

CHAPTER TWO

TELEVISION INFLUENCE AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF NIGERIA'S UNSEEN MINORITY

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Abstract

Active political participation is an important factor in a healthy democracy. From the mundane monitoring of electioneering campaigns on television to voting and contesting during elections, citizens get involved to register their presence as a matter of right and obligation. But in the emerging democracy of Nigeria, political participation has significant ramification that is shaped substantially by the media. This study sought to determine the extent of involvement of the residents in Ado-Odo/Ota, a semi-urban area in Ogun State - one of the country's 36 political subdivisions, sequel to exposure to the broadcasts of the 2007 presidential election. Positive and statistically significant relationships were found between citizens' exposure to television broadcasts and their political participation. The broadcasts encouraged them to seek out more information about political parties and election candidates. However, it turned out that the influences of television on participation of the residents were affected by their own inadequacies – illiteracy and rural location of voters, among others.

Keywords: Ado-Odo/Ota, Minorities, Nigeria, Political Participation, Television.

Introduction

Political participation is the bedrock of democracy. It includes involvement in and contributions to such political exercises as running in elections, voting, campaigning, party membership, election funding and other similar acts. Political participants attempt to influence the political processes through acceptable forms of persuasion. Active political participants register to

vote, actually vote and vigorously talk to others to take the same steps. Some others watch politics unfold on television. Democracy as a system of government gives the citizens the right of mass participation.

The mass media¹ are strategic partners in political participation as reflected in the news they transmit about political parties and their manifestoes, contestants and the general electoral processes which help voters make reasoned choices. Television, in particular, has proved to be immensely popular in enhancing political education and participation. The government, non-governmental organizations, political parties, contestants and voters all recognize that television broadcasts² can be powerful tools to be employed during times of election. What television chooses to show or not to show about the candidates and the electoral processes affect citizens' participation and may help to determine electoral results.

Although many countries have taken steps to improve the chances of women and those described as *minorities*³ in increasing their level of political participation, a large number of citizens seem to be lethargic about the possibility of contributing meaningfully to election processes. This paper wants to find out if television broadcasts encouraged the illiterate, non-skilled, non-party members who are residents in the rural areas in Ado-Odo/Ota area of Ogun State to take part in the Nigerian 2007 presidential election⁴.

Statement of the Problem and Hypothesis

Television has glamorized elections by reporting the thrills and frills. With its power of sound and pictures, it has brought into millions of homes what is happening in and outside their countries. Television images give the viewers the opportunity to have first hand impressions of contestants. Citizens need the requisite knowledge, as packaged by the media, to actively engage in the election process (McLeod, Kosicki and McLeod, 2002, 244).

Unimpressively, however, many citizens still do not participate in politics. Some feel that their votes do not count. Others would rather watch the electoral processes from their television screens than participate in the process. This paper wants to investigate the influence of the media as it hypothesizes that exposure to television broadcasts impelled the illiterate, low skilled, non-party members' resident in the rural areas of Ado-Odo/Ota of Ogun State of Nigeria to participate in the country's 2007 presidential election.

Literature Review

Democracy

Democratization involves the existence of political parties, change of guards at the installation of a new government and genuine popular

participation in politics and government (Nwabueze, 1993, 2-3). Modern representative democracy has some traits. They are popular accountability of government, political competition, alteration in power, popular representation, majority decision, right of dissent or disobedience, political equality, popular consultation and a free press (Roskin, Cord, Medeiros and Jones, 2006, 74-78). The institutional features of democracy include the provision of equal or universal suffrage; the balancing of majority rule with the protection of the minority; the rule of law; freedom of expression and freedom to dissent (Bobbio, 1987, 65-66). This explains why a democratic state “aims at being as far as it can be, a society composed of equals and peers”. (Aristotle, 1958, 181).

A democratic society offers regular opportunities for individuals to determine who to rule by voting. The major reason for the selection of leaders through rule-based elections is to create political and social stability. The people accept any winner emerging from the process as they see themselves as contributors in the selection process (Omotoso, 2002, 62). A democratic government must of necessity embrace popular participation in politics, its organization, management and conduct. There must be periodic elections to fill positions; independent political opposition that the incumbents are not permitted to suppress; and opportunities for significant upward or downward mobility (Oyero, 2008, 34).

