



## Research Article

# Determinants of Political Participation among Farmers in the South East Nigeria

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**Abstract:** The study investigated the determinants of political participation among farmers in the South East Nigeria. Multistage sampling technique was used to select 200 farmers in the South East Zone (Anambra, Imo, Enugu, Ebonyi and Abia State). Data were collected using structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics and regression model. The findings showed that the majority (60%) of the farmers were male. The mean age of the farmers was 47 years while the average farm size was 1.07 hectares. The Majority (52%) of the farmers were married while 60% of them were full time farmers. Similarly, the mean farming experience was 13 years indicating that they had long time farming experience. Determinants of political participation among farmers in the study area were education ( $t=6.725, p=0.002$ ), income ( $t=5.060, p=0.000$ ), age ( $t=3.807, p=0.001$ ), sex ( $t=3.778, p=0.000$ ), incentives ( $t=-3.678, p=0.003$ ), social welfare ( $t=-4.659, p=0.003$ ), mode of participation ( $t=4.698, p=0.002$ ), political environment ( $t=5.396, p=0.004$ ), political interest ( $t=3.789, p=0.000$ ) and party interest ( $t=4.891, p=0.004$ ). The study recommends the timely provision of social amenities; incentives and other farming inputs to enable farmers participate fully in politics.

**Keywords:** Politics, Farmers's Participation and Determinants.

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## INTRODUCTION

Active participation of farmers in group activities like politics is central to the sustenance of the groups' goals as well as to the success of the participatory approach to agricultural development. Participation is the process through which stakeholders influence and share control over priority setting, policy-making, resource allocations and access to public goods and services (World Bank, 2014). Development experts opined that participation of individual members of any farmer-group in politics is crucial to the realization of the goals and expectations of the group (Muhammad *et al*, 2011). In spite of the benefits of membership of farmers in political game, participation of farmers in political activities is not guaranteed in many rural communities in Nigeria (Nwaobiala *et al*, 2014). Poor participation of farmers has been attributed to be partly responsible for the poor performance of our politicians and failures of some farmer-groups due to personal interest. An awareness of the level of participation of members of farmers in politics will provide useful insight for government agencies and policy makers in strengthening the existing gaps between farmers and politicians. Knowledge of the socio-economic characteristics of farmers which affect their levels of participation in political activities will also provide a focus around which stakeholders can work to bring about optimal participation of farmers in politics (Omotesho, Ogunlade, Lawal and Kehinde, 2016).

Political participation is normally associated with the modern form of democracy. In this political system, participation by the individual in political activity is considered a virtue, a sign of politeness

Cal health and the best method of ensuring one's private interests. Participation gives an opportunity to express one's own point of view and secure the greatest good for the greatest number. It provides citizens a sense of belonging, dignity and value, alerts both the rulers and the ruled to their duties and responsibilities and facilitates broader political understanding (Kateřina Vráblíková, 2010). By involving people in the affairs of the state, participation promotes stability and order in the system. It not only stimulates political learning but also makes citizens responsible. It deepens the political awareness and increases the sense of political effectiveness. Therefore, taking part in the political processes which lead to the selection of political leaders or determine or influence public policy is generally known as political participation. Despite the fact that elections are the major event in the political process, political participation cannot be limited to only electoral process, i.e., voting and campaigning. It is a term applied to various types of activities ranging from political orientations, attitude, knowledge, interest in politics, identification with a political unit (political party or its any wing) to taking active part in political action such as rally, demonstration, strike or campaigning for voting in elections. The most important political activities may be those carried out by parties or citizens between elections to influence

government decisions about specific problems that concern them (Puja Mondal, 2015).

Political participation is described as one of the basic conditions of functioning democracy (Dahl 1998, Verba *et al* 1995, Norris 2002 in Kateřina Vráblíková, 2010), and the quality of democracy and its ability to connect citizens with political leaders has become an important political issue today. In this regard, question of what factors determine citizens' political participation in democratic countries becomes highly relevant. Therefore, political participation refers to all those activities which influence the decision-making process. These activities may include voting, seeking information, discussing, attending public meetings, making financial contribution, communicating with representatives to become member in a political party, canvassing, speech writing and delivering speech, working in campaigns, competing for public and party offices, among others.

