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Impact of Public Opinion on Public Policy in South West, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

In Nigeria, the playing down of public opinions often makes them ineffectual in the determination of public policy. In view of this, this study examines the relationship between public opinion and public policy in South West, Nigeria, finds out whether public opinions have effect on public policy, and the extent to which Nigerians are aware of the importance of their views on public policy. Again, the study examines the roles of public opinions on public policies and discusses factors that inhibit the use of public opinions by Nigerians. The study administered a questionnaire on one hundred and fifty respondents from three purposively selected states in the South West, Nigeria. Political parties' governing the states was the selection criterion. Oyo and Lagos states were chosen as the All Progressive Congress (APC) controlled states and Ekiti state; being under Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). The study used random sampling method to select respondents from the three states and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) v22 to analyze the data. Books, journal articles, internet-based materials, media publications were the secondary data and was content analyzed. The results showed that there is a relationship between public opinion and public policy, but the level of awareness of the people about the use of their views in policymaking process is minimal. Factors that affect the use and influence of people's opinion on public policy are corruption, poor political culture, education, poverty and unemployment.

1.   Introduction

A principal function of representative democracy is to provide a mechanism through which public opinion and public policy are regularly connected. In any modern and democratic political system, the process of making public policy is a relatively complex one. According to Jega (2003), the process through which public policy is formulated and implemented is one of the most important processes of governance. This is because, societal development in modern nation-states lies in the fact

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that it serves as the political, legal and administrative lubricants within which functionaries of government and its institutions interact with a myriad of non-governmental stakeholders. Public opinion is one of the complex networks of variables that often influence policymaking process. According to Ugumanim, Bassey, Obo, et al (2014), the situation in Nigeria shows that most public policies do not reflect the opinions of the populace. Over the years, policy makers rarely considered the genuine opinions of Nigerian in the process of making public policies (Obo & Obo, 2013). Public policies should be products of the wishes and aspirations of the majority but this has not been the case in Nigeria (Wlezien and Soroka, 2016).If government effectively relies on public opinion for its public policy drive, it is a major driving force to good governance.

As a result of the fact that opinions of many Nigerian do not have influence on policy-making process in the country, "public policies" churned out of the process are only designed to promote and protect the class interests of the few elites who control the Nigerian State. According to Obo, Eteng and Coker (2014), the extreme poverty and illiteracy that pervade the Nigerian society disempowered the majority of the people and made them inconsequential in the policy-making process in the country. Lack of awareness by the people of their role in policymaking makes it difficult for them to be involved in policymaking processes of the state. There have been attempts by several scholars to examine the impact of public opinion on public policy (Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, 2004; Ugumanim, Bassey, Obo et al, 2014; Akinleye, 2008 and Oludayo, 2016).This is not because there is lack of subject on which to research upon but because of the importance of this topic to a democratic society. Most of the scholars are of the view that public opinion helps to determine how democratic a state is, however, policy makers often face the problem of how to balance what the people wanted and what the government actually do and have continue to struggle to balance this limitation. The other problem relates to the weak power exercised by the citizen in knowing or influencing public policy decision. As captured by Obo and Obo (2013), some citizens are not awareof their right to participate in public policy decisions while the few people who know perceived their involvement as irrelevant (Milton, 2011 and Stimson, 2014).This, in theend made many policies of government not to represent the views of the people and hence lacking in providing the expected outcomes that the people desired.

Most studies on the relationship between public opinion and public policy showed that policy-makers follow public opinion (Page & Shapiro, 1992; Stimson, 2004), while others concluded that policy-makers ignore public opinion (Schwartz, 1995) and others find that few elites hijacked public opinion for their personal interest (Kingdon, 2003). In addition, some argue that "public opinion" is an artifact of measurement and does not really exist (Bishop, 2005).Harwood Childs is one of the early studies on the linkage and found that "the relationship between public opinion and public policy varies greatly from issue to issue. The influence of public opinion varies from virtually no influence to enormous influence. Influence may be exerted quickly or slowly, it may change over time or remain constant, and its impact may be direct or indirect" (Childs, 1965). Childs also notes that extent of the influence depends on a number of factors including: the degree of agreement within the public; the intensity of expressing public opinions, and the extent of organizing support for and against the public opinion.