The core of democracy is regular competitive elections where citizens engage in elections for seven reasons: as a means of holding politicians accountable, expressing discontent, pointing the route they want policies to take, placing issues on the public agenda, occasioning public debates and choosing delegates or trustees (Powell, 2000). Powell describes elections as instruments of democracy. Elections are fundamental to democracy because they allow citizens to make the decisions of selecting who the officeholders will be (Bianco, 2001, 67).

Voting

The vote is the foundation of political equality and the avenue through which ordinary members in a political system attempt to influence others. Voting in an election is the most important political decision that resolves who rules (Berman and Murphy, 1996, 369). “The act of voting occupies a central place in political behaviour. Elections are a direct and generally accepted approach to popular consultation and are a basic component of democratic government. By selecting one candidate or party over another, citizens express preferences regarding who should govern and which government policies should be adopted or changed” (Ethridge and Handelman, 2008, 88).

The right to choose not to vote is also essential to a successful democracy (Piven and Cloward, 1988 and Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980).

Some people do not vote because they are satisfied with the ways things are and therefore see no particular reason to become politically involved; feel that their votes do not count; the voting process is difficult; or that the parties are not differentiated (Berman and Murphy, 1996, 374). Additional reasons include lack of interest in both politics and in the elections; lack of time, non-registration; voters travelling at the time of the elections and hindering medical problems (Ross, 1996, 13). Those who have no stake in public business do not consider it necessary to participate in political activities (Schattschneider, 1960).

Political Participation

Political participation means taking part in activities associated with governance. It makes the citizens responsible for choosing their representatives and goes a long way in “empowering the powerless in society” (Eveland, 1993, 24–25)⁵. These are the “activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and or the actions they take” (Verba and Nie, 1972, 2). It is a voluntary activity or a concern with “doing politics, rather than being attentive to politics” (Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995, 39). According to them, participation is influenced by three factors: motivation, capacity, and recruitment networks. Social norms (Shulman and Levine, 2012, 532–552) and availability of online technology (Garcia-Castanon, Rank and Barreto, 2011, 115–138) also influence participation.

There are seven classes of political participants (Verba and Nie, 1972, 118–119). They are the *unclassifieds*, *inactives*, *voting specialists*, *parochials*, *communalists*, *campaigners* and the *complete activists*. The unclassifieds are unknown. The inactives lack political vigour. The voting specialists only vote and do not get involved in other activities. The parochials communicate with public officials in order to take care of their individual problems. The communalists work in volunteer groups, interact with party officials on a variety of issues but avoid campaign work. The campaigners attend to political campaigns and vote. The complete activists are fully involved in all aspects of political life..

All these are repackaged into four broad categories: the *apathetics*, the *spectators*, the *transitionals* and the *gladiators* (Milbrath, 1982). The apathetics neither vote nor get involved in politics. The spectators may wear party buttons, put stickers on their cars and try persuading others to vote in a pre-arranged way. The transitionals appear at political meetings, give money and contact public leaders. The gladiators run and assume public offices, solicit for funds for their parties, attend caucus meetings and are active during political campaigns. Milbrath adds that the apathetics and the spectators are political

inactives, while the transitionals and gladiators are actives. He concludes that most citizens are *inactives*.

Voting is central to participation (Berman and Murphy, 1996, 366). They remark that if all citizens easily register to vote and then actually vote, then the candidates they vote for will be representative of the population. They add that democratic involvement through voting and other acts of participation usually result in political stability because the citizens show greater level of contentment in the political system. Some scholars have found that citizens are increasingly reducing their civic and political participation. Such reductions are manifested in various forms such as lower voter turnout, (Putnam, 2000, 337); increased distrust of political parties and governmental institutions, (Inglehart, 1997) and political cynicism (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997).

It is important that citizens participate. Participation itself enhances their democratic citizenship (Putnam, 2000, 337) and those who participate determine public policy outcomes (Hill and Leighley, 1992) and DeLuca (1995).

