



E-ISSN: 2664-603X

P-ISSN: 2664-6021

Impact Factor (RJIF): 5.92

IJPSG 2025; 7(12): 222-230

www.journalofpoliticalscience.com

Received: 02-10-2025

Accepted: 05-11-2025

Fredrick Campbell

The Federal Polytechnic, Ado-
Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria

The impact of deliberative democracy on ethnic tensions and human rights in Nigeria (1999-2024)

Fredrick Campbell

DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.33545/26646021.2025.v7.i12c.798>

Abstract

Nigeria's transition from military rule to civilian rule through a democratic process in 1999 was meant to, among other things, uphold the right of the people to participate in governance through elected representatives and promote deliberations among the different ethnic nationalities. However, the protection of this right in accordance with the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 has often been called into question with its implementation and protection influenced by ethno-centric factors. These have led to various agitations by non-state actors in reaction to the imbalance in political power, marginalization and failure of the state to protect their human rights, which raises fundamental questions as to the effectiveness of deliberative democracy in Nigeria as it concerns reducing ethnic tensions and the promotion of human rights in Nigeria. The study explores the impact of deliberative democracy in reducing ethnic tensions in Nigeria from 1999 to 2024. Also, it sort to determine if there had been a significant reduction in human rights violations, with focus on the right to take part in government through elected representatives and free elections. 185 respondents participated in the survey with Spearman's correlation analysis utilized to determine the relationship between political participation, ethnic tensions and voting rights in Nigeria. The study found out that while there was a substantial increase in deliberative democracy in Nigeria, it had failed to effectively address ethnic tensions and perceptions of denial of voting rights. It concludes by recommending a restructuring of the socio-political system in Nigeria.

Keywords: Deliberative democracy, ethnicity, tension, human rights, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Since its independence in 1960, Nigeria has been prone to ethnic tensions which have created questions as to the extent which prevailing constitutional tenets provide protection for the constituting ethnic components who have often complained of being politically marginalized. These ethnic tensions have had devastating consequences on a number of occasions such as the military coup and counter coup of January and June, 1966 respectively, the Nigerian civil war which occurred from 1967 to 1970 and led to over 3 million deaths. These incidents led to the restructuring of the political, geographical and administrative structures with a view to reducing the domineering influence of the three major tribes, Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba, on the other minority ethnic groups and reducing the cries of marginalization and promoting inclusiveness in governance, a onerous task given the over 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria.

The efforts to reduce marginalization led to the restructuring of Nigeria from three regions, Eastern, Northern and Western regions between 1960-1963, to the creation of the mid-western region in 1963, to give the ethnic groups in that area such as the Binis, Etsakos, Itshekiris, Ijaws, Uhrobos, a sense of belonging. The civil war from 1967-1970 threw up new sets of ethnic variables and clamour for identification and representation within the Nigerian socio-political system and this gave rise to the abolition of the regional system and creation of 12 twelve states by Military decree.

Further ethnic agitations led to redefining state boundaries and creation of new states from 1976 to 1996 bringing the total states to 37, including a Federal Capital Territory, spread across six geopolitical zones of north-central, north-east. North-west, south-east, south-south and south-west. These geographical changes occurred under various military regimes but where incorporated into the 1999 constitution.

Corresponding Author:

Fredrick Campbell

The Federal Polytechnic, Ado-
Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria

Though the attempts to reduce marginalization by state creation occurred under Military regimes, the ultimate goal was to reduce ethnic tensions and ensuring that key ethnic groups were represented in the affairs of government. The transition to civilian rule in 1999 created a greater opportunity for democratic participation at the legislative and executive arms of government.

At the federal legislative level which has two Chambers, states, had three representatives at the Senate representing each of the three zones within a state, except the Federal Capital territory had one representative. At the House of Assembly, representation is based on landmass and population which meant some states have more representatives than others. This is replicated in states which have a single chamber, the state house of assembly which has elected representatives from each local government within the state while each local government area also has elected councilors representing the various wards.

At the federal executive level, there is the federal executive council which is headed by the elected President and comprises of Ministers nominated by the President but must have representatives from all the states. This system is replicated in states where there must be commissioners in the state executive council from each of the local governments within the state.

Despite these attempts to expand political participation, Nigeria continues to be embroiled in ethnic tensions and claims of human rights violations in the participation of the democratic processes.

