

## Norms of Citizenship and Political Engagement of Young Adults

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### Abstract

This paper explores the influence of citizen norms on political engagement. A sample of two hundred and seventy-five (275) students from two universities sited in the northwest Nigeria partook in the study through stratified proportionate method. Participants completed a (five) Likert scale questionnaire in a cross-sectional survey using quantitative design. Drawing from Thompson's democracy theory, this study examined the relationship between citizen norms and political engagement. The Smart PLS 3 software was adopted in analysing the data collected. The results maintained the hypothesized effect of duty and engaged based norms on political engagement of youngsters. This implies a substantial effect, hence propagating extant literature on political engagement.

**Keywords:** Political Engagement; Citizen Norms; Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM)

### Introduction

We live in a period when the lack of political engagement among Nigerians and other nationals, is generally observed. Since the launch of democratic governance in May 1999, Nigeria had experienced both ethno-religious and communal clashes. These conflicts are seen as inherent in the country's post-colonial politics, social and economic arrangements. In other words, the problems experienced live with us as a people. However, with the attempt to democratize the country, people have made attempts between and among their different ethnic and religious groups to control power at the communal, local government and nation's level respectively. As well, the struggles for financial and political prospects have further these clashes. Not only that, scholars like [1,9] acknowledged that the large quantity of resources (natural and human) have ignited suspicion, distrust and hatred among the general populace under the democratic dispensation.

Consequently, Nigeria as a country is besieged by bribery and corruption, electoral misconduct, tribal sentiment, insecurity and religious fanaticism. To put simply, lots of problems are evident in the educational, economic, religious, social, and political spheres of the society [5,10]. Given this, the conventional value of mutual respect, integrity, hard work, dignity of labour, and professionalism have been battered as citizens struggled for many years to survive in a nation that is seriously ridden by institutionalized corruption, ethnic and religious violence, with poverty (4-Year Strategic Plan 2011-2015). These therefore necessitated for general harmony and steadiness amongst the citizens more than ever before, particularly with the widespread of tribal hostility and religious crises.

In spite of these problems, every young adult is a potential leader in Nigeria as long as he fulfils the constitutional criteria. This perhaps explains the scholarly interest in the state of young people's general social and political participation that seems a concern for the declining levels of civil activities (eroding public confidence in the democratic institutions of government, low electoral turnout, and other pointers to scepticism, public apathy, cynicism and distrust in political parties and politicians) in Nigeria [36]. These issues are tied to citizens who are seen as uninformed and inactive in participatory activities [3]. To rephrase, young Nigerian citizens have not comprehended and exhibited the citizenship traits needed for the nation to progress in terms of human and material resources.

Given this situation, some scholars have further linked these problems to civic disconnection by citizens. For instance, [45] reported civic disengagement in a study of African youths from nineteen (19) nations considered as democratic including Nigeria. Their result revealed that young people were seen to cast fewer votes when

compared to older citizens and were unlikely to complain on unfavourable issues that concern them than older citizens which demonstrates a lesser degree of political attachment as further reaffirmed by other studies' position on political apathy [41]. The purpose of this current article is therefore to investigate whether there is a connection between citizen norms and political engagement among tertiary students.

### **Norms of Citizenship and Political Engagement**

In mostly cited works, norms of citizenship are the view people hold about what it means for a person to be seen as a good citizen [14]. Usually, citizenship norms are common beliefs of people about civil responsibilities [33]. Although, citizen norm could either be duty or engaged based (dual construct) as stated by [17]. For example, dutiful norms encouraged people to accomplish their political activities e.g. through using the internet for voting, while it did not hold for engaged activities [21]. Conversely, [50] note that the emphasis of engaged norms in terms of participatory acts implied alteration in political involvement which is far from voting during elections and party activity that are considered institutionalized terms of duty citizen.

Theoretically, a good citizen is seen abiding by regulations, assisting the needy and participating during voting or political campaign. Thus, citizens' beliefs determine their level of contributions as members of a particular group or nation. Even though, education, age and marital status (personal characteristics) are diversely interrelated with citizenship norms across nations investigated [12]. For example, youngsters have considerably less dutiful-based norms than do their elder counterparts. To put differently, Youths are more engaged in terms of norms.

Similarly, [43] investigated to find out the connection between norms of citizenship and political involvement in a study of 1,697 youths. Their result revealed that youngsters clinch to norms of engaged-citizenship than duty-citizen norm. This means that change in behaviour to a greater extent determines how one embraces and contributes to communal progress.