Theoretical Framework

The media agenda-setting theory of McCombs and Shaw (1972, 177) established that the mass media could influence their audiences. They analysed the contents of newspapers, magazines and television newscasts that 100 undecided Chapel Hill voters were exposed to during the 1968 Presidential election in the United States. They found that the *media agenda* influenced the public agenda. The media agenda were the issues that the media thought of as important as determined by their prominence, length and position. The *public agenda* were the things that the public thought, discussed or worried about. Voters' judgements of what they considered the major issues of the presidential campaign were influenced greatly by the salience of media reports. McCombs and Shaw called this influence *agenda setting* and concluded that "the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign by influencing the salience or of attitudes toward the political issues". They later defined agenda setting as the impact the mass media have in shaping cognitive changes in individuals by structuring their worlds. Thus, stories that the media emphasize in their reporting are seen also as important by voters reading them (McCombs and Shaw, 1974).

Strong relationships have been established between the media and public priorities (Rogers, 1996; Ghanem, 1996; Newbold, 1995, 121; and Weaver, Graber, McCombs and Eyal, 1981). The media agenda have strong influence on top decision makers too (Rogers and Dearing, 2010, 555-594). However, the media's political agenda setting impact is limited except for some uncommon

and non-routine crises (Walker, 1977, 423–445; and Wood and Peake, 1998, 173–183).

The media do not only tell people what to do, but can influence what they think or hold opinion about by what they chose to report. The media transfer the salience of items on their news agenda to the public agenda by assigning specific attributes to the objects, issues, events or persons of interest. If the media assign some qualities to someone, the media content consumers assign same to that person (McCombs, 2002, 1-18). It is necessary to point out that:

“the media may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about. And it follows from this that the world looks different to different people, depending not only on their personal interests, but also on the map that is drawn for them by the writers, editors and publishers of the papers that they read.” (Cohen, 1963, 13)

The four elements involved in agenda setting are the frequency of reporting, its prominence, degree of conflict the reports generate and the cumulative specific effects over time (Folarin, 2002, 75). Some authors think that the mass media do not reflect social realities because news items are chosen and shaped by the newsroom staff; that people get their news from limited sources; and the few news items chosen by these professional gatekeepers tip people to think of them as important. Thus, what the people get to know are what the mass media present to them (Anaeto, Onabanjo and Osifeso, 2008, 89). This means that:

“In choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. Readers learn not only about a given issue, but how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position.... The mass media may well determine the important issues - that is the media may set the agenda.” (McCombs and Shaw, 1972, 176)

The agenda setting power of journalists during elections is in their discretion to include or exclude information for publication about political actors (Butler, 1998, 27–45 and Van Praag and Brants, 1999, 179–199). The *media gatekeepers* do not only select which messages to pick, but actively construct such to emphasize certain aspects (Kosicki, 1993, 113). The press can even colour events by the way they are presented or even refusing to present the stories (McLuhan, 1968, 204). The agenda-setting theory hinges on the premise that if the same people are exposed to the same media, they will place

the same importance on the same issues (Barker and Kibler, 1971, 193-205). In other words, if people are not exposed to the same media covering the same things, they will not see the same issues as important.

For the media to have any strong impact on politics, different media outlets must concentrate on the same issues (Eilders, 2000, 181-206). The media agenda-setting process works because of the credibility assigned to the media; reliance on the news media for information and exposure to media messages (Wanta and Hu, 1994, 90–98). People who trust the media and know a lot about politics suffer the strongest effect from agenda setting because high media credibility leads to high media reliance and exposure (Miller and Krosnick, 2000, 301–315).

Methodology

The survey research method was adopted in this study since a large human population was under observation. A group of people were studied by collecting and analysing data from those considered representative of the entire population. The sample was randomly drawn from the 187,391 registered voters in Ado-Odo/Ota local government area. Since it was not possible to study all these people, 5% of them were chosen to give 3,635 respondents. Only 3,064 returned the copies of the questionnaire. This large sample was stratified as *illiterate* (n = 268), *non-skilled* (n= 561), *non-political party members* (n = 1,727) and *residents in the rural areas of Ado-Odo/Ota* (n = 698). These sub-sampling was carried out to test if these variables enhanced or hindered their political participation in this particular election.