2. Problem Statement

As noted in the introduction, the 1999 Nigerian constitution has made provisions for elected and appointed officials to represent various zones and constituencies in Nigeria. Ordinarily, these provisions, which are enshrined in the constitution as contained in sections 7,14,40, 77, 222 and 228 (1999 Nigeria constitution) are meant to address issues of marginalization in political participation under democracy and in line with Article 21 of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 upholding the rights of citizens to take part in governance through elected representative and free elections and these should cater for ethnic interests and create socio-political stability.

However, agitations by various groups such as Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the south-east, Odua'a Peoples' Congress and Yoruba Nation in the south-west, various socio-economic militia groups in the Niger Delta in the south-south region and other cases spread across the northern part of Nigeria, bear testimony to the fact that Nigeria suffers from human rights issues that plague participatory democracy and human rights protection and call into question the extent to which deliberative democracy has positively impacted on these issues.

3. Research Objectives

The objectives for this research are:

1. To determine if deliberative democracy has reduced ethnic tensions in Nigeria
2. To determine if the increase in political participation has led to an increase in the protection of the right to vote in Nigeria.

3.1 Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

1. Has deliberative democracy reduced ethnic tensions in Nigeria?
2. Are the voting rights of the citizens protected under deliberative democracy in Nigeria?

To guide this study, the following hypotheses was investigated.

H₀ Deliberative democracy has not led to reduced ethnic tensions in Nigeria

H₁ Deliberative democracy has led to reduced ethnic tensions in Nigeria

H₀ Increase in political participation has not led to protection of voting rights in Nigeria

H₂ increase in political participation has led to protection of voting rights in Nigeria

3.2 Research Aim

The aim of this study is to investigate the impact deliberative democracy from the angle of increased political participation and its influence on reducing ethnic tensions and protection of voting rights in Nigeria.

4. Conceptual Review

The key concepts propelling this study are deliberative democracy, ethnicity and human rights. These concepts are central to the study and understanding their context is germane.

4.1 Deliberative Democracy

Deliberative democracy is a form of democracy which prioritises deliberations as key to decision making. It aims to improve the quality of decision making by limiting the decision makers to a small but highly representative sample of the general population. Deliberative democracy is a relatively new political concept and traces its history to the work of John Rawls (1970) and Joseph M. Bessette (1980). They opine that liberty and equality require that democratic representation should go beyond the mere voting of political representatives and should be the primary source of legitimacy for law. At the core of deliberative democracy concept is the need to justify decisions through debates and contributions from both the elected representatives and the voting citizens. This entails that deliberative democracy is a key element of representative and direct democracies as it combines elements of both practices. Lieb (1997) posited that deliberative democracy has two faces, the first being the elitist deliberative democracy where specific bodies are given the constitutional power to take decisions on behalf of the citizens, and populist deliberative democracy where lay people are empowered to take decisions. In either cases, the power to make decisions for all people in the society rest in the hands of a few or majority, but never everyone. This has led to the development of various viewpoints and models (Cohen, 1989; Fishkin, 2009)^[20, 23] as to the most ideal form of deliberative democracy.

Gutmann and Thomson however provide one of the most modern definitions of deliberative democracy as they define it as "... a form of government in which free and equal citizens and their representatives justify decisions in a process in which they give one another reasons that are mutually acceptable and generally accessible, with the aim of reaching decisions that are binding on all at present but

open to challenge in the future" (pp.3-7). This definition is relevant to this study because it recognizes the equality of interaction between the citizens and their representatives in the decision making process.

As such, the working definition of deliberative democracy for this study is that it is a form of government in which eligible citizens elect people from amongst themselves to represent them at formal institutions where the representatives have an obligation to confer with the citizens they represent before binding decisions are taken on their behalf.

This working definition is suitable for this study because while it captures the essence of the concept of deliberative democracy, it recognizes the importance of consultations between the elected representatives and the citizens which is the case in Nigeria where elections are held every four years to elect representatives from amongst the citizens into the Federal and State Legislative Houses and also at the Local Government councils. These elected representatives represent different geographical and ethnic interests and is meant to give every Nigerian a sense of belonging and build cooperation across ethnic divides.

4.2 Ethnicity

In Nigeria, ethnic affiliations are often seen as stronger bonds than national interests (Adeniji, 2015; Brigeovich, A. & Oritsejafor, 2022) ^[1, 14]. Ethnicity encompasses the socio-cultural characteristics that certain people share which include religion, language, values, customs, beliefs and traditions. Chandra (2012) ^[18] posited in his definition that ethnicity is an identification factor as it comprises of people who share certain attributes that distinguish them from other groups of people. Mays, Ponce, Washington & Cochran (2003) ^[48] see it from the perspective of inherited attributes and socially imposed characteristics such as language, culture, history, cuisine, dressing, dialect and other attributes which must be learned as part of identifying with that ethnicity.

