4. Results

4.1 Preliminary Analyses

Preliminary assumption tests were conducted to forestall violation of normality, homogeneity of variance, and independence principles. T-test and one-way ANOVA were used for data analysis. Kruskal-Wallis statistic was used where data violated both normality and homogeneity tests whereas Welch's ANOVA was used where data violated only homogeneity of variance assumption in cases of three or more categorical variables (Field, 2013). Tukey HSD, Games-Howell test and Bonferroni test were conducted for all significant ANOVA, Welch's ANOVA, and Kruskal-Wallis results respectively (Field, 2013).

Bonferroni correction method was used to adjust alpha when multiple comparisons were run in order to control the familywise error rate and reduce the probability of a false significant result (Lee & Lee, 2018). Mann-Whitney U was used where data violated only normality test while the alternative t-test result presented in the SPSS output table was used where only the equality of variance test was violated, in cases of two categorical variables.

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation [SD] of responses on measures (n = 372)

	Measured Variables	Mean	SD
Civic Engagement [CE]	Political Participation [PP]	1.21	.68
	Human Rights Activism [HRA]	.45	.47

The descriptive statistics (mean [M] and standard deviation [SD]) scores of all participants on the measured variables are presented in Table 4 while the mean and SD scores of each independent variable (sociodemographic factor) on the measured (outcome) variables are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Mean and standard deviation [SD] of responses of each sociodemographic factor on measures (n = 372)

		Gender		Location		Age			SES (Monthly Income)				Education		
		M*	F*	U*	R*	18-25	26-35	36-50	≥ ₦150k	₦100k – 149k	₦50k -99k	< ₦50k	PE*	SE*	TE*
Measured Construct		Mean (SD)		Mean (SD)		Mean (SD)			Mean (SD)				Mean (SD)		
CE	PP	1.31 (.74)	1.06 (.52)	1.23 (.68)	1.18 (.66)	1.08 (.66)	1.35 (.70)	1.17 (.63)	1.35 (.78)	1.39 (.78)	1.20 (.63)	1.10 (.59)	.89 (.44)	1.07 (.52)	1.32 (.74)
	HRA	.55 (.50)	.29 (.39)	.45 (.47)	.43 (.49)	.39 (.48)	.54 (.48)	.40 (.46)	.61 (.56)	.56 (.52)	.38 (.41)	.39 (.45)	.34 (.45)	.52 (.46)	.42 (.49)

Note: CE = Civic Engagement; PP = Political Participation; HRA = Human Rights Activism; *M = Male, F = Female, U = Urban, R = Rural, PE = Primary Education, SE = Secondary Education, TE = Tertiary Education.

4.2 Political Participation

The Mann Whitney U test was used on data on gender and location variables. The result for gender showed that the political participation scores for males (mean rank = 199.35) and females (mean rank = 167.91) were significantly different ($U = 13,894, p = .005$). The result for location showed no significant difference between the political participation mean scores of urban (mean rank = 188.47) and rural (mean rank = 182.83) participants ($U = 15,252, p = .61$). One-way ANOVA was used to analyse data on age because only normality assumption is violated and one-way ANOVA tolerates violations to normality distribution. Result showed a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of political participation of the different age groups ($F(2,369) = 4.97, p = .007, \eta^2 = .021$). Tukey's HSD post hoc comparison showed that only the mean scores of participants aged 18-25 ($M = 1.08$) and 26 -35 ($M = 1.17$) significantly differed ($p < .05$). To control familywise error rate, Bonferroni correction method was further ran and the result showed the mean scores of participants aged 18-25 ($M = 1.08$) and 26 -35 ($M = 1.17$) significantly differed ($p = .007$).

The Kruskal Wallis H Test on data on education variable showed that there was a statistically significant difference in political participation mean score between the different education groups ($\chi^2(2) = 13.01, p = .001$), with a mean rank PP score of 135.61 for primary education, 169.12 for secondary education and 201.71 for tertiary education. Bonferroni post hoc comparison showed that the mean score of tertiary

education group differed significantly from that of primary education ($p = .016$) and secondary education groups ($p = .017$). The Kruskal Wallis Test on data for income variable showed that there was a significant difference in political participation mean score between the different income groups ($\chi^2(3) = 8.94$, $p = .030$), with a mean rank PP score of 212.42 for Group 3, 204.61 for Group 4, 188.62 for Group 1, and 169.29 for Group 2. Bonferroni post hoc comparison showed that the mean score of participants in Group 1 differed significantly from Group 3 ($p = .017$) and Group 4 ($p = .018$) only when the p-value is unadjusted but did not differ ($P > .10$) when adjusted with Bonferroni corrections method.