Childs also notes that public opinion influences policy in two major ways. In the first way, public opinion tends to influence policy-makers through dissatisfaction rather than for positive action. Public opinion for progressive policies is, in essence, dissatisfaction with existing policies. Another aspect of the negative influence of public opinion is that policy-makers use the knowledge of the public's tolerances to constrain the policy options because the public would not accept some decisions. This leads to Childs' second point of view, that officials are often reluctant to take a stand in the face of probable widespread, popular disapproval. He also notes that public opinion not only influences policy, but policy influences opinion. According to him, once there is a policy decision, there is a tendency for public opinion to accept it. As general policies become more specific and the implications of the policies become clearer, public opinion often changes.

Given the above background, this study sets out five specific objectives and research questions respectively, and four research hypotheses. It later explains the method for conducting the research, and uses communication and plurality theories to explain the connectivity of public opinion and public policy making processes in Nigeria. It then conceptualizes the key terms and presents its findings. It then discusses the policy implications for the study from where conclusion was drawn.

1.1   Research objectives

The specific objectives of this study are to:

(i)   Examine the relationship between public opinion and public policy in South West, Nigeria.

(ii)   Find out whether public opinions have effect on public policy in the study area.

(iii)   Investigate the extent to which Nigerians are aware of the importance of their views on government policies.

(iv)   Examine the roles of public opinions on public policies in Nigeria.

(v)   Discuss the factors that inhibit the use of public opinions by Nigerians.

1.2   Research questions

The following research questions guided the researcher:

(i)   Is there a relationship between public opinion and public policy in South West, Nigeria?

(ii)   What effect does public opinion have on public policy in the study area?

(iii)   How aware are the people about their roles in state's policies?

(iv)   What is the role of public opinion in policy processes?

(v)   Are there any factors that affect public opinion on the state's policies of Nigerians?

1.3   Research hypotheses

(i)   There is no significant relationship between public opinion and public policy in South West, Nigeria

(ii)   Public opinions do not have effect on public policy in the study area

(iii)   Nigerian masses are not aware of the influence of their opinion on public policies in the study area

(iv)   Several factors hinder the use of public opinion as a measure of Nigeria's public policies preference

1.4   Research methodology

This study is an empirical one and utilized primary and secondary data. The study used a self-structured questionnaire to collect primary data from one hundred and fifty respondents purposively picked from three states of the South West geo-political zone of Nigeria. The political parties governing the states were the basis for picking the states. Oyo and Lagos represented the All Progressive Congress (APC) controlled states, while Ekitiis the only state under the control of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).A self-constructed questionnaire was administered on thirty (30) people chosen from market association (10 from each state); thirty (30) academic staff (10 from each state); thirty (30) members of civil society groups (10 from each state); thirty (30) members of political parties (10 from each state); and thirty (30) artisans (10 from each state). Fifty respondents expressed their views on the questionnaire in each state. The study used Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) v22 to analyze the primary data and presented it in frequency table, charts and graphs. Books, journal articles, internet-based material, media publications provided the secondary data and was content analyzed.

2.   Theoretical frameworks

The study used communication and plurality theories to explain the connectivity of public opinion and public policy making processes in Nigeria. The first theory is the communication theory. The main event that opened the way to the development of communication theory was the publication of an article by Claude Shannon in the *Bell System Technical Journal* in July and October 1948 under the title "A Mathematical Theory of Communication". Shannon focused on the problem of how best to encode the information that a sender wants to transmit. He also used tools in probability theory, developed by Norbert Wiener. They marked the nascent stages of applied communication theory at that time. Shannon developed information entropy as a measure for the uncertainty in a message while essentially inventing the field of information theory.

In 1949, in a declassified version of his wartime work on the mathematical theory of cryptography ("Communication Theory of Secrecy Systems"), he proved that all theoretically

unbreakable ciphers must have the same requirements as the one-time pad. He was concerned with representing a continuous-time signal from a (uniform) discrete set of samples. This theory was essential in enabling telecommunications to move from analog to digital transmissions systems in the 1960s and later in 1951, Shannon made his fundamental contribution to natural language processing and computational linguistics with his article "Prediction and Entropy of Printed English" (1951), providing a clear quantifiable link between cultural practice and probabilistic cognition. Communication is a process that concern exchange of facts or ideas between persons holding different positions in an organization to achieve mutual harmony. The communication process is dynamic in nature rather than a static phenomenon.