Ethnicity is however not stagnant as globalization has led to the spread of ethnic characteristics beyond defined borders with people laying claim to more than one ethnicity by virtue of assimilation, marriage and birth (Morer, 1967). The fluid nature of ethnicity therefore has led to the establishment of four schools of thought. The first is the primordialist view which sees ethnicity as a coercive or forced social bond. The second school of thought is the instrumentalist who see ethnicity as an extension of politics or political strategy used by interest groups to achieve political and economic goals. The third view comes from the constructivists who opine that ethnicity is a product of recent and historical forces which shape ethnic identities (Gellner, 1997) ^[25]. This view recognizes the evolving nature of ethnic relations. The fourth view is that of the essentialists who argue that ethnic identities are defined by the ontological categories of social actors (Smith, 1991) ^[44]. While other views on ethnicity abound (Cohen, 1978; Banton, 2007; James, 2015) ^[21, 28], they can be subsumed under any of the four schools of thought or cut across them.

A key takeaway from the schools of thought is the deep seated roots of ethnic affiliations regardless of how they might have arisen. This deep seated roots can therefore be said to play a significant role in ethnic politics and class placement in a society, especially multi-ethnic distinct states like Nigeria.

As such, for the purpose of this study, ethnicity can be defined as the culmination of traits, values and beliefs which serve as a form of identity and determine social interactions within a society. While some aspects of ethnicity can be learned, such as language, cuisine, dialects and behaviours, others cannot be naturally learned or attained such as physical traits.

4.3 Human Rights

Human rights can be referred to as those standards that recognize and protect the dignity of a person or people regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, religion or any other status. They seek to protect people from excessive discrimination and abuse based on politics, religion and socio-economic standing (Nickel & Etinson, 2024) ^[35]. Though there have been debates and skepticism about the universality and applicability of human rights (see Lacroix & Pranchere, 2016; Shaheed & Richter, 2018; Silk, 2021) ^[30, 41, 42], it is generally agreed that all humans have certain rights which must be protected. These include right to life, right to fair trial, right not to be torture, right to religion amongst others.

A key argument about the concept of human rights is that it has a moral bearing which cuts across social and cultural values. This however can be subjective given the presence of cultural relativism where each culture has developed its own values and norms and see modern human rights as a western imposition (Shaheed & Richter, 2018) ^[41]. The concept of human rights has evolved over centuries first as value systems and natural laws within independent societies (Carlyle, 1903; Moyn, 2010; Sutto, 2019) ^[17, 34, 45] to a universal declaration recognized by international bodies (Simmons, 2009) ^[43] with philosophers such as Locke, Burlamaqui, Hutcheson and others (Moyn, 2010) ^[34] who made significant contributions to modern human rights development.

The concept of human rights has been expanded to include protection of not just natural rights, but as an instrument to protect personal liberties such as freedoms of speech, political association, voting and representative rights, education and expression among others. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 recognises over 40 human rights across 28 categories (UDHR, 2024). A key thrust of human rights protection as contained in the Declaration is the protection from discrimination, marginalization, oppression and the right to participate in government, issues which are focal to this study.

5. Empirical Review

Specific studies on deliberative democracy in Nigeria are scarce, probably because of its fluid nature and its propensity to be misrepresented. Studies on ethnic tensions in Nigeria on the other hand abound as ethnic distrusts have existed for as long as the nation itself. From communal conflicts to an ethnic based war, Nigeria has grappled with providing a truly representative structure that properly accommodates the diverse interests within the country. Ethnic tensions in Nigeria manifests themselves through various outlets such as religious, political and cultural differences. Tuki (2024) ^[46] posited that ethnic tensions in Nigeria can be attributed to religious differences as the major ethnic groups as split along religious lines, that is, Christians and Muslims. Tuki (2024) ^[46] opined that the inherent struggle for political power between these two

groups expresses itself in the violent conflicts occurring between them.

5.1 Deliberative Democracy and Ethnic Tensions in Nigeria

Anugwon (2000) identified ethnic distrust as the bane and reason for the collapse of the 1st to 3rd democratic republics in Nigeria with the issues of marginalisation and agitations of ethnic minorities as key contributing factors. Anugwon (2000) recognizes upfront that political power struggles, sharing of allocations and resources were drivers of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria and disrupted democracy. She posited that proper representation of the general populace in governance was essential to avoid the collapse of the 4th republic and advocated for modelling federalism according to the American model. Anugwon (2000) conducted a qualitative analysis of the situation using historical records and arrived at the conclusion that the absence of proper representation gave rise to feelings of marginalization which created ethnic tensions and led to human rights abuses as was seen in the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and four other Ogonis from the Niger-Delta area of Nigeria. Anugwon's (2000) study was instrumental in linking ethnic tensions to human rights abuses due to lack of proper representation. However, Anugwon's (2000) study which was conducted at the onset of the 4th republic did not take cognizance of the 1999 Nigerian constitution which had taken into consideration the diverse ethnic interests in Nigeria and put modalities in place to ensure adequate representation.