4.3 Human Rights Activism [HRA]

Mann-Whitney U test was used for the data on gender and location variables. The result showed a statistically significant difference between the HRA mean scores of male (mean rank = 208.55) and female (mean rank = 154.59) participants ($U = 11,870$, $p < .001$). The result for location showed no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of urban (mean rank = 188.75) and rural (mean rank = 182.30) participants ($U = 15,184$, $p = .557$). One-way ANOVA on data for age variable showed that there was a significant difference in the HRA mean score between the different age groups ($F(2,369) = 3.90$, $p = .021$, $\eta^2 = .021$). Tukey's HSD post hoc comparison showed that only the mean scores of participants aged 26 - 35 ($M = .54$) and 36 - 50 ($M = .40$) significantly differed ($p < .05$). To control familywise error rate, Bonferroni correction method was further conducted and the result showed the mean scores of participants aged 26-35 ($M = 1.08$) and 36 -50 ($M = 1.17$) significantly differed ($p = .04$).

Furthermore, the analysis on data for educational qualification revealed a statistical significance in the HRA mean scores of the different educational groups ($\chi^2(2) = 6.57$, $p = .037$), with a mean rank HRA score of 204.24 for secondary education, 178.49 for tertiary education and 162.98 for primary education. Bonferroni post hoc comparison showed that the mean score of participants in secondary education and tertiary education groups significantly differed (.021) only when unadjusted, but did not differ when adjusted with Bonferroni correction method ($p = .064$). The result on income variable showed a significant difference in the mean score of the HRA scale of different income groups ($\chi^2(3) = 11.89$, $p = .008$), with a mean rank HRA score of 215.37 for Group 4, 207.99 for Group 3, 175.11 for Group 2, and 173.65 for Group 1. Bonferroni Post hoc comparison showed that the HRA mean score of participants who earn less than ₦50,000 differed significantly with participants who earn ₦150,000 and above ($p = .019$).

5. Discussion

As earlier hypothesised, the study's participants reported low levels of political participation and human rights activism in general, as shown in Table 4. From a Sociopolitical Development Theory (SDT) perspective, the result could be associated with low levels of sociopolitical development (acritical and adaptive stages) among the participants. Also, there are some significant variations within and across the sociodemographic groups studied, as discussed below. The civic engagement scale used to collect data for this study was created based on existing literature on civic engagement and it depicts Western perspectives of the means of civic engagement, including political participation and human rights activism, since it failed to take into account the external factors that limit an individual's choices to take civic action. While analysing the data with the SDT lenses, the apparent nuances of democracy and politics across countries with varying levels of economic development necessitated a recontextualisation of our theoretical lenses.

Thus, a comparative analysis of SDT and our modified version of it are presented simultaneously in this section, towards demonstrating the importance of context in social analysis.

5.1 Sociodemographic Factors and Political Participation

The finding of this study that political participation is influenced by gender, with men being more involved, is consistent with findings of other studies (Cicognania et al., 2011). This study also showed that age had a small influence on political participation, as shown in Table 6, but could not predict participation. Specifically, emerging adults (18-25) scored lower than young adults (26-35) and older adults (36-50). This result is interpreted with caution because the significant difference found between the political participation of these age groups could be as a result of the age imposition on election rights such as aspiring for positions and voting, as some emerging adults, although eligible, will have to wait for electoral periods (which may come years later) to exercise their voting right for the first time. Emerging adults' low participation in politics could also be as a result of their lack of trust in politicians and the government (Flanagan, 2003; Crocetti, Jahromi, & Meeus, 2012) and political depression.

The finding on education contradicts the findings of Croke et al. (2016) and supports the findings of Larreguy and Marshall (2017) and Arnot et al. (2009), as discussed in the literature review section above. Our result showed that individuals with higher education are more involved in politics than those with secondary education, who are in turn more involved than participants with only primary education. Also, just like previous studies (Waterson & Moffa, 2017; Levin-Waldman, 2013), the present study confirmed income as a significant factor in political participation since higher income groups are more likely to participate in politics than lower income groups. However, the results for income and education should be interpreted with care since education is significantly correlated with income ($r = .243, p = < .001$).

Even though there is low political participation across board, suggestive of the adaptive stage of Watts et al.'s (1999) sociopolitical development theory, male participants and individuals who have higher education and income are more involved and appear to be in more advanced stages (critical and liberation stages) than females and people with lower education and income. But if we consider the modified model for the Nigerian context (Figure 2), the individuals (women and individuals with low education and low income usually marginalised) found to be less engaged are likely in the retreat stage while the individuals found to be more involved are likely in the reaction stage, and it is unlikely, just like Zimbabweans in Croke et al.'s study (2016), that they would progress beyond the retreat stage considering the Nigerian state's power and its stifling of the agency and autonomy of citizens. Thus, for effective civic engagement, it is very important for Nigerians to advance to the top of the pyramid of the modified SDT model. To achieve this, policy formulation and implementation needs to take cognizance of Nigeria's unique context, moving beyond simply advocating for political and human rights actions to finding solutions to the obstacles facing such actions in Nigeria.