Communication process as such must be considered a continuous and dynamic inter-action, both affecting and being affected by many variables. One, the sender; that is, the person who intends to convey the message with the intention of passing information and ideas to others. There is also an idea; that is subject matter of the communication. This may be an opinion, attitude, feelings, views, orders, or suggestions. Another process is encoding, which is conversion of subject matter into symbols such as words, actions or pictures. Next is channel, which is either formal or informal means of transmitting messages. We also have receiver who interprets the message. The receiver tries to understand the message in the best possible manner in order to achieve the desired objective of the message. The person who receives the message from the communicator tries to convert it in such a way to extract meaning to his complete understanding. Feedback always follow; which is the process of ensuring that the receiver has received the message and understood it in the same sense as sender meant it. Until the receiver understands the message and gives it the required attention as conveyed by the sender the message could be perceived as a mere action.

Communication theory relates to public policy issues because it sees decision maker as the process of steering and coordinating human effort towards the achievement of a set goal. Communication theory is concerned with the process through which people make decisions against the consequences of the decisions. Communication theory however, treats government or policy makers as a decision-making system based on various information that they have got from various channels; all decisions of public policy are response to the demands of the people rather than the decision of the policy maker.

The plurality theory is the second one that posits that the list of possible sources of power is virtually endless such as legal authority, monetary, prestigious, skill or expertise, knowledge, charisma, legitimacy, free time, and experience. According to Stimson (2014), pluralists stress the differences between potential and actual power, and that actual power means the ability to compel someone to do something. Dahl describes power as a "realistic relationship, such as A's capacity for acting in such a manner as to control B's responses". Potential power refers to the possibility of turning resources into actual power. Money is one of the many instruments of power but does not automatically translate to power because it can be skillfully or clumsily, fully or partially, or not used at all.

The pluralist approach to the study of power, states that nothing can be categorical about power in any community. To determine this, pluralists study specific outcomes. The reason for this is that they believe human behavior is largely a product of inertia (Oludayo, 2016; Milton, 2011). Pluralists also believe that there is no one particular issue or point in time at which any group must assert itself to stay true to its own expressed values; rather there are issues and points at which this is possible. There are also costs involved in taking action. While structuralism argues that power distributions have a rather permanent nature, pluralism says that power is in tied to issues, and vary widely in duration. In addition, instead of focusing on actors within a system, the emphasis is on the leadership roles itself. By studying these, it can be determined to what extent there is a power structure in a society. According to Dayo and Zainab (2017)there are three major tenets of the pluralist school and are: one, resources and hence potential power are widely scattered throughout society; secondly, at least some resources are available to nearly everyone; and thirdly; at any time the amount of potential power exceeds the amount of actual power. Finally, no one is all-powerful unless proven so through empirical observation. An individual or group that is influential in one realm may be weak in another. A measure of power, therefore, is its scope where it is successfully applied. Pluralists believe that with few exceptions power holders usually have a relatively limited scope of influence. One has to observe it empirically in order to

know who really governs. The best way to do this is to examine a wide range of specific decisions, noting who took which side and who ultimately won and lost.

In relating these two theories to this study, communication theory see people as the speaker who interact with the government by giving policy direction through their demands and inputs and sees government as the agency which convert these opinions into policy decisions which are responses. Plurality theory also reveals the importance of each group in the state and that no group within a political structure can be all-powerful since each group act as check on the other groups to enable the balance of power within the political system.

3.   Conceptualizations

Public opinion is the aggregate of the individual views, attitudes, and beliefs about a particular topic, expressed by a significant proportion of a community. Generally, public opinion is the totality of the political orientations, beliefs, values, and attitudes expressed by members of a group about current issues, actors, and events in their political environment (Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle, 2004; Ayeni-Akeke, 2008). Public associations and mass media can distort public opinions. Mass media has a great impact in modeling of public opinion by the wide range of methods to change people's view about a particular issue. This is why Winston Churchill remarked that "no such thing as public opinion but published opinion". Public opinion can be defined can be expressed in many ways such as writing letters to public officials, holding meetings, engaging in public demonstrations, editorial comments, election results, plebiscites, and radio or television talk shows (Johari, 2005).

Public opinion determines the success of public policy. It legitimizes government decisions in the process. This is because, if the people contribute to the process of government policy, they feel more obliged to support it. It enables effective participation in government. More people are involved in decision-making process and aid the government to provide for the needs of the people. In addition, it makes government policies to be credible and effective. On the other side, public opinions are not usually uniform and sometimes favor the majority or privileged few in the society. It equally slows down the process of decision-making and this makes the government not responsive in emergencies. It may also distract the attention of government from important and essential policy to irrelevant ones. There can also be lack of knowledge about public issues within the country. Despite the shortcomings, public opinion exerts considerable influence on government decisions.