Badru (n.d) presents a very traditional approach to the issue of deliberative democracy by exploring its traditions as rooted in the Yoruba culture, one of the major ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. Badru (n.d) recognizes that there is a serious deficit in contemporary democratic practices in Nigeria as elected representatives do not serve the interests of the electorate or people, but those of political sponsors and elites. As such, Badru (n.d) identified two critical questions affecting deliberative democracy in Nigeria which are who rules the people and how are they ruled. This is instructive because it recognizes that there is a disconnect between the deliberative democratic principles as loosely enshrined in the 1999 Nigerian constitution and the reality on ground. This position was supported by the studies of various scholars who questioned the democracy practiced in Nigeria and if it truly represented the people (Aluaigba, 2002; Omotola, 2007; Ajayi & Ojo, 2014; Osah & Ogheneakoke, 2024) [6, 38, 4, 39]. Badru (n.d) advocated for the adoption of a collegiate system of deliberative democracy molded after the pre-colonial Yoruba Agbajo Owo system which ensured that the people were involved and committed to making decisions concerning how they were governed, a tradition similar to the republican system in pre-colonial Igbo system (Uchendu, 1965; Bates, 2010) [47, 12]. Badru's (n.d) position is informed by his perceived failure of deliberative democracy as practiced in Nigeria but does not delve into the ethnic tensions and human rights violations arising thereof.

Akinola (2014) [5] recognized the importance of deliberative democracy in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria. He advocated for a decentralized deliberative democratic model where state actors, institutions and citizens could interact effectively. Akinola (2014) [5] argued that the ethno-religious divisions in Nigeria warranted a model that allowed for greater deliberations and interactions within the

polity. Like other similar studies, Akinola's (2014) [5] presumption is that the 1999 Nigerian constitution does not provide for deliberative democracy and is therefore inadequate to address ethnic tensions and advocates for a federalist deliberative democracy.

Maashin and Torhemen (2022) [32] approach the usefulness of deliberative democracy from the angle of leadership recruitment. They argue that the use of the majoritarian model for leadership recruitment in Nigeria had failed to curb ethnic and minority agitations and therefore advocated for deliberative democracy based on the habermasian model which prioritises procedural popular sovereignty (Habermas, 1991) [27]. Maashin and Torhemen (2022) [32] opined that the absence of deliberative democracy had led to perpetual alienation of certain ethnic groups from the central power structure and this was the reason for ethnic tensions. Again, Maashin and Torhemen (2022) [32] like other studies on deliberative democracy in Nigeria, ignore that deliberative democracy does exist in Nigeria and the issue resides on its effectiveness in reducing ethnic tensions and protection of human rights.

Governance issues in Nigeria have often been blamed on the skewed nature of colonialism in Nigeria which gave identity politics a key role in the constitutional framework. Ajaja (2021) [3] looked at the issue from a constitutional legalistic perspective and stated that the constitution of Nigeria did not support deliberative democracy resulting in several ethnic conflicts. Ajaja (2021) [3] points to persistent marginalization as evidence of general dissatisfaction with governance in Nigeria. Using qualitative methodology by drawing from historical records and other secondary materials, Ajaja (2021) [3] advocates for the inclusion of the principles of deliberative democracy in the constitution as a means to resolve ethnic tensions in Nigeria. While Ajaja's (2021) [3] study recognizes the importance of deliberative democracy in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria, it neglects to recognize that the essence of deliberative democracy is already embedded in the Nigerian constitution through the provision for elected representatives at both the state and local government levels. As such, the study stops short of investigating the impact of deliberative democracy on ethnic tensions in Nigeria. Ajaja's (2021) [3] study nonetheless provides valuable insight into how deliberative democracy can be effective in dousing ethnic tensions