However, It is also citizens' right but many social factors inhibit its participation (Mahmood, 2014). Farmers' participation in electoral process is considered an essential part of the democratic process and understanding who participates and why is important to determine who has a voice in politics is also essential for rural development. Are some farmers' interests in society better represented than others? If so, what are the implications of these inequalities for elite's decisions and policies? What does that mean for the good functioning and legitimacy of the electoral process? Why do farmers continue to participate in elections? And how might these elections link to democratization more broadly? Based on the above existing questions, it behoves the writers to carry out research on the determinants of political participation among farmers in the south eastern Nigeria.

#### METHODOLOGY

The study area is South-East agricultural zone of Nigeria. The south east of Nigeria comprises Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. It has a land area of approximately 28,972km<sup>2</sup> and the vegetation of the area is a mixture of savannah and tropical rainforest with average annual rain fall of 2500mm. South -Eastern Nigeria has fertile and well-drained soil and the good population are essentially farmers(Okeke and Oluka,2017).

Multistage sampling techniques were used in this study. In the first stage, one agricultural zone each from every state selected was used for the research. Here, Anambra, Umuahia, Ebonyi South, Nsukka and Olu agricultural zone from the listed state; Anambra, Abia, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo were used respectively. These gave a total of four agricultural zones that were used for the study.

In the second stage, two local governments from each zone selected were purposefully used due to their active participation in farming and politics. Ayamelum and Anambra East in Anambra zone, Ikwuano and Umuahia South in Umuahia zone, Ohaozara and Afikpo in Ebonyi south zone, Nsukka and Uzouwani in Nsukka zone, Olu and Isu in Olu agricultural zone .

In the third stage, one community each was selected from each local government used for the study . Here, Omor from Ayamelum local government, Igbariam from Anambra East local government, Umudike from Ikwuano local government, Oloroko from Umuahia South, Okposi from Ohaozara local government, Ihe from Afikpo local government , Adani from Uzouwani local government and Obukpa from Nsukka local government. These gave a total of eight communities used for the research.

In the last stage, 25 farmers were selected from each community using simple random techniques and this gave a total sample size of 200 respondents.

#### MEASUREMENT OF VARIABLE

To ascertain the determinants of political participation among farmers, multiple regression analysis was used.

$$T = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5 + \dots + b_{13}X_{22} + \mu$$

Where

T=Total people participate in an election

a=constant term

b<sub>1</sub>-b<sub>22</sub>= regression coefficients

μ=error term

X<sub>1</sub>=age (measured in years)

X<sub>2</sub>=education (measured by the number of years spent in formal education)

X<sub>3</sub>=sex (dummy variable 1=male, 2=female )

X<sub>4</sub>= Social participation (member = 1, non member = 0)

X<sub>5</sub>=political socialization (socialization=1, non socialization =2)

X<sub>6</sub>=Incentives (received incentive=1, not =2)

X<sub>7</sub>=political efficacy

X<sub>8</sub>=Occupation

X<sub>9</sub>=Race

X<sub>10</sub>=Social welfare (people certified=1, not certified=2)

X<sub>11</sub>=Mode of participation (always=1, not always=2)

X<sub>12</sub>=political environment (conducive=1, not =2)

X<sub>13</sub>=family size (number of people leaving under one roof)

X<sub>14</sub>=Party affiliation

X<sub>15</sub>=Level of exposure to media

X<sub>16</sub>=Political interest

X<sub>17</sub>=Cynicism

X<sub>18</sub>=party interest

X<sub>19</sub>=Health status of the farmers

X<sub>20</sub>=income

X<sub>21</sub>=Farm size (measured in hectare)

X<sub>22</sub>=Political experience (number of years in politics)

#### DATA COLLECTION

Data used for this research were collected through a structural questionnaire.