Public policy is the principled guide to action taken by the government. The foundation of public policy is composed of national constitutional laws and regulations. Public policy solves problems efficiently and effectively, serves justice, supports governmental institutions and policies, and encourages active citizenship. Other scholars define public policy as a system of "courses of action, regulatory measures, laws, and funding priorities concerning a given topic promulgated by a governmental entity or its representatives. In the United States, this concept refers not only to the result of policies, but more broadly to the decision-making and analysis of governmental decisions. Thomas Dye defines public policy as whatever the government decides to do or not to do at any given time. According to Wikipedia(2017), policy maker refers to the actors or agencies that are involved in the process of making policy. They are individuals charged with the responsibility of transforming the mirage of public opinions into programmes. Thus, policy makers do not make decision without formal enquiry into the demands of the people.

4.   Findings

4.1   Relationship between public policy and public opinion

To examine the relationship between public opinion and public policy in South West, Nigeria, respondents expressed their views on the following statements in the Section B of the questionnaire. They are:

S/N	Statements	5	4	3	2	1
1	Public opinion is well connected with public policies in South West, Nigeria					
2	Public opinions do no influence public policies					
3	Nigeria's public policies depend on the will of policy makers					

4	There is a strong relationship between public opinion and public policies in South West, Nigeria					
5	I see no relationship between public opinion and public policy in South West, Nigeria					

1 was scored for "very low" response, 2 for "low" response, 3 for "moderate" response, 4 for "high" response and 5 for "very high" response. Furthermore, the scores of each item were computed as a single measure to determine the relationship between public opinion and public policy, and was subjected to descriptive statistics with a minimum and maximum obtainable score within the scale of 0 and 25 respectively with a mean and standard deviation (X= 4.1058 & SD= 0.77483). Therefore, the score that ranged between (0-5) implied "very low level of relationship", (6-10) implies "low level of relationship", (11-15) implies "moderate", also (16-20) implies "high level of relationship ", and (21-25) implies "very high level of relationship". The results are in Table 1 below.

Table 1:

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Low	4	3.8
Moderate	14	13.5
High	70	67.3
very high	16	15.4
Total	104	100.0

Fieldwork (2018)

The table above shows that there is high-level relationship between public opinion and public policy in South West, Nigeria. From the results as above, it shows that there is high-level relationship between public opinion and public policy in Nigeria as against the assumption of Page & Shapiro (1992); and Stimson (2004) that "the relationship between public opinion and policy-making is not clearly defined. However, it tallies with the view of (Akinleye, 2008)that public opinion is a perceptual screen through which we can view the world. It also corroborates the position of Sapru (2016). Obo, Edeng and Coker (2014) noted that the public is a prism through which the state perceives the policy realities. In his word, "without public opinion, a nation does not only perish, but will hardly know what to approve or disapprove". The relationship of public opinion and policy-making process is pointed out by Kingdom (2003) who noted that policy actors must carry the people along in the decision making process, by holding due consultations with the people of any constituencies to be affected by a policy action. Thus, even in a situation where exigencies of time do not permit them to do so, they should still seek for people's support of any policy option made even after its implementation.

4.2   Public policies as products of the masses opinions

Respondents expressed their views on whether public policies are products of masses opinion in South West, Nigeriaby expressing their views on the following statements as raised in Section C of the questionnaire. They are:

S/N	Statements	5	4	3	2	1
1	Public opinions shape Nigeria's policy direction					
2	Opinions of the public change unacceptable positions of policy makers					
3	People's needs give direction to Nigeria's public policy					
4	Public policies are not derived from people's wishes					
5	Government are held accountable by public opinion					

1 was scored "very low" response, 2 for "low" response, 3 for "moderate" response, 4 for "high" response and 5 for "very high" response. Furthermore, the scores of each item were computed as a single measure to determine the effects of public opinion on public policy in Nigeria and was subjected to descriptive statistics with a minimum and maximum obtainable score within the scale of 0 and 25 respectively with a mean and standard deviation (X= 2.9423& SD= 0.66576). Therefore, the score

that ranged between (0-5) implied "very low level of effect", (6-10) implies "low level of effect", (11-15) implies "moderate", also (16-20) implies "high level of effect", while (21-25) implies "very high level of effect". The results are in Table 2 below.