6.0 Elements of Deliberative Democracy in Nigeria

Before proceeding further, it is germane to clear the issue of deliberative democracy in Nigeria. As noted by Ajaja (2020) [2], no country can be said to fully practice deliberative democracy as it is not realistic in its application, however, it does exist to some extent to some governance issues as seen in the United States of America, Canada and Australia. The empirical review of various literature on deliberative democracy in Nigeria however seems to indicate that deliberative democracy is not practiced in some form in Nigeria. This assumption is quite interesting given the evidences that abound that deliberative democracy is practiced in Nigeria. For instance, the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria makes provision for referendums in issues on state creation, boundary adjustments (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). Furthermore, legislative decisions are a product of deliberations by persons elected from among the citizens to take decisions on their behalf and these elected

representatives hold constituency meetings with the electorates. Also, National and State Legislatures hold public hearings where interested citizens can air their opinions on specific issues (Zwingina, 2012)^[49]. In addition, studies have shown that representative democracy incorporates elements of deliberative democracy and has become increasingly more common in democracies around the world and they complement each other (Bessette, 2001; Keutgen, 2021)^[13, 29] as can be seen in the limitation of decision makers to a smaller but more representative sample of the population.

6.1 Growth of Deliberative Democracy and Political Representation in Nigeria

Deliberative democracy in Nigeria can be traced to 1960 when the country got independence from Great Britain. The Federal Legislature comprised of two houses, the Senate, which had 20 members with 12 representing each region nominated by the electoral college of their regional assembly and 8 others with 4 of those appointed by the President and the other 4 representing the Federal Capital Territory and traditional interests. The second house, the House of Representatives, had 305 members which was a significant increase from the 185 members as provided for in the 1951 Macpherson Constitution. This represented an increase in the democratic participation as more people were elected to reflect diverse interest and encourage more deliberations.

The first republic however came to an abrupt end in January, 1966, following a military coup. This led to reduced participation given the authoritarian system of government as elections were not held. Within this period, ethnic agitations led to the breakdown of the existing regional structure and the creation of states to reduce the agitation (Broom, 1978) and reduce cries of marginalization. As a prelude to the return to democracy, the 1979 constitution made conscious efforts to address the issue of representation at all levels and arms of government (Campbell, 2004)^[16]. The Legislature comprised of 5 Senators from each state and a Federal House of Representative consisting of 450 members, all elected from the general populace from senatorial districts and constituencies (1979 Nigerian Constitution) and representing diverse ethnic interests. This arrangement was also replicated at the state level with each state having a unicameral legislature of the State House of Assembly with members directly elected from various constituencies (1979 Nigerian Constitution). The 1979 Nigerian Constitution therefore saw a significant increase in both direct and indirect participation of the masses in government by expanding the rights and freedoms of political association and representation.

The 3rd and 4th Republics also followed the same trend of increasing political participation in government for eligible Nigerians. The 2nd Republic which was truncated by a military coup on December, 1984, was briefly succeeded by 3rd Republic between 1992 and 1993, which never really took off, and then the 4th Republic in 1999. The 1999 Nigerian Constitution followed the pattern of the 1979 Constitution by having a Bi-cameral legislature at the Federal level and unicameral legislature at the state and local government levels. There was a significant increase in political parties contesting for elective political positions. At

the federal legislature, the number of senators increased to 109 while the House of Representative was reduced to 360. The total number of elective legislative positions as at 2024 is 10,269.

From having less than 2000 elected legislative representatives in 1960 to over 10,000 in 1999, it can be seen that there has been a significant increase in political participation in Nigeria. The question now is if this increased political participation has led to reduced ethnic tensions in Nigeria.

7. Methodology

The study utilized a survey technique with data gathered through primary and secondary sources. The primary data was gotten using a questionnaire containing information on socio-demographic data and relevant questions, while the secondary data was gotten from journals, books, government publications, internet, articles etc. The population of the study was drawn from 520 persons, of voting age, across the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. Stratified random sampling was then employed to select 185 respondents with 5 of them from each of the 36 states and Federal Capital Territory. The data was analysed using the SPSS package (Spearman's correlation analysis) to test the hypotheses in the study. 185 questionnaires were distributed and the same number returned due to the careful grouping and vetting of the respondents to ensure their relevance to the study. Relevant statements were thereafter selected for hypotheses testing.

8. Results

The first research question interrogates the relationship between active political participation and its influence on reducing ethnic tensions in Nigeria. Two statements were used in the analysis questions 1 and 9 (see appendix for questionnaire sample). Utilizing descriptive statistics, the results showed that on the question of political participation, 78.4% of the respondents were active participants while 21.6% were not active political participants. On the question of trusting other ethnic groups, 80.5% of the respondents were of the view that they could not trust other ethnic nationalities, with only 12.4% expressing the view that they trusted other ethnic groups while 7.1% were undecided. Table 1.1 and 1.2 show a summary of the descriptive statistics for the questions.