#### DATA ANALYSIS

Data collected on socio-economic characteristics were summarized using frequency, percentage and mean score while determinant of political participation was analyzed using regression model

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 showed that the majority (60%) of the farmers were male. The implication is that male participated more actively in farming activities and politics than their female counterpart in the study area. This finding disagreed with that of Lorenz (2003) which claimed that females are more actively participated than males in political system. However, 52% of the farmers were married. The mean age was 47 years. This shows that farmers were still in their active productive years and this could help them to improve their farming system and participation in politics. This disagreed with the findings of Mannarini, Legittimo and Talo (2008) that as people grow old, their interest in politics and willingness to take active role increased. The mean household size of the farmers was eight (8) while 60% of the farmers were full time farmers. Majority (54%) of the farmers acquired land by inheritance while about 28.5% of the farmers cultivated less than 1ha. The average farm size cultivated by the farmers was 1.07ha. This implies that farmers were small scale farmers. This result agrees with that of Mbanaso (2010) that farmers in the South East Zone were small scale farmers. Similarly, majority (56.5%) of the farmers completed secondary school while 22.5% of them did not have formal education. The mean year of farming experience was 12 years. This implies that farmers had long period of farming experience on farming system. In the same vein, 52.5% of the farmers had access to credit while majority (87.5%) of the farmers had access to extension services.

**Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of the farmers**

| Variables                         | Percentage | Mean    |
|-----------------------------------|------------|---------|
| <b>Marital Status:</b>            |            |         |
| Single                            | 25.0       |         |
| Married                           | 52.0       |         |
| Widow                             | 10.0       |         |
| Separated                         | 5.5        |         |
| Divorced                          | 7.5        |         |
| <b>Age:</b>                       |            |         |
| 21-30                             | 22.5       | 47 yrs  |
| 31-40                             | 67.5       |         |
| 41-50                             | 5.0        |         |
| 51-60                             | 3.5        |         |
| 61 and above                      | 1.5        |         |
| <b>Household Size:</b>            |            |         |
| 1-2                               | 35.0       | 8       |
| 3-4                               | 53.5       |         |
| 5-6                               | 5.5        |         |
| 7-8                               | 4.5        |         |
| 9 and above                       | 1.5        |         |
| <b>Farm Size:</b>                 |            |         |
| < 1ha                             | 28.5       | 1.07 ha |
| 1 – 2 ha                          | 65.0       |         |
| 3 – 4 ha                          | 5.0        |         |
| 5 and above                       | 1.5        |         |
| <b>Source of Farm Land:</b>       |            |         |
| Rented                            | 15.5       |         |
| Inherited                         | 54.0       |         |
| Purchased                         | 16.0       |         |
| Borrowed                          | 14.5       |         |
| <b>Source of Labour:</b>          |            |         |
| Family                            | 32.5       |         |
| Hired                             | 67.5       |         |
| <b>Source of Agro-Input:</b>      |            |         |
| Input dealers                     | 51.0       |         |
| Fellow farmers                    | 55.0       |         |
| ADP                               | 32.5       |         |
| Research Institute                | 22.5       |         |
| <b>Occupation:</b>                |            |         |
| Fulltime farming                  | 60.0       |         |
| Trading                           | 17.5       |         |
| Civil servant                     | 22.5       |         |
| <b>Farming Experience:</b>        |            |         |
| 1-10                              | 10.0       | 13yrs   |
| 11-20                             | 50.0       |         |
| 21-30                             | 25.0       |         |
| 31-40                             | 9.50       |         |
| 41-50                             | 5.0        |         |
| <b>Educational Qualification:</b> |            |         |
| Non formal education              | 22.5       |         |
| Primary school completed          | 10.0       |         |
| OND/NCE                           | 56.5       |         |
| First degree and above            | 7.0        |         |
| <b>Access to Credit:</b>          |            |         |
| Yes                               | 52.5       |         |
| No                                | 47.5       |         |
| <b>Access to Extension Agent:</b> |            |         |
| Yes                               | 8.5        |         |
| No                                | 12.5       |         |

Source: Field Survey, 2017.