Copies of a close-ended questionnaire were administered to them. These questions followed a Likert-like pattern to elicit responses from the respondents on their pre-election political participation. The questions sought to find out if their exposure to television broadcasts stimulated their interest in knowing more about the political parties and contestants; increase their level of political participation; make them join political parties and campaign teams, and get others to join too. They were to indicate if they strongly disagreed, disagreed, did not know, agreed or strongly agreed with the questions. The resulting numerical data were organized and analysed statistically. The Pearson Bivariate Two-Tailed Correlation tests measured the precise linear association between the independent variable i.e. the respondents' exposure to television and the dependent variable or their consequent political participation.

Results

These quantitative data are the responses to the issues in the questionnaire. They are tabulated to create room for meaningful analysis and interpretation. Following each table is a brief explanation.

Table 2-1a: Description of voters' location

Location	%
Rural	22.8
Urban	60.1
Suburban	17.1
Total = 100.0 n = 3064	

The description of the location of the respondents fell into three categories - rural, urban or suburban and Table 1a shows that most of the respondents are urban based. More than half of the respondents live or are located in the urbanized areas of Ado-Odo/Ota. They are distantly followed those living in the rural and suburban areas.

Table 2-1b: Description of voters' literacy level

Literacy Level	%
Illiterates	8.8
Primary	16.8
Secondary	23.4
Diploma/Certificate in Education	26.8
Degree	24.2
Total = 100.0 n = 3064	

Most of the respondents are literate with the bulk of them having post secondary school diplomas, certificates and degrees. A few have basic education that terminated at the primary school level. The rest have no formal education and therefore are illiterates.

Table 2-1c: Description of voters' skill level

Skill level	%
High Skilled	81.7
Low Skilled	18.3
Total = 100.0 n = 3064	

Some four out of five respondents are engaged in jobs that demand one form of high skill or the other. The rest are involved in low-skilled employment. In other words, their jobs do not demand high proficiencies, expertise or competencies gained through training.

Table 2-1d: Description of voters' party membership

Skill level	%
Yes	43.6
No	56.4
Total = 100. n = 3064	

Most of the respondents are not registered party members. They do not have membership in any of the political parties that registered for the Nigerian general elections of 2007.

Table 2-2: Responses of respondents (Strongly Agree = SA, Agree = A, Strongly Disagree = SD, Disagree = D, Don't Know = DK)

Variable	SA	A	SD	D	DK
Interest to find out more about contestants	28.7	36.8	13.6	16.8	4.1
Interest to find out more about political parties	26.6	37.6	15.5	16.5	3.8
Increasing level of political involvement	21.1	30.0	19.6	24.4	5.3
Voluntarily joining political campaign teams	13.6	19.5	28.9	32.6	5.4
Voluntarily joining political parties	15.7	17.6	30.3	30.6	5.8
Voluntarily getting others to join political parties	14.6	21.0	29.9	29.0	5.5
Raising topics for discussion	27.8	33.7	17.0	17.3	4.2
TOTAL = 100.0	n = 3064				

Most of the respondents were strongly encouraged through television broadcasts to find out more about the presidential contestants running for the presidential election and the political parties fielding them. More than half of the total number of respondents claimed that what they watched on television made them increase their level of involvement in political participation as a build up to the election.

Did what respondents watch on television make them to voluntarily join political campaign teams? Six in ten persons disagreed that television broadcasts made them to voluntarily join political party campaigns teams. Television broadcasts did not create the desire in most of the respondents to willingly join political campaign teams or political parties. This is in

contradistinction to its role in stimulating the interests of the voters. The broadcasts also did not inspire most of these respondents into getting other persons to join these same parties. However, television broadcasts slightly encouraged more than a third of the total respondents to get others to join political parties. Possibly, these are the party stalwarts bent on getting other people to be more politically active during the election.

More than six out of every ten respondents affirmed that what they watched on television helped to raise issues for discussion between them, their family members and friends. Figures on Table 2 show that television broadcasts generated topics for discussion for most of the respondents and those that are close to them. This lends credence to Cohen's (1963, 13) statement that although the media may not tell us what to think, they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about. This is also in conformity with the insight of agenda-setting scholars (McCombs, 2002, 1-18; McCombs and Shaw, 1974; 1972, 176) that the media, in this case television, do set agenda of salient issues to be discussed.