Table 1: Question 6

Question (1)	Have you actively participated in governance/elections since 1999?			Total
	Yes	No	Undecided	
Response	145	40	0	185
Percentage	78.4	21.6	0	100

Source: Author's Field Work (2024)

Table 2: Question 9

Question (9)	Do you trust other ethnic groups?			Total
	Yes	No	Undecided	
Response	23	149	13	185
Percentage	12.4	80.5	7.1	100

Source: Author's Field Work (2024)

Hypothesis Testing for Research Question One: Has Political Participation reduced ethnic tensions in Nigeria?

Correlations				
			Political participation	Ethnic distrust
Spearman's rho	political participation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.070
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.347
		N	185	185
	ethnic distrust	Correlation Coefficient	.070	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.347	.
		N	185	185

Given the results of the descriptive statistics, a Spearman's rank correlation coefficient test was conducted to determine the relationship between political participation zones and level of ethnic distrust. The result indicated a non-significant negative relationship [$r(185) = -.070$, $p = .347$. This showed that the higher levels of political participation

had not led to a reduction in ethnic tensions as there was still a high level of distrust among ethnic groups in Nigeria. Therefore we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

The second research question interrogates the relationship between active political participation and protection of voting rights in Nigeria.

Table 2: Question 8

Question (8)	Do you feel your rights to actively participate in governance/elections are well protected?			Total
Response	Yes	No	Undecided	
	160	25	0	185
Percentage	86.5	13.5	0	100

Source: Author's Field Work (2024)

Table 2 shows the responses from respondents who participated in the survey. 86.5% of the respondents were of the opinion that their rights to actively participate in

political activities/elections were not well protected while 13.5% were of the opinion that they fully enjoyed those rights.

Correlations				
			political participation	protected rights
Spearman's rho	political participation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.061
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.408
		N	185	185
	protected rights	Correlation Coefficient	-.061	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.408	.
		N	185	185

The Spearman's rank correlation coefficient test was conducted to determine the relationship between political participation zones and level of protection of voting rights. The result indicated a significant negative relationship [$r(185) = -.061$, $p = .408$. This showed that the higher levels of political participation had led to higher feelings of unprotected voting rights. Therefore we fail to accept the alternate hypothesis.

9. Findings

The findings show that despite the increase in active political participation in Nigeria, deliberative democracy had failed to reduce ethnic tensions as there is still a high level of distrust among ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. This means that the Nigerians were still sharply divided along ethnic lines and these division was being fueled by factors which had made the increased opportunities to participate actively in governance insufficient.

The study also revealed that regardless of ethnic/geopolitical association, Nigerians felt their rights to vote were not well protected which in turn hindered their rights to fully participate in governance. This could be as a result of the notion that since their voting rights were not protected, the elected representatives held little allegiance to the voting population since it was not necessarily their votes that brought them into office. This has a negative effect on effective deliberative democracy as the elected representatives had less reasons to bring issues to their constituencies for deliberations or convey the position of the

constituency at the federal level.

10. Conclusion

The study interrogated the relationships between active political participation, ethnic tensions and protection of voting rights within the context of deliberative democracy in Nigeria to find out if the age old problems of ethnic tensions and protection of voting rights had been significantly addressed by deliberative democracy. The study revealed that mistrust among ethnic nationalities in Nigeria had remained unchanged and was still very high, a situation which indicated that deliberative democracy in Nigeria had yet to achieve one of its cardinal objectives of creating a conducive political environment where citizens can engage in discussions, directly and through elected representatives, to resolve socio-economic differences. It further revealed that deliberative democracy had not only failed to protect voting rights of Nigerians, regardless of ethnic affiliation, but the increased participation had further exacerbated the issue as there was more awareness that the voting rights of the electorate were not being respected or protected despite the 1999 Constitution codifying those rights. This is evident in the various reports on elections in Nigeria providing evidence of voter intimidation, manipulation of election results and other sharp practices (EU, 2023; Amaechina, Okafor, Nduba & Ezeamu, 2024) ^[22, 7] that raise questions about just how well the voting rights of Nigerians are protected.

11. Recommendations

Based on the findings above, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. There is a need to review the constitution to base representation at the legislative houses on ethnic representation rather than geopolitical zones and constituencies as is presently applicable. This would ensure that every ethnic group is represented when national issues are deliberated. This would help reduce ethnic distrust and tensions.
2. There should be greater devolution of political, economic and administrative powers from the central government to the states and local governments. This would reduce overdependence on the federal government and give more control to the citizens at the grassroots to be more involved in governance.
3. The right to participate in governance should be clearly spelt out in the constitution, especially in the process through which legislative representatives are elected. Electoral reforms guarantying and protecting the rights of citizens of Nigeria to freely elect, and hold accountable their elected representatives must be should be enshrined in the constitution.
4. Referendums should be made an essential component of the legislative process. Critical national issues which cannot be resolved at the legislative assemblies should be subjected to a citizen referendum to allow for greater direct participation of the citizens.