Conversely, citizenship norms within a given polity or subgroup might encourage more or less civic activity, as well might uphold certain types of participation over others (for instance, protesting versus voting). How citizenship norms influence political behaviour is therefore an essential feature of democratic citizenship [44]. Thus, a person's decision to cast his vote (or not) may perhaps be in part a function of the socio-political milieu in which he is located, rather than entirely a judicious preference based on one's urge.

Citizenship norms play essential role in promoting people's engagement in politics such as in voting, helping in campaigning, a just nonviolent protest, as well as supporting a democratic discussion in a public context. This explains why social scientists have commonly agreed that norms of citizenship offer a basis for understanding the way and form change occurs in citizen participation [37]. Consequently, norms of citizenship directly impact on students' decisions as whether to engage in or keep away from civil activities. Hence, citizenship norms are fundamental in the accomplishment of political engagement.

[18] was supportive when he observed that norms of citizenship help to shape peoples' expectations and roles in civic and political processes as well as their descriptions of governmental roles in particular projects they execute. However, since citizenship identifies what is expected of the individual and what the individual expects of government in a democracy, it influences a series of people's thinking and ultimately determine how they make contributions politically or otherwise [19].

Consequently, the factors responsible for people's involvement in civil activities is an outcome of their view about good citizenship, the democracy theory [54] is essentially supportive in highlighting citizen norms which results in diverse participatory acts. Scholars like [18,53,52] have utilized the theory to elucidate the responsibilities of citizens in a democratic setting. Hence, established that the norms of citizenship have made people to become aware and get involved in both voluntary and civil activities as ways of performing their civic duty. To rephrase, an individual's conviction gradually affects him by transforming his culture so as to make life more habitable for the generality of people.

However, authors like [25] construed political engagement as encompassing cognitive, affective dimensions, as well various forms of political action. Researches on political engagement have continued to grow among scholars because of its expediency in democratic system. This concern is particularly salient as it relates to young folks. Since, the political engagement of college students is an important area of study as university students are expected to vote more than their non- university peers and a large segment of the country's future leaders will be college graduates [2].

This was evident when [32] in a study of students (California and Chicago) on political engagement found that open conversation about societal issues support how persons get committed to engagement with political issues like elections. Thus, In the political literature, there is an assumption that citizenship norms have connection with political engagement of citizens.

Likewise, [39] in a study confirmed students who partook in civics lessons expressed opinions of greater political consideration, aspirant consciousness, and political efficacy belief, are seen to improve the chances of choice during an election. Research study have noted teachers' classrooms that encourage argument, promote community projects, as well make use of the Internet enhance levels of awareness, affiliation, and engagement with politics [22]. Thus, suggesting schools as avenues for imbibing independent culture where diverse citizen norms are prevalent. The present study makes the following propositions:

*H1(a): Engaged based norms is significantly related to political engagement.*

*H1(b): Duty based norms is significantly related to political engagement.*

## **Materials and Methods**

In a survey research, questionnaire was administered and collected from a population sample of 275 students drawn from two different (Ahmadu Bello University and Bayer University Kano) Nigerian universities. Items of the variables in this study were adapted from different sources. For example, the perception of citizenship norms dimensions (i.e. dutiful) was adapted from [29], has 5-items. While, engaged citizens norms has seven items adapted from [47]. Thus, these (12) items are measured by a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from strongly disagree (1), and strongly agree (5) respectively. The 8-items that measured political participation was adapted from [49] such as "I take part in a peaceful march or rally". After measuring items on a Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree =1, strongly agree =5. Analysis was conducted with Smarts where we approximated the model's measurement through all the necessary requirements for measurement and there after the model was assessed structurally.