5.2 Sociodemographic Factors and Human Rights Activism

The results showed that male and urban participants were more involved in human rights activism or protection than their female and rural counterparts. This is in contrast to Shavit, Lahav, and Shahrabani's (2014) study where female participants were more involved. The results for age and education are more

nuanced, with the middle groups being the most involved in activism. That is, young adults were more involved in human rights activism than older adults and emerging adults, especially through social media, while people with secondary education background reported more involvement than people with tertiary and primary education background.

This study further revealed that individuals in the high-income group are more likely to discuss and protest human rights violation than individuals in the low-income group. This result compares to Levin-Waldman's (2013) study, where higher income increases the resources at the disposal of citizens for various forms of civic participation, including activism. However, our result is in contrast with Neundorff, Smets, and García-Albacete's (2013) study that found lower income and poverty increases citizens' activism, especially in areas of direct importance to their lives. The result could be because high income group as expressed in our study (₦150, 000 is a little above poverty line if economic peculiarities of Nigeria like high inflation and poor purchasing power of the Naira are accounted for) are more likely to be affected by the problems of Nigeria's weak institutions since they have more encounter with such weak institutions. It could also be that the higher the income, the more resources and confidence to civically engage as is also seen in Levin-Waldman's study.

In relation to Watts et al.'s (1999) sociopolitical development theory, even though there is a generally low involvement with human rights activism, individuals who are males and have higher income are more involved and can be said to have attained higher sociopolitical development than females and lower income participants. Interestingly, young adults appear to be in more advanced stages than emerging adults and older adults, while participants with secondary education are in more advanced stages than those with primary and tertiary education. This outcome complicates a developmental model (Figure 1) that should have a clear path of progression. However, the modified model for the Nigerian context (Figure 2) explains this situation better. It is likely that the emerging adults and primary educated participants are at the recognition stage, while the young adults and secondary educated participants are at the reaction stage, and older adults and tertiary educated participants are at the realisation and retreat stages. This assumption is necessitated by previous findings in existing literature that suggest a positive correlation for civic engagement and income, age and education, and Croke et al.'s (2016) finding that participation decreased with increase in education in authoritarian regimes.

In sum, the emerging pattern is that where Watt's SDT implies lower development, our modified model implies that the individuals are on higher rungs of the SPD pyramid when their context is accounted for. This underscores the importance of contextualising 'universal' or Western-based theories and epistemologies, especially for non-Western countries and emerging democracies. However, even though our model suggests that a significant number of our study's participants are at advanced levels of socio-political development, this is not transformative in itself, as the key stage (behavioural or action stage) is unattained. People need to get to the highest point of the pyramid where sustainable action is produced. Therefore, for improved civic engagement (specifically political participation and human rights activism) among Nigerians, a progression to the resistance stage is imperative. To achieve this, individuals need to look beyond ethnic, religious, and other perceived differences, and believe that there are more people willing to make that progression. Government institutions also need to develop and implement policies that protect people engaged in civic actions from oppression. Given the common knowledge that

oppressors do not wilfully relinquish their power (Freire, 2000), achieving high sociopolitical development and national transformation is a task for the citizenry.

6. Implications and Limitations of this Study

Men were found to be more engaged in both civic engagement components, most of which require activities that are not considered ‘homely’, therefore, unsuitable for women. Although women as well as men are aware of the inequalities that exist in broader institutional systems including political institutions on ground of ethnicity, godfatherism, etc. and both genders try to combat the inequalities, women become adaptive to the inequalities existing between them and men especially in political institutions, and women who try to resist the inequality realise the danger it poses to their lives and family leading to greater retreat among women in social justice pursuit. Women’s participation in elective positions is still declining in Nigeria: statistics on participation in federal political positions across the years placed women’s participation at 5.85% in 2015, 6.80% in 2011, 6.85% in 2007, 4.75% in 2003, and 3.05% in 1999. Data on 2011 political contestants at federal and state levels showed that only 9.53% of women contested for elective posts (INEC, 2019).

Yet, it is necessary for women to participate in these activities, especially politics, so that they can have equal rights with men, among other benefits. Female participation is also essential for civic engagement because more efforts are needed to have true democracy and high level of human rights observation and protection. Therefore, civic engagement agendas including civic education, adult education and civil societies initiatives should help both genders realise how women’s retreat from political institutions affects broader struggles to end social injustice and achieve sustainable development and thus, explore ways of helping women progress above adaptive stage and retreat from political institutions to resolute resistance of political inequalities. For instance, efforts should target inviting influential women, especially female politicians, to deliver guest talks –highlighting the challenges they faced while advancing through political life and how they overcame such challenges– to women and youths since studies have shown that women politicians are role models for girls (e.g., Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006). Civil societies should advocate policies that mandate political parties to elect not less than a certain proportion of women in their primaries.