Table 2:

Ranking	Frequency	Percentage
very low	1	1.0
Low	1	1.0
Moderate	17	16.3
High	52	50.0
very high	33	31.7
Total	104	100.0

Fieldwork (2018)

Table 2 above represents the perception of the respondents on the effect of public opinion in Nigeria, the results show that public opinions have a high effect on public policy in South West, Nigeria, with 50.2%. Most research showed that, policy-makers do not follow public opinion", however the results from the table above show that public policies are products of public opinion in Nigeria. This tallies with the view of Child(1965) that the general public is competent than any elitist group expert or otherwise to determine the basic ends of public policy, appraise the results of public policy, and in the final analysis fair, just, and moral". This shows that public opinion has high effect on public policy.

4.3   Awareness of the people about their roles in state's policies

Respondents expressed their views on the following statements as raised in Section D of the questionnaire to measure the extent of people's awareness on the use/influence of their opinions on government policies. They are:

S/N	Statements	5	4	3	2	1
1	I understand public opinion and the extent of its use					
2	I always made known my feelings on public issues					
3	Government policies can be influenced by public opinions					
4	Many Nigerians feel involved in government public policy processes					
5	Nigeria political system encourages people's involvement in public policies					

1 was scored for "very low" response, 2 for "low" response, 3 for "moderate" response, 4 for "high" response and 5 for "very high" response. Furthermore, the scores of each item were computed as a single measure on the extent of awareness of Nigerians to use their opinions or influence government policies was subjected to descriptive statistics with a minimum and maximum obtainable score within the scale was 0 and 25 respectively with a mean and standard deviation (X= 4.1058 & SD= 0.77483). Therefore, the score that ranged between (0-5) implied "very low level of awareness", (6-10) implies "low level of awareness", scores that ranged between (11-15) implies "moderate", also scores that ranged between (16-20) implies "high level of awareness", while scores that ranged between (21-25) implies "very high level of awareness". The results are in Table 3 below.

Table 3:

Category	Frequency	Percentage
very low	1	1.0
Low	24	23.1
Moderate	48	46.2
High	23	22.1
very high	8	7.7
Total	104	100.0

Fieldwork (2018)

The table above showed that there is moderate level of awareness of Nigerians on the influence of their opinions and the extent their opinions can influence government policies with 46.2%. The measure of awareness of Nigerians on what their views are on government policy is moderate and relatively low due to the elitist nature of Nigeria politics that renders impose many people's opinion on public policies impotent. Thus, when policy makers without recourse to citizens' views make policies unilaterally, they result in failure (Milton, 2011).In addition, level of awareness also differs if we compare urban area with rural areas. According to Ugumanim, Bassey, Obo, et al (2014), urban population are closer to the center of power and so are likely to express their views more than the rural areas that are remote.

4.4   Roles of public opinion in policy making
Section D of the questionnaire was also with five statements that measured the views of respondents on the roles of public opinion in policy making processes in South West, Nigeria. They are:

S/N	Statements	5	4	3	2	1
1	Public opinion play major roles in public policy in the country					
2	Public opinion is insignificant in policy formulation and implementation					
3	Government does not reckon with any public opinion before they take decisions					
4	Public opinions in the country are of no use on policy decisions					
5	Public opinion help to shape the course of government programmes in Nigeria					

1 was scored for "no role" response, 2 for "few role" response, 3 for "some role" response, 4 for "many role" response and 5 for "great role" response. Furthermore, the scores of each item were computed as a single measure to determine the extent of awareness of Nigerians on government policies and was subjected to descriptive statistics with a minimum and maximum obtainable score within the scale was 0 and 20 respectively with a mean and standard deviation (X= 3.3942& SD=0.96962). Therefore, (0-4) implied "no role in policy making", (5-8) implies "few roles in policy making", (9-12) implies "some role in policy making", also (13-16) implies "many role in policy making", while (17-20) implies "great role in policy making". The results are in Table 5 below.

Table 5:

Category	Frequency	Percent
No important role	3	2.9
Few important roles	13	12.5
Some important roles	42	40.4
Many important role	32	30.8
Great important roles	14	13.5
Total	104	100.0

Fieldwork (2018)

From table 5 above, the results showed that public opinion has some important role to play in policy making in Nigeria, with 40.4%. Even though, there has been a lot of criticism that no public opinion can truly reflect the views of the general masses, the results tallies with the opinion ofOludayo (2016) that public opinion influences the performance of decision makers and leaders in government, and that it describes and explains realities to people.