Analysis of Responses

The responses of the respondents who are illiterates, are engaged in no or low skilled jobs, have no party affiliations and live in the rural areas in Ado-Odo/Ota were analysed with the objective of gaining insights into the characteristics of the various respondents' exposure to television broadcasts and such broadcasts encouraging their political participation during the Nigerian 2007 presidential election. The descriptive statistics here indicate the mean, standard deviation, skewness and Kurtosis values of the variables of interest by providing a summary of the statistics for continuous numeric variables. The mean is the intermediate value between the highest and lowest variables. The standard deviation measures the amount by which a set of values shift from the mean. The skewness indicates the lack of uniformity in the frequency distribution. The values might skew to the left or right. The Kurtosis is the measure of the magnitude of the frequency distribution concentration around the mean. Both skewness and Kurtosis show how much a distribution varies from a normal distribution.

Responses are categorized from 1-5. 1 and 2 are seen as strong and mild agreement with the opinion that television broadcasts did boost respondents' political participation. Responses of 4 and 5 are seen as mild disagreement and strong disagreement with the opinion that television broadcasts did actually encourage political participation. Those respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the view of television broadcasts encouraging or discouraging their political participation are scaled 3.

Table 2-3: Literacy level of respondents

Variable	Mean Statistic (\bar{X})	Standard Deviation (σ)	Skewness		Kurtosis	
			Statistic	Standard Error (SE)	Statistic	Standard Error (SE)
A1	2.4701	1.17840	.376	.149	-.789	.297
A2	2.5299	1.26130	.378	.149	-.967	.297
A3	2.6716	1.24988	.179	.149	-1.028	.297
A4	2.8433	1.16345	-.050	.149	-.924	.297
A5	2.7799	1.33241	.037	.149	-1.200	.297
A6	2.7910	1.16165	.054	.149	-.872	.297
A7	2.6231	1.24962	.187	.149	-1.111	.297
n = 268						

Key:

- A1= Television stimulating interest to find out more about the political parties
A2 = Television stimulating interest to find out more about the contestants
A3 = Television stimulating interest to increase their level of involvement
A4= Television stimulating interest to voluntarily join political campaign teams
A5= Television stimulating interest to join political parties
A6= Television stimulating interest to get others to join political parties
A7 = Raising topics for discussion

Table 2-3 shows that all the values are more than 2. This means that the respondents agreed that television broadcasts possibly stimulated them to overtly participate in the 2007 Nigerian presidential election. The respondents tacitly confirmed that television broadcasts stirred their interests enough to voluntarily join political parties (A5, mean 2.7799), get other people to join the political parties (A6, mean 2.7910); and the political campaign teams, (A4, mean 2.8433). Television broadcasts stimulated their interests enough to increase their level of political participation in the election (A3, mean 2.6716); find out more about the contestants running for this election, (A2, mean 2.5299) and the political parties that fielded them, (A1, mean 2.4701). In addition, television broadcasts also raised the topics that the respondents discussed with members of their families, friends and those that are important to them (A7, mean 2.6231). These illiterate respondents could understand electoral programmes, commercials, jingles and other similar messages transmitted in their local dialects. Television is a sight and sound channel. All that these respondents had to do was to listen and watch.

Table 2-4: Descriptive statistics of no/low skilled respondents

Variable	Mean Statistic (\bar{X})	Standard Deviation (σ)	Skewness		Kurtosis	
			Statistic	Standard Error (SE)	Statistic	Standard Error(SE)
B1	2.3672	1.16063	.503	.103	-.800	.206
B2	2.2638	1.16416	.667	.103	-.643	.206
B3	2.6649	1.20638	.084	.103	-1.206	.206
B4	3.1194	1.07487	-.499	.103	-.554	.206
B5	3.0196	1.11226	-.492	.103	-.694	.206
B6	3.0196	1.09119	-.436	.103	-.732	.206
B7	2.3012	1.18328	.529	.103	-.889	.206
n= 561						