Conflict of Interest Statement

There are no conflicts of interest.

Research Funding

This is a self-funded research.

References

1. Adeniji AS. The impact of ethnicity on Nigeria's political development: An assessment 1999-2011. *Int J Res Dev Organ*. 2015;2(12):71-99.
2. Ajaja O. Unearthing the principles of deliberative democracy within the framework of the extant 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria. *Unilag Law Rev*. 2020;4(1):71-105.
3. Ajaja OO. Deliberative democracy & problems of democratic governance in Nigeria [Master's Thesis]. Vancouver: The University of British Columbia; 2021.
4. Ajayi AT, Ojo EO. Democracy in Nigeria: Practical problems & prospects. *Dev Country Stud*. 2014;4(2):107-125.
5. Akinola O. Federalist deliberative democracy in Nigeria: Challenges & prospects. In: Ugarriza JE, *et al*, editors. *Democratic deliberative in deeply divided societies*. London: Palgrave Macmillan; 2014. pp. 112-128.
6. Aluaigba TM. The Irony of Democracy: The Nigerian experience. In: Kamilu SF, editor. *Democracy in Nigeria's 4th republic: Myths, realities, challenges & prospects*. Kano: Triumph Publishing Company; 2002.
7. Amaechina I, Okafor J, Nduba OJ, Ezeamu E. Electoral malpractice & consolidation of democracy in Nigeria: A study of Muhammadu Buhari's administration 2015-2023. *J Pol Sci Leadersh Res*. 2024;10(2):50-74.
8. Anugwom EE. Ethnic conflict & democracy in Nigeria: The marginalization question. *J Soc Dev Afr*. 2000;15(1):61-78.
9. Badru RO. Contemporary Nigeria & the deficit of deliberative democracy: Exploring the indigenous value of Agbajo owo as collegiality. Gainesville: Centre for African Studies, University of Florida; n.d.
10. Ball O, Gready P. *The no nonsense guide to human rights*. Oxford: New Internationalist; 2007.
11. Banton M. Weber on Ethnic Communities: A Critique. *Nations Nationalism*. 2007;13(1):19-35.
12. Bates R. Democracy in Africa: A very short history. *Soc Res*. 2010;77(4):1133-1148.
13. Bessette JM. Deliberation: Political aspects. *Int Encycl Soc Behav Sci*. 2001:3377-3380.
14. Brigeovich A, Oritsejafor E. Ethnic versus national identity & satisfaction with democracy: The decline of the ethnic cleavage in Nigeria? *Reg Fed Stud*. 2022;34(4):441-472.
15. Brown B. *Critical times ahead*. London: Financial Times; 1978.
16. Campbell F. The assessment of federal character principle & national integration in Nigeria [Bachelor's Thesis]. Ado-Ekiti: University of Ado-Ekiti; 2004.
17. Carlyle AJ. *A history of medieval political theory in the west* (Vol. 1). New York: GP Putnam & Sons; 1903.
18. Chandra K. *Constructivist Theories of Ethnic Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2012.
19. Cohen A. *Custom & Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in a Yoruba Town*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; 1969.
20. Cohen J. Deliberative Democracy and Democratic Legitimacy. In: Hamlin A, Pettit P, editors. *The Good Polity*. Oxford: Blackwell; 1989. pp. 17-34.
21. Cohen R. Ethnicity: Problem & Focus in Anthropology. *Annu Rev Anthropol*. 1978;7:383-384.
22. European Union Election Observation Mission. Nigeria 2023: Final Report. 2023. <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eom-nigeria-2023/european-union-election-observation-mission-nigeria-2023-final-report-en/>
23. Fishkin JC. *When the People Speak: Deliberative Democracy and Public Consultation*. New York: Oxford University Press; 2009.
24. Geertz C, editor. *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Africa and Asia*. New York: The Free Press; 1967.
25. Gellner E. *Nationalism*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson; 1997.
26. Gutmann A, Thompson D. *Why Deliberative Democracy?* Princeton: Princeton University Press; 2002.
27. Habermas J. *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. Cambridge: MIT Press; 1991.
28. James P. Despite the Errors of Typologies: The Importance of Understanding Categories of Difference & Identity. *Interventions*. 2015;17(2):174-195.
29. Keutgen J. Complement not competitor: How deliberative & representative democracy can work together. Westminster Foundation for Democracy. 2021 Sep 14. <https://www.wfd.org/commentary/complement-not-competitor-how-deliberative-and-representative-democracy-can-work/>
30. Lacroix J, Pranchere J. Human rights on trail: A genealogy of the critique of human rights (Maas G,