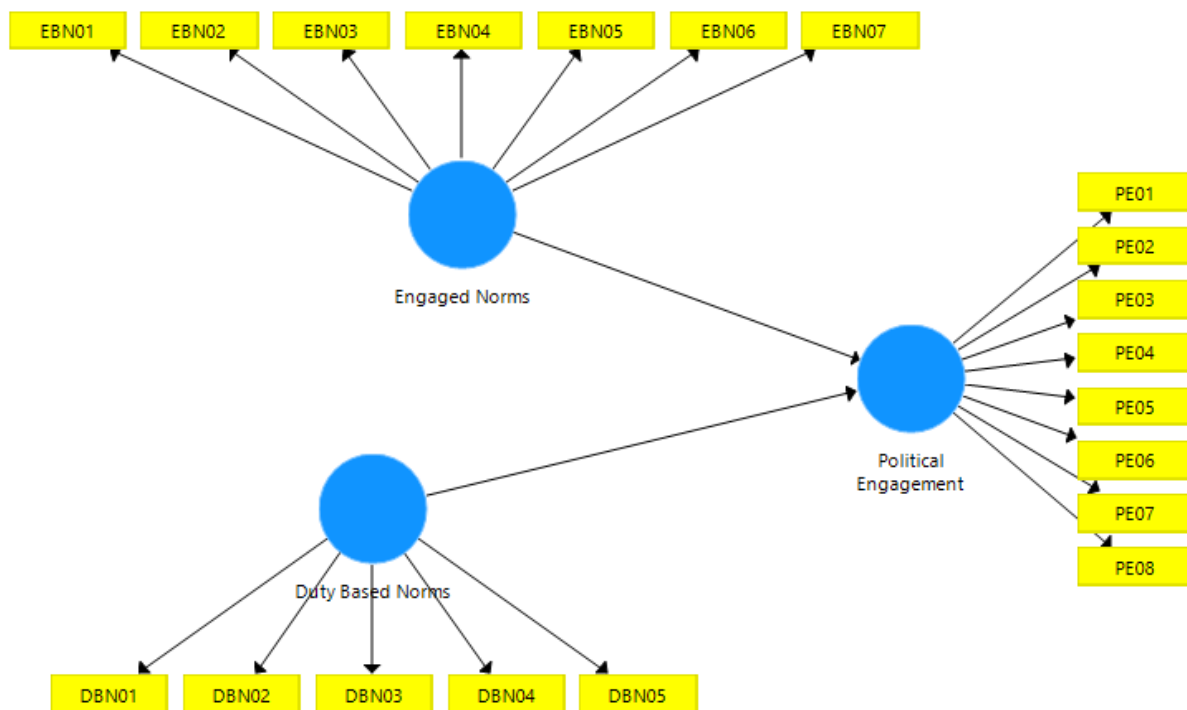
## **Results**

### **Measurement Model**

In assessing the model, items loadings were checked and only those items that loaded above the threshold value of 0.70 were maintained as suggested by [24]. Conversely, the internal consistency was calculated by composite reliability, having reached the satisfied criteria, the minimum is .78 and the maximum is .85. Further, in examining the constructs' Average Variance Extracted (AVE), all values indicated they have met the least requisite of 0.5 [24] with the values that ranged from .524 to .583.

Construct validity is basically ascertained when measuring a model prior to calculating the model structurally that aims at testing the hypotheses. Given that the measurement model encompasses relationships concerning the latent constructs with their indicators. Thus, the entire items in the measuring model need to exhibit ample convergent and discriminant validity as a circumstance for ascertaining how valid the constructs are. As recommended by [26] factor loadings, composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) were used to assess convergent validity. Besides, Table 1 enumerates the loadings of indicators, reliabilities as well as the AVE for all the items registered in the model. To put simply, all constructs' (composite) reliability values demonstrated

they exceeded the proposed norm (0.70) as they were checked [28,46]. In particular, the values of latent variables are between .78 and .85 which [27] sees as satisfactory reliability.



**Figure 1: Research model**

In measuring the model, items loadings were checked and only those items that loaded above 0.70 were maintained as suggested by [24]. Conversely, the internal consistency was calculated by composite reliability, having reached the satisfied criteria, the minimum is .771 and the maximum is .847. More so, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were examined, all of which have met the least requirement of 0.5 [24] with the values that ranged from .524 to .583. These are depicted in table 1.

**Table 1 Factor Loadings and Reliability (Measurement Model Results)**

Constructs	Loadings	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
<b>Dutiful Norms</b>		0.807	0.583
DN02	0.709		
DN04	0.799		
DN05	0.780		
<b>Engaged Norms</b>		0.771	0.531
EN05	0.650		
EN06	0.705		
EN07	0.821		

<b>Political Engagement</b>		0.846	0.524
PE01	0.712		
PE02	0.756		
PE04	0.769		
PE06	0.722		
PE08	0.652		

We recognized and reported the discriminant validity of constructs via comparison between correlation matrix and the square root of average variance extracted (AVE) across diagonal. Using the [24] standard the values of the square root of AVE surpassed that of the inter-correlation amongst the constructs in the model. Table 2 exemplifies the result of constructs' discriminant validity.