**DETERMINANTS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AMONG FARMERS**

Table 2 showed that the independent variables (age, sex, social participation, political socialization, incentives, political efficacy, race, occupation, social welfare, mode of participation, political environment, family size, party affiliation, level of exposure to media, political interest, cynicism, party interest, health status of the farmers and educational level) has a strong correlation (0.896) with the dependent (political participation). These variables explained 74.3% of the variation in the dependent variable.

Out of the twenty-two (22) variables investigated, only ten variables were found to be statistically significant as regards to the determinants of political participation among farmers in the south east zone. They were education, income, age, sex, incentives, social welfare, mode of participation, political environment, political interest and party interest.

**EDUCATION**

The implication is that once a farmer is educated and knowledgeable it could help him/her to integrate political values into his/her farming system thereby making use of agricultural subsidies from politicians and government. Those who are educated and more affluent tend to have more opportunities and a greater stake in the prevailing political order and thus have interest in the activities that support the political system. Education has a serious impact on political participation because the educated people are in a better position to transmit their political interest and knowledge to their children as well as their neighbourhood (Mahmood,2014). Educational institution serves as the basic ground in the development of skills of political participation,through schools/college/university unions, one learns how to join in an organization, fulfil duties, participate in meetings, discuss social issues and organize to achieve group goals. In the light of the above, this finding is in line with the result of Mahmood (2014) which saw education as one of the factors that hindered political participation in Pakistan.

**AGE**

As people grow older, their interest in politics and wiliness to take an active role would increase. Therefore, as people grow old, their interest in politics becomes aroused and their participation would be significantly increased. This agrees with Mannarin and Talo, (2008); Highton and Wolfinger, (2001) who saw age in their separate studies as a variable determined the active participation in politics.

**POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT**

The extent to which an individual perceives political stimuli to participate in political activities depends on the political environment and the political settings. Environment inspires people a feeling of belongingness and also acts as a powerful factor that brings people into politics. Therefore, political environment determines the levels of farmers’ participation in politics (Mahmood, 2014).

**MODE OF PARTICIPATION**

There are various ways in which people can participate in political activity. Some are directly involved in electoral sub-system and some are in other political activities. People can participate outside the electoral process-voting and election campaign. They can also take part in group or organizational activities to deal with social and political problems. In such activities they join hands with other people of the society to influence the actions of the party to win election. However, in this mode, a variety of people may engage in campaigning activities while others may be concerned with financial empowerment of the party as well as other related activities that can move the party forward.

**INCENTIVES**

Farmers participate actively in politics if they feel they can derive benefits from candidates or party. Access to state resources has become the primary motivation for engaging in elections in Nigeria. Diverting and distribution of state resources have been part of electoral culture in Africa, people no longer necessary possess democratic aspirations or policy preference when they vote, rather they hope to leverage more benefits from the existing regimes.Thus,incentive is one of the factors considered in political participation in the study area. This finding agreed with Bostom (2008) who saw incentive as one of the factors that influenced political participation in the Arabic world.

**SOCIAL WELFARE**

The levels and quality of social amenities provided by existing government determine the degree of participation among people in the community. The negative sign shows that people tend to participate actively in politics when they have access to social amenities that make life more comfortable. However, people tend to be apolitical once they have nothing to show off as regards to social benefits and this could lead to their non participation in politics. Therefore, social welfare is one of the strongest factors that determines political participation among farmers in the South East Zone (Mannarin, Legittino and Talo (2008).

**POLITICAL INTEREST**

People tend to participate actively in what they have interest on and be guided to achieve the interest objectively. This finding is in consonance with Gulber, Pomirchy and Sonemshain (2015) who shown that voting frequency and political participation were largely motivated by political interest and education in los agel.