Income also influences political participation and human rights activism significantly; there is a strong positive correlation between the former and the latter. Lower income earners participated less in politics and human rights activism. This probably is because they are discouraged from using civic actions to assuage inequalities as argued by Rubin (2007): this could be as a result of adaptation to inequalities and in some cases retreat from civic actions consequent from political depression. Therefore, there should be more targeted encouragement for individuals with low-income to participate in politics and human rights activism, to help them realise the importance of contributing to choosing leaders, deciding policies etc.

Location, though not significant, matters for human rights activism; urban residents were more likely to be engaged. This could be because human rights violations resulting from human trafficking, intergroup conflicts, police brutality, child labour, abuse and neglect, etc. occur more in urban areas where stronger ties do not exist among residents. Urban residents are also more likely to protest for social rights since they impact their livelihood. Again, rural residents have traditional means –such as fines, apology, ostracism etc.– of dealing with human rights violation that most times discourage utilisation of

constitutional and modern approaches. Therefore, it is important for human rights and civic actors to focus on enlightenment programmes that would encourage rural residents to discard approaches such as ostracism, and advance their activism beyond individual rights to social rights such as demanding for social infrastructures which are pursued through protests and petitions. More is needed in urban areas to promote national unity and peace and reduce human rights violations. Hence, it is important that individuals, organisations and the different levels of government start embracing everyone (caring virtues), irrespective of where they come from, towards fostering national unity and peace. Having opportunities to meet people of other ethnic groups and learn about them could help dismantle harmful stereotypes and reduce intergroup conflicts, for example, and this is one of the benefits of the national youth service corps programme currently in place for tertiary institution graduates. However, more initiatives are needed, especially for people not catered for by the age and education restrictions of the youth service programme.

The major challenge facing civic engagement in Nigeria, especially with respect to human rights activism, is that the associated activities have been characterised as (civil) disobedience, rebellious, or illegal, etc. (e.g., Wheeler-Bell, 2012; Banks, 2008). These undesirable connotations attached to such civic actions present challenges to its engagement by citizens such as unwillingness to participate in social movements. Yet, there is need to prepare citizens for such actions. Hence, we ask: how can citizens be convinced or prepared to engage in civic actions even though they are sometimes dangerous? Transformative civic action training is important. This involves empowering citizens to engage in actions that promote social justice, even where the form of justice pursued is against the conservative acts defined by the government as justice, as well as to resist government repression of their actions. Probably, trying to convince Nigerian citizens that transformative civic actions are justified will not be that simple. It requires expansive interpretation of civic duties and engagement as enshrined in laws and policies. This interpretation draws from golden interpretation rule –a legal interpretation rule that deviates from literal meanings of laws where such meanings would lead to hardships and absurdity (see: *Beck v. Smith*, 1836 and *Ayoade v. Military Governor of Ogun State*, 1993)– to define civic engagement beyond duties and 'civil disobedience'; it incorporates rights and legality into civic engagement understanding. Civic engagement is seen not just as duties but a legal right. Expansive interpretation of civic duties may face the challenge of not having received judicial sanction. Thus, civil societies are encouraged to apply for judicial reviews of governmental acts including laws where there is the need. However, in a state where the judiciary is not pragmatically independent, civil societies should continue with their actions insofar as it is for the interest of social justice and equality.

Despite this study's significance, limitations exist. The study's scale is new and the items used for each subscale cannot be said to have covered all facets of the subscales. Even though preliminary assessments and tests indicate high validity and reliability, further testing and application with other samples is required to establish the scale's robustness. Further studies could also test the applicability of Watts et al.'s (1999) sociopolitical development theory in Nigeria, and also compare this with the applicability of the emerging model we created for the Nigerian context. Larger sample sizes will also provide more robust results.

7. Conclusion

To foster civic engagement, it is important to understand how it is influenced by sociodemographic factors within specific contexts. Our findings show low levels of engagement in civic actions, across groups, in

Nigeria and this suggests low level of psychological aspect of sociopolitical development among Nigerians, according to SDT. However, our modified SDT model explicated the contextualised nature of sociopolitical development such that even with the reported low levels of civic engagement (action), a significant proportion of participants exhibited high levels of psychological aspect of sociopolitical development. This result is important because it highlights the possibility that higher levels of civic engagement sufficient for national transformation can be achieved if the existing barriers discussed in this paper are eliminated or reduced at least.

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