**Table 2: Discriminant validity Results (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)**

S/No.		1	2	3
1	Duty Based Norms	0.763		
2	Engaged Based Norms	0.405	0.729	
3	Political Engagement	0.491	0.372	0.727

Note: Diagonal elements are the square root of the AVE of the reflective scales while the off diagonals are the squared correlations between constructs

### Structural Model

In assessing the structure of the model, it involves the hypothesized association between exogenous and endogenous variables with its quality criteria. The model hypotheses testing demonstrates that, the relationship between the duty norms and political engagement was significant (t-value, 8.361;  $p < 0.001$ ). Relationship between engaged norms and political engagement was found to be significant (t-value, 5.012;  $p < 0.001$ ). Table 3 portrays the result of the hypothesis findings. In examining the  $R^2$  of the model (e.g. the endogenous construct) it shows that the value of 28% obtained was acceptable since it is higher than the 10% recommended by [20]. This suggests the  $R^2$  value obtained from the analysis was 0.277, indicating that 27.7% of variance in political engagement can be explained by all the exogenous variables in the model. The effect size (0.02, 0.15, and 0.35) values are representing small, medium, and large effects that signify different impact levels on the exogenous latent variable correspondingly as [13] stated. Hence, in this study, the exogenous constructs DBN and EBN have the effect size values of 0.191 and 0.050 respectively (see also 3). To put simply, the effect sizes of all these exogenous constructs on the political engagement (PE) endogenous construct are medium and small.

Ultimately, the predictive relevance was also checked as a way of judging the structural model in addition to estimating the magnitude of the  $R^2$  values. This is signified by the Stone- Geisser criterion  $Q^2$  values obtained by running a blindfolding procedure with an omission distance of 7 based on 275 cases. However, a technique of cross-validated redundancy was employed in line with [27] suggestion, the (reflective) endogenous construct has confirmed a predictive relevance as its value of  $Q^2$  is beyond zero. In particular, the  $Q^2$  value is 0.138.

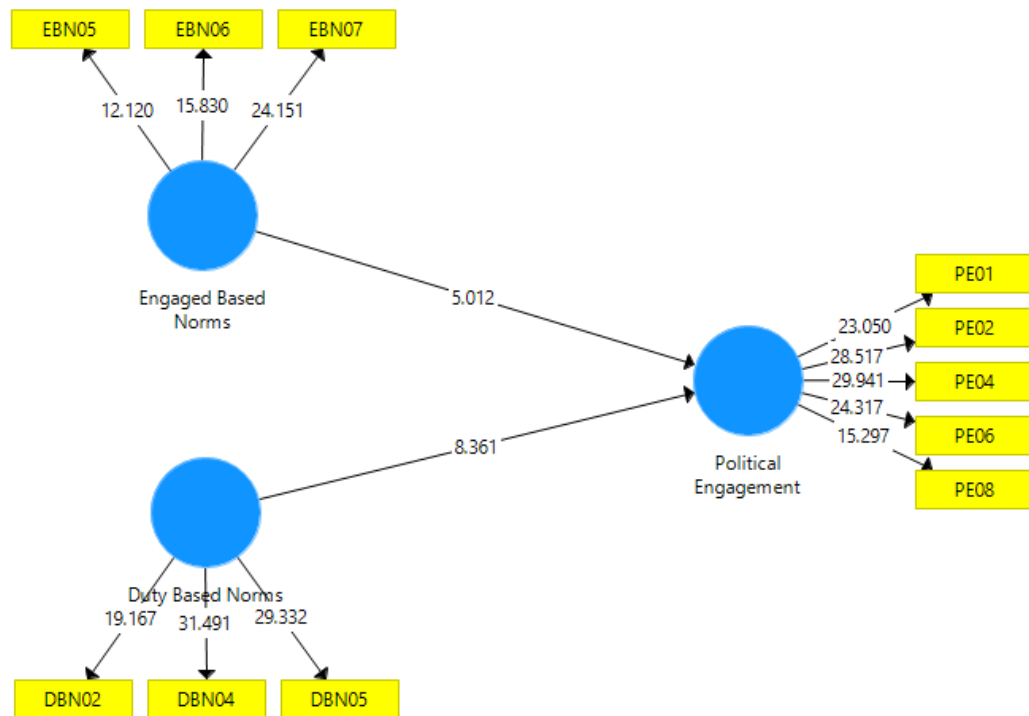


Figure 2 Structural Model

Table 3: Summary of the Structural Model

Hypothesis	Relations	Beta	SE	t-value	p-value	Results
H1	Duty Norms - > Political Engagement	0.407	0.049	8.361***	0.000	Supported
H2	Engaged Norms -> Political Engagement	0.207	0.040	5.012***	0.000	Supported
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		0.277				
<i>Q</i> <sup>2</sup>		0.138				
Effect sizes ( <i>f</i> <sup>2</sup> ):						
Duty Norms		0.191				
Engaged Norms		0.050				