- Trans.). Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press; 2016.
31. Leib E. Can Direct Democracy be Made Deliberative? Buffalo Law Rev. 2006;54.
 32. Maashin AT, Torhemen MT. The imperative of deliberative democracy in the leadership recruitment process in Nigeria. J Arts Humanit Soc Stud. 2022;2(3):161-167.
 33. Morner M. Race mixture in the history of Latin America. Boston: Little & Brown; 1967.
 34. Moyn S. The last utopia: Human rights in history. Cambridge: Harvard University Press; 2010.
 35. Nickel J, Etinson A. Human Rights. In: Zalta EN, Nodelman U, editors. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall Edition). 2024.
 36. Nigeria Constitution. Independence Constitution Nigeria, 1960.
 37. Nigeria Constitution. The constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria, 1979.
 38. Omotola JS. Godfathers & the 2007 general elections in Nigeria. J Afr Elect. 2007;6(2):134-154.
 39. Osah MI, Ogheneakoke C. Dilemma of Nigeria democracy: The intervention of social studies. J Afr Soc Stud. 2024;5(2):170-182.
 40. Rawls J. A theory of justice. Cambridge: Harvard University Press; 1971.
 41. Shaheed A, Richter RP. Is Human Rights a Western Concept? IPI Global Observatory. 2018.
 42. Silk J. What do we really talk about when we talk about human rights? Open Global Rights. 2021.
 43. Simmons BA. Mobilizing for human rights: International law in domestic politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 2009.
 44. Smith A. National Identity. Harmondsworth: Penguin; 1991.
 45. Sutto M. Human rights evolution: A brief history. COESPU Mag. 2019(3):18-21.
 46. Tuki D. Violent conflict & hostility towards ethno-religious outgroups in Nigeria. Terror Pol Violence. 2024;1-23.
 47. Uchendu VC. The Igbo of south eastern Nigeria. Chicago: Holt Reinhart & Winston; 1965.
 48. Mays VM, Ponce NA, Washington DL, Cochran SD. Classification of race & ethnicity: Implications for public health. Annu Rev Public Health. 2003;24:83-110.
 49. Zwingina JS. The role of public hearing in the law making process [Paper Presentation]. International Conference on Law Reform & the Law Making Process, Washington, DC; 2012 Jul 16-17.

Appendix 1: Selected Survey Questions

Socio-Demograph Information	Which geopolitical zone is your ethnic/legislative constituency group located?						Total
	North West	North East	North Central	South East	South South	South West	
	35	30	35	25	30	30	185

Source: Field Data (2024)

Question 1 Have You actively participated in governance/elections since 1999?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	145	78.4
No	40	21.6
Total	185	100

Source: Field Data (2024)

Question 2 Do you feel your ethnic group is properly represented at the Federal Legislature

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	79	42.7
No	106	57.3
Undecided	0	0
Total	185	100

Source: Field Data (2024)

Question 3 Does your Federal Legislative representative consult with his/her constituency on regular basis?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	61	33
No	124	67
Undecided	0	0
Total	185	100

Source: Field Data (2024)

Question 4 Do your federal legislatures take out time to explain key policies affecting your ethnic group?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	38	20.5
No	147	79.5
Undecided	0	0
Total	185	100

Source: Field Data (2024)

Question 5 Do you feel your ethnic group is being marginalized?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	146	78.9
No	34	18.4
Undecided	5	2.7
Total	185	100

Source: Field Data (2024)

Question 6 Do you feel other ethnic groups have an undue political advantage over yours?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	145	78.4
No	32	17.3
Undecided	8	4.3
Total	185	100

Source: Field Data (2024)

Question 7 Do you feel you actively participate in politics through your federal legislative representatives?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	51	27.6
No	134	72.4
Undecided	0	0
Total	185	100

Source: Field Data (2024)

Question 8 Do you feel your rights to participate in governance/elections are well protected?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	25	13.5
No	160	86.5
Undecided	0	0
Total	185	100

Source: Field Data (2024)

Question 9 Do you trust other ethnic groups in Nigeria?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	23	12.4
No	143	80.5
Undecided	13	7.1
Total	185	100

Source: Field Data (2024)