Key:

B1= Television stimulating interest to find out more about the political parties

B2 = Television stimulating interest to find out more about the contestants

B3 = Television stimulating interest to increase their level of involvement

B4= Television stimulating interest to voluntarily join political campaign teams

B5= Television stimulating interest to join political parties

B6= Television stimulating interest to get others to join political parties

B7 = Raising topics for discussion

The values, (B4, 3.1194); (B5, 3.0196) and (B6, 3.0196) in Table 4 are above 3 but less than 4. These show that the respondents who engaged in no or low-skilled jobs did not know if their exposure to television broadcasts enhanced their political participation or not. Thus, they were ignorant of the fact that their watching telecasts on the election stimulated their interests to voluntarily join political campaign teams, join political parties and get others to join these same parties. The other values (B1, mean 2.3672); (B2, mean 2.2638); and (B7, mean 2.3012) are closer to 2. These suggest that the respondents with no or low skill demanding jobs agreed that their watching television broadcasts on the election made them political participants in the presidential election by stimulating their interests to find out more about the contesting political parties and their candidates. What they apparently found out and later saw on television raised fresh topics for discussion between them, their families and friends. Finally, their watching developments on the election on television, (B3, mean 2.6649), inspired them enough to increase their level of political participation.

Table 2-5: Descriptive statistics of non-party member respondents

Variable	Mean Statistic (\bar{X})	Standard Deviation (σ)	Skewness		Kurtosis	
			Statistic	Standard Error (SE)	Statistic	Standard Error(SE)
C1	2.4007	1.17000	.533	.059	-.749	.118
C2	2.3596	1.19474	.580	.059	-.749	.118
C3	2.8054	1.20894	-.009	.059	-1.131	.118
C4	3.1824	1.03349	-.553	.059	-.280	.118
C5	3.1598	1.05137	-.544	.059	-.263	.118
C6	3.1112	1.05048	-.400	.059	-.442	.118
C7	2.3868	1.16725	.516	.059	-.728	.118
n = 172						

Key:

C1= Television stimulating interest to find out more about the political parties

C2 = Television stimulating interest to find out more about the contestants

C3 = Television stimulating interest to increase their level of involvement

C4= Television stimulating interest to voluntarily join political campaign teams

C5= Television stimulating interest to join political parties

C6= Television stimulating interest to get others to join political parties

C7 = Raising topics for discussion

Three out of the seven variables (C4, mean 3.1824), (C5, mean 3.1598) and (C6, mean 3.1112) cluster around 3, thereby suggesting that respondents who are not registered party members do not know if their exposure to television broadcasts made them to participate more or not in this election. Hence, they cannot say if their exposure to television encouraged them to voluntarily join political campaign teams, join political parties or even get others to join political parties. This was not surprising since they were not party members and logically lacked the zeal to evangelize others into membership of their political parties or their political campaign teams. However, the variables (C1, mean 2.4007), (C2, mean 2.3596 and C7, 2.3868) tell us that the political participation of the respondents who were not party members were enhanced by their exposure to television broadcasts on the election. Hence, television broadcasts stimulated their interest to find out more about the political parties and their contesting candidates. These same broadcasts also raised topics that they discussed with their relations and friends. Lastly (C3, mean 2.8054) television broadcasts encouraged their political participation.

Table 2-6: Descriptive statistics of the responses of respondents based on location

Variable	Mean Statistic (\bar{X})	Standard Deviation (σ)	Skewness		Kurtosis	
			Statistic	Standard Error(SE)	Statistic	Standard Error(SE)
D1	2.3553	1.14882	.437	.093	-.934	.185
D2	2.4140	1.19019	.417	.093	-1.002	.185
D3	2.5430	1.19252	.308	.093	-1.021	.185
D4	2.8123	1.12517	-.135	.093	-.980	.185
D5	2.7937	1.17010	-.062	.093	-1.051	.185
D6	2.7521	1.15146	-.094	.093	-1.079	.185
D7	2.4756	1.18823	.308	.093	-1.053	.185
n = 698						

Key:

D1= Television stimulating interest to find out more about the political parties

D2 = Television stimulating interest to find out more about the contestants

D3 = Television stimulating interest to increase their level of involvement

D4= Television stimulating interest to voluntarily join political campaign teams

D5= Television stimulating interest to join political parties

D6= Television stimulating interest to get others to join political parties

D7 = Raising topics for discussion

Has location any influence on the political participation of the respondents? The mean values as presented on Table 6 indicate that the respondents in the rural areas leaned towards agreeing that their locations influenced their political participation. Thus, (D1, mean 2.3553) and (D2, mean 2.4140) let us know that television broadcasts stimulated the respondents' interests to find out more about the contesting political parties and their various presidential contestants. What respondents saw on television on the elections generated topics for discussion between them, their family members and friends (D7, mean 2.4756). (D3, mean 2.5430), (D4, mean 2.8123) and (D5, mean 2.7937).

Possibly, these discussions buttressed the need for them to increase their political participation. Hence, their watching telecasts not only raised topics for discussion between them, their family members and their friends, but also raised their levels of involvement in political participation by making them to voluntarily join political party campaign teams, and political parties.

Relationship between Exposure to Television and Political Participation

Pearson Bivariate Two-Tailed Correlation tests measure respondents' exposure to television and their political participation. After running the correlation tests, all the values were significant** at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), significance level = .000.

Table 2-7: Correlation coefficients between exposures to television broadcast and rural respondents

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	1						
2	.616**	1					
3	.417**	.400**	1				
4	.387**	.462**	.335**	1			
5	.325**	.255**	.469**	.458**	1		
6	.445**	.406**	.321**	.578**	.449**	1	
7	.489**	.435**	.299**	.341**	.387**	.389**	1
n=698							

Key:

- 1= Television stimulating interest to find out more about the political parties
- 2 = Television stimulating interest to find out more about the contestants
- 3 = Television stimulating interest to increase their level of involvement
- 4= Television stimulating interest to voluntarily join political campaign teams
- 5= Television stimulating interest to join political parties
- 6= Television stimulating interest to get others to join political parties
- 7 = Raising topics for discussion

There are significant and positive relationships between what these voters in the rural areas watched on television and their political participation in the Nigerian presidential election of 2007. Television broadcasts stimulated their interest enough to find out more about the presidential election contestants and the political parties. The correlation values of .616 and .578 tell us so. Even though the respondents live in rural communities, this did not hinder them from seeking out more information about the political parties and the contestants. The correlation values for other variables are low, fluctuating from .255 - .489 to show weak relationships between the voters' location and their participation in the election. Their countryside locations did not encourage them to effectively participate in the election. Some of them may not even have seen the need to subject themselves to the rigours of voting, especially against a widespread belief that their votes may neither be counted nor make any impressive change in the result of the election. Some of them think that the electoral exercise is not transparent and can be easily hijacked by the moneybags.

If voters' level of job skills is considered, there are significant and positive relationships between exposure to television broadcasts on the election and their political participation. The respondents studied are not engaged in high skill-demanding jobs because of their illiteracy. What they saw on television motivated their interests to find out more about the presidential election contestants and their political parties ($r = .585$); voluntarily get other people to join political parties and political campaign teams ($r = .561$); and voluntarily joining political parties themselves, ($r = .576$).

If these respondents are engaged in high skill demanding jobs, they may not have the desire to join political campaign teams or parties or even to try to persuade other people to follow their examples. However, the other variables are low implying that their low skill power affected their level of political participation.

Table 2-10: Correlation coefficients between exposures to television broadcast and respondents' non-party membership

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	1						
2	.546**	1					
3	.400**	.397**	1				
4	.213**	.261**	.313**	1			
5	.219**	.163**	.272**	.553**	1		
6	.220**	.208**	.273**	.513**	.534**	1	
7	.284**	.307**	.250**	.162**	.229**	.183**	1
n = 1727							

Following the established trend, all the correlation coefficients are positive and significant. These respondents are not registered members of any of the political parties. However, their non-partisanship did not hinder their political participation, even though the correlation coefficients are not too high. What these non-party members saw on television motivated their interests to find out more about the political parties and the, contestants (.546); join political parties and their campaign teams (.553); persuade others to join the political campaign teams too, (.513); and finally lure others to join political parties (.534). Television broadcasts did raise topics for discussion between these non-partisans and their friends or family members.