4.5   Factors that affect public opinion of Nigerians on the state's policies
Respondents expressed their views on factors they considered as having effect on the country's public policies as raised in Section D of the questionnaire, which are:

Table 5:

S/N	Statements	Mean	N	Std. Dev.	Ranking
1	Most Nigerians have poor political education to help steer their opinion formulation	3.8846	104	1.17670	3RD
2	Party politics is a major hindrance to use of public opinion	3.8173	104	.95292	5TH
3	Poverty and unemployment are setbacks to public opinion	3.8654	104	1.11528	4TH
4	Corruption affects Nigerians use of public opinion	3.9904	104	1.06575	1ST
5	There is poor political culture among Nigerians	3.9808	104	1.08816	2nd
6	Level of orientation among Nigerians are low to shape their opinions	3.6827	104	1.21691	6TH

Fieldwork (2018)

From table 5 above, it is evident that all the factors identified are responsible for why public opinions have no impact on public policies in Nigeria. One major factor according to respondents is corruption; next to it was poor political culture on the part of Nigerians, and poor political education to help put their opinions into use among other reasons. The factors identified as hindrance to the use of public opinion come closer to what Shapiro (2011) referred to as absence of political stimuli. On the other hand, Lasswell and Deiner (2015) remarked that the belief that leaders are self-centered lead to poor utilization of public opinion. In furtherance of the above, Davison (2017) on his own observed that poor political culture can also relegate political competence and efficacy of the people to believe that public policies must reflect the wishes of policy makers. Education and the access it gives, status in the society, interpersonal skill as well as ability to speak in public and present one's view in a persuasive manner are the key skills identified by Wlezien and Soroka (2016) as influential to utilization of public opinion.

5.   Implications of the Study

Given the fact that there is a significant relationship between public opinion and public policy, the followings are the policy implications of the study, in order to get more Nigerians involved in the country's public policy processes.

The study is a veritable device input because of its theoretical and practical relevance. In its theoretical sense, the study serves as a test of concept capable of leading to advancement on public policy discourse vis-à-vis public opinion. In its practical way, the findings provide important grounds for policy intervention strategies. Political experts, administrators and public office holders will find the result of this study useful by providing them strategic blueprint through a robust initiative capable of improving the relationship between individuals, civil society organizations and the state. As for the government, the study will stimulate interests on issues that touch the role of public opinion, public policy and good governance in the course of democratic advancement. In the process, the results of the study will guide the implementations of policies and intervention strategies, and create an enabling environment for public opinion to perform their ideal roles in state's public policies.

Nigeria's policy makers should endeavor to make use of people's view in formulating public policy. This will give a sense of belonging to citizen and further encourage more participation in the country's public policy matters. In the process, good governance, the essence of democracy would be rooted. The government should explore the existing avenues to seek the views of its citizen on policy direction in order to deliver its mandates in accordance with the citizens' wishes. If this were done creditably, democratic practice of taking decisions that have inputs of the majority would be deeply rooted. The government would also be responsive to the citizen view on public policy thrust.

The political parties in the state should create enabling environment for the sustenance of a participant political culture by educating the citizens through good ideology rather than heavy utilization of propaganda. The political party should perform their duties of interest aggregation and articulation. It is more of utmost importance that leadership of political parties learn to convey their opinions in civil manner without allowing it to disorganize the system. At present, most political parties, especially opposition ones use their power to disrupt the system.

The interest and civil society groups should further educate citizens on the use of their right to help articulate their views. This will enable them to achieve their goal as much as possible in not long a distant time. The mass media should comply with international standard and global practices of news reportage. Important national discourse should be of more concern, and appropriate views be sought by looking ahead into the future in order to give policy direction to government.

6.   Conclusion

Public opinion holds great prospect for the breakthrough of public policy. It is a major instrument for achieving outstanding breakthrough aimed at formulating acceptable public policy in a state. To achieve the feat however, elites will need to do away with the practice of hijacking the views of the public while avenues should be available, through which policy makers could more explore the views of the public. Thus, the oligarchy should not set out to override the popular views of the people. When the views of the people appeared irrelevant in policy thrust of a state, people tend to be a pathetic and seemingly far away in the governance process. In the end, policy choices of government become outlandish as key players in the political system become mere spectators rather than active drivers of public issues.

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