**PARTY INTEREST**

Party interest exerts an influence on political participation, especially on the traditional setting where party

interest overrides other interests. Therefore, this study agreed with Mannarin, Legittino and Talo (2008) who attributed party interest to be significantly influenced political participation.

**SEX**

In western democracies women take part in political processes to a lesser extent than men while on the other hand, they are likely to appear to a greater extent than men into unconventional and social forms of participation (Inglehart and Caterborg, 2002; Norris, Campbell and Lovenduski, 2004). This result also suggested that the gender gap is attributable to different participatory styles and different meanings attached to personal engagement in politics. This finding disagreed with the finding of Lorenz (2003) which claimed that women were more inclined than their men counterpart in political participation.

**INCOME**

Income is one of the predispositions related to political participation in the modern world. As some studies have shown, people have to be predisposed to take part in politics as far as there is income from it and this has been the reason some elements termed themselves "politicians" as an occupation. As matter of this, Norris (2002) saw income as a variable that influences political participation significantly in a social system.

**Table 2: Determinates of political participation among farmers in the South East**

| Unstandardized Coefficients     |        | Standardized Coefficients |        |         |
|---------------------------------|--------|---------------------------|--------|---------|
| Variables                       | B      | Standard Error            | Beta   | T       |
| Constant                        | 3.735  | 1.089                     |        | 5.581*  |
| Income                          | 0.003  | 0.014                     | 0.011  | 5.060*  |
| Farm size                       | 0.0431 | 0.265                     | 0.151  | 1.851   |
| Political experience            | 0.026  | 0.031                     | 0.047  | 0.495   |
| Age                             | 0.1120 | 0.033                     | 0.345  | 3.807*  |
| Sex                             | 1.088  | 0.164                     | 0.667  | 6.667*  |
| Social participation            | 0.021  | 0.023                     | 0.067  | 0.863   |
| Political socialization         | 0.146  | 0.317                     | 0.046  | 0.547   |
| Incentives                      | -0.858 | 0.239                     | -0.344 | -3.678* |
| Political efficacy              | 0.081  | 0.233                     | 0.030  | 0.348   |
| Race                            | 0.0228 | 0.414                     | 0.045  | 0.545   |
| Occupation                      | 0.829  | 0.315                     | 0.057  | 0.849   |
| Social welfare                  | -0.849 | 0.275                     | 0.302  | -4.659* |
| Mode of participation           | 0.784  | 0.372                     | 0.412  | 4.698*  |
| Political environment           | 0.2110 | 0.034                     | 0.355  | 5.396*  |
| Family size                     | 0.220  | 0.247                     | 0.080  | 0.897   |
| Party affiliation               | 0.0003 | 0.004                     | 0.013  | 0.167   |
| Level of exposure to mass media | 0.017  | 0.033                     | 0.037  | 0.499   |
| Political interest              | 1.088  | 0.164                     | 0.668  | 3.789*  |
| Cynicism                        | 0.960  | 0.330                     | 0.145  | 1.503   |
| Party interest                  | 0.837  | 0.275                     | 0.302  | 4.891*  |
| Health status of the farmers    | -0.168 | 0.343                     | -0.048 | -1.495  |
| Education                       | 1.089  | 0.162                     | 0.679  | 6.25*   |

Source: Field Survey, 2017. \*P≤0.05. Adjusted R = 0.743

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The determinants of political participation among farmers in the South East were educated, income, age, sex, incentives, social welfare, mode of participation, political environment, political interest and party interest. There should be an improvement on the state of social and economic infrastructure in the rural areas, improving agricultural system which has almost become moribund in the rural communities could as well encourage the involvement of both small and large scale farmers into politics.

Education among farmers should be encouraged. This is because a farmer who is educated has more opportunities and a greater stake in the prevailing political order.

Politicians should not take party interest for granted, they should try as much as possible to give regular maintenance to the party structure, political environment, among other variables to ensure the continuity of the party and this could encourage people to participate fully in politics.

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