Major Findings

All the variables testing for political participation are positive and statistically significant implying that what these voters in the rural areas watched on television about the election influenced their political participation in the

Nigerian presidential election of 2007. Television broadcasts enhanced and increased the participation of these voters on the fringes of modern societies. Unimpressively, however, most of these indices are low and below average, indicating that the level of political participation was low.

Importantly, the respondents wanted to know more about the presidential election contestants and the political parties to improve their cognition. This may not be surprising as fifty-one political parties and twenty-five presidential contestants were approved by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to run in this election. For the voters without any formal education, this may be confusing. Hence, they sought to improve their knowledge about the people running for the exalted office. They tuned to television broadcasts to reduce their ignorance. They also had interpersonal discussions on what they saw on television on the election with members of their families, their friends, peers and relations. These discussions created a commonality in decision on whether to further participate in politics or not. It is to be assumed that those who engaged in more meaningful interpersonal discussions on political issues participated in more political activities when compared to those that did not.

The television broadcasts were sufficiently motivating to make the respondents take specific actions like joining political parties and voluntarily becoming part of political campaign teams. They also took steps to make others to toe the same lines. This is in line with Verba et al (1995) finding that the social environment contributes in promoting participation by recruiting those not ordinarily interested in politics. Residents who were not in campaign teams are recruited through their social networks. These personal contacts appear more effective in drawing the minority voters into participation since the mega-parties do not give them much attention.

However, political strategists and media planners should not be carried away by these facts. Rural communities are not as influenced as the urban areas are by television broadcasts because the rural residents are more closely knitted and communalistic than their urban counterparts. The low correlation indices confirm the weak relationships between the voters' rural locations and their effective participation in the election. Thus, strategists must use different methods to woo voters with perceived differences to participate more.

The poor literacy level of the respondents did not hinder these respondents from political participation. Television is a visual medium and pictures at times *talk* louder than words. The respondents could see the pictures of the contestants and the emblems of their parties on their television screens. Some television broadcasts are also presented in the Yoruba language and *Pidgin English*. These two are the most popular languages used in communicating in Ado-Odo/Ota communities and effectively combined to reduce the deficiencies in not being formally schooled.

Conclusion

Television broadcasts aided the participation of residents of Ado-Odo/Ota in the politics of the 2007 Nigerian presidential election. Despite being limited by such factors as lack of specific job skills, illiteracy, being residents of the backsides of the society by reason of living in the rural areas and not even being party members, yet these voters from Ado-Odo/Ota participated visibly in the Nigerian presidential election of 2007. However, the level of visibility could have been higher.

NOTES

- ¹ The mass media traditionally include the print and broadcast media. Today, the Internet has joined in the foray. However, this paper focuses attention on television.
- ² Television broadcasts include news, commentaries, spots, commercials and whatever contains information about the presidential election.
- ³ Minorities are relatively sizeable numbers of people with distinguishable characteristics living within a larger group. In this paper, they are citizens who may be hindered from political participation because of illiteracy, lack of skilled jobs, non-partisanship and rural residencies. The illiterates have no basic formal education. The non-skilled voters are those engaged in non professional jobs or engaged in jobs that do not need appreciable formal training and skills in their performance. They are not graduates of higher institutions of learning. Non-party members are not registered with or affiliated to any of the political parties. Voters who are residents in the rural areas are surrounded by nature's landscapes. They are communalistic in behaviour. The rural areas used in this study are Iju Ibiye, Obere, Osuke, Idanyi, Ajerogun, Odugbe, Egun Tedo, Edu, Ipatira, Imose, Odan Abuja and Igbo Odo.
- ⁴ The 2007 Nigerian presidential election held on April 21, 2007.
- ⁵ William P. Eveland. "Political Participation of the Elderly: The Influence of Community Structure," University of Delaware <http://www.udel.edu/communication/web/thesisfiles/evelandthesis.pdf> (accessed July 15, 2012).

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