\* p < 0.1; \*\*p < 0.05; \*\*\*p < 0.01 (one tailed)

## Discussion

The study was determined to examine the relationship between two citizen norms domains (dutiful and engaged norms) and political engagement. We found a considerable relationship between dutiful norms (DN) and engaged norms (EN) with political engagement (PE) as hypothesized earlier. The significance level was determined by the t-values and p-values attained from the analysis. For hypothesis one (1a), the relationship between DNB and PE was supported (t-value= 8.361,  $p < 0.001$ ). Hypothesis (1b) linking engaged norm with political engagement (EBN--->PE) was supported (t-value= 5.012,  $p < 0.001$ ) as depicted by the result.

Drawing upon [11] theory of social learning (SLT) that suggests citizenship norms are instilled through observation, and representation as [16,23,30] acknowledged. When this happens, it encourages stability in behaviours, values and attitudes which in turn promote and build citizens' self-efficacy [34], leading to active involvement of students politically. In the same way, [42] reiterated that the talk as well as associations with peers and family unit have a powerful effect on young persons' involvement patterns. Our finding of significant correlation between duty-based norms and political engagement is not surprising because it is consistent with prior studies indicating that perceptions of students is enhanced through young adults' participation in civil activities as recognized by [14,17].

Dutiful norms have considerable relationship with political engagement thus supporting the arguments of some scholars like [15,40, 41] who acknowledged good citizens are expected to participate in democratic deliberation, discuss political matters with other citizens and preferably comprehend their opinions symbolizing essential aspects of influential citizenship [19]. Not only that they should be informed about happenings in and outside their environs which help in making crucial autonomous decisions.

Dutiful citizenship encouraged people to accomplish their political activities by means of the internet to determine their choice of candidates, as well as other worthwhile activities [21]. Though voting, compliance with laws and norms of social order are considered as duties and responsibilities of citizens which often are enshrined into the laws of the land [18] especially in democratic states. Similarly, the finding of this study showed a significant positive relationship between duty-based norm and political engagement, extending the few empirical studies that have investigated the relationship of citizenship norm and participation [4].

The significant positive relationship between engaged based norms and political engagement further corroborated the findings of [43] on engaged-citizenship norms which was highly correlated with civic participation especially among the (Malays and Indian) students as they tried investigating why the trend of citizenship norms is altering amongst young populace. Besides, they concluded that young cohorts have extended their paths of involvement in an independent setting by adopting novel norms of engaged citizenship, that is now connecting them to voluntary activism more than before and apart from the conventional casting of votes. This finding is not surprising because it is consistent with studies by [18,23,35,51] whereby younger age groups place more emphasis on actively helping out in their community in a non-institutionalized manner.

Equally, engaged based norms having substantial relationship with political engagement tap on traditions that are beyond voting. This spurs people (i.e. students) to partake in political consumption like boycotting, buycotting, or demonstrations for reasons (like civil or ethics), controversial action as well as internet activism. Also, it is alleged that a busy citizenry is relatively well educated [31], similar to the sample of undergraduates in this research, which explains why engaged based norms persuade students' civil activities. Thus, suggesting youngsters are energetic in volunteering, but not consistent in voting.

## Conclusion

This research study supports the influence of citizens norm in predicting political engagement of students in tertiary level. Thus, a significant contribution to the field of knowledge is in terms of the level of education (university) focused. Unlike most studies conducted in Nigeria at the basic education (primary and secondary schools) levels which focus on students' intention to participate not on the actual involvement in a democratic

state as young adults. This makes it imperative for people of voting age (18 years and above) to be familiar with the consequences for their political, social and civic actions as citizens. Equally, it is vital to state the limitations of this study, e.g. data for this study was gathered via self-report (questionnaire), this could be biased because of narrow-mindedness. Not only that, the data is cross sectional which does not favour causal inferences made from the people sampled. Hence, to extend to this study, potential scholars could conduct longitudinal studies in order to measure the theoretical construct (political engagement) of youngsters in other universities sited in other regions especially Nigeria at different points in time. Nonetheless, this study has provided a glimpse of how citizen norms persuade students to participate in civic and political activities.

### Conflicts of Interest

The Author declares that no conflicts of interest exists in this paper.

### Funding Statement

This study was performed as part of the employment conditions of the author whose employer is Federal College of Education Kano, Nigeria.

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