The Influence of Mental Health and Political Participation on Civic Engagement

OLAMIDE EMMANUEL ABE[1], COMFORT IREGBENOSI ADAMS[2]

[1, 2]Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan

Abstract- **In contemporary democratic systems, the intersection of mental health, political participation, and civic engagement is increasingly critical within developing societies where socio-political instability exacerbates psychological distress. In Nigeria, a country faced with governance challenges, economic disparities, and weak public institutions, the psychological condition of citizens shapes their willingness to engage civically or participate in political processes. Despite the global recognition of the role of mental well-being in fostering active citizenship, empirical studies examining this nexus within the Nigerian are limited. This study aims to (1) examine the extent to which mental health predicts civic engagement among Nigerian citizens; (2) assess the impact of political participation on the psychological well-being of individuals within the Nigerian political system; and (3) analyse how mental health and political participation jointly mediate the relationship with civic engagement. The study employed a cross-sectional survey design using a quantitative approach. It was conducted in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, using a small sample size of twenty-three purposively selected respondents who are civically and politically active scholars. A structured questionnaire based on constructs from the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM) was administered online to collect data on mental health status, political engagement, and civic participation. Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), with non-parametric techniques employed due to violations of normal distribution. Findings reveal a generally positive association between mental well-being and civic engagement (Mean = 3.83; SD = 1.114), as well as a moderate affirmation of the link between mental health and political participation (Mean = 3.52; SD = 1.504). Emotional resilience recorded the lowest mean (3.26), barriers to sustained engagement due to psychological or structural burnout within a political system as a result of political activities or engagement. The study concludes that psychological wellness and political activeness are intertwined and jointly shape civic engagement patterns in Nigeria.**

Indexed Terms- Mental health, political participation, civic engagement, Civic Voluntarism Model, democratic development.

I. INTRODUCTION

In any political system, anywhere within the global system, civic engagement is a cornerstone of the democratic process of such societies, which are some of the activities in the system, such as voting, community service, and political participation and also, within the global system, the advancement of technology has shaped all aspects of human activities and governmental processes in the term of people mental health, and political participation, which are responsible for the people civic engagement.

Civic engagement in any political system is the cornerstone of democratic societies that encompass a wide range of activities through which individuals participate in their communities' political and social life, such as voting, political discussions, community service, advocacy, and participation in civic organisations. Ehrlich (2000) sees *civic engagement* as the working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference for the communities and self. It means promoting the quality of life in a community through political and non-political processes. Carpini & Keeter (1996) define civic engagement as individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern, whose active participants are centered on the role of citizens in the democratic process through various forms of participation. Levine (2007) posits that civic engagement is any activity that involves people working together to make a difference

in the civic life of their communities and developing the knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference. Putnam (2000) views civic engagement as participation in networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit, particularly through community and voluntary associations.

The World Health Organization (WHO), a key actor within the international system responsible for shaping global health discourse among states, emphasised the profound impact of mental health on individuals' daily functioning (such as their participation in political and civic life). According to the WHO, mental health is defined as a state of mental well-being that enables individuals to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn and work well, and contribute to their community. Mental health is a coordinated state of psychological functioning shaped by an individual's social and psychological context. It reflected in three dimensions: the ability to align one's mental processes with the external environment, the coherence and completeness of mental functions, and the emotional and psychological consistency of the individual. From a practical standpoint, mental health has two core aspects: the absence of diagnosable psychological disorders, and the capacity to sustain a generally positive mental and emotional condition throughout daily experiences. According to the Africa Polling Institute, many that are associate mental illness with supernatural causes, resulting in a reliance on traditional healers and religious interventions rather than medical treatment (Africa Polling Institute, 2020).

Political participation is a fundamental pillar of democratic governance that reflects the extent to which citizens are actively involved in shaping political outcomes and influencing public policy. As the global system grapples with political, social, and economic complexities, understanding the dimensions of civic involvement becomes increasingly vital. Verba, Nie, and Kim (1978) define political participation as those legal activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take, which is an institutional and outcome-oriented nature. Similarly, Milbrath and Goel (1977) describe it as those activities by private

citizens that are intended to influence the selection of political leaders and the actions they take, that form the deliberate engagement of individuals in the political process. Huntington and Nelson (1976) broaden this by defining political participation as activity by private citizens designed to influence government decision-making, which encapsulates both conventional forms, such as voting and campaigning, and more unconventional acts like protests and petitions.

However, the relationship between mental health and political participation is a complex one within a political system. Political engagement has positive and negative effects on mental health. On one hand, being politically active provides individuals with a sense of purpose and community. On the other hand, exposure to political conflict and violence causes psychological distress for an individual who is a member of a political system. In Africa, the volatile political climate that is characterised by electoral violence and corruption exacerbates mental health issues among citizens and hinders their willingness to engage in civic activities. The intersection of mental health and political participation also has implications for policy development. States and non-state actors aimed at improving mental health services that enhance civic engagement by enabling individuals to participate more fully in society.

However, there is a growing recognition of civic engagement as a cornerstone of democratic development in third world countries in the global system, in which there is a gap about the psychological determinants that influence citizens' willingness and ability to participate in public life. Mental health are exacerbated by socio-economic stressors, political instability, and inadequate public health infrastructure that severely limit individual agency, reduce political participation, and affects the active citizenship, making the interconnections between mental well-being, political involvement, and civic engagement underexplored in scholarly discourse, in the Third World countries where systemic issues continue to suppress psychological resilience and democratic participation. Thus, this paper provides a wealth of knowledge necessary for the process of interrogating the issues that surround the influence of mental health and political participation on civic engagement in

Third-World Countries. The study objectives are: to examine the extent to which mental health predicts civic engagement among Nigerian citizens, assess the impact of political participation on the psychological well-being of individuals within the Nigerian political system, which has a greater influence on the development of other Third World countries in the continent, and analyse how mental health and political participation jointly mediate the relationship between civic engagement. To achieve the objectives of this study, the study is structured into five sections. The first section serves as the introduction that provides the general background information and outlines the problems addressed in the study. The second section delves into the discourse surrounding the relevant concepts. Section three details the methodology employed in this research. The fourth section is on the issue of discourse presented, which was answered through the results and discussions. Finally, section five offers conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of this study.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Mental Health

Mental health is a fundamental component of health and well-being that influences how individuals think, feel, and interact with others within human societies. According to the World Health Organization (2022), mental health is defined as a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn and work well, and contribute to their community. This definition situates mental health as more than the absence of mental disorders, to include the dynamic state of internal equilibrium that is essential for personal and societal functioning. Therefore, mental health is an individual and collective concern in Third World societies that are facing socioeconomic and political instability.

The psychological perspective of mental health entails the presence of positive emotional states (such as happiness, self-esteem, and resilience). Jahoda (1958), one of the pioneers in mental health theory, posited six criteria for positive mental health, such as self-actualisation, autonomy, environmental mastery, and accurate perception of reality. These characteristics

are linked to an individual's capacity for civic responsibility and societal engagement in a political system, either in developed or developing states. Positive mental health supports an individual's ability to make sound judgments, maintain interpersonal relationships, and respond adaptively to socio-political challenges in the state, which is an element for participating in civic and political life (Keyes, 2002).

Moreover, social determinants shape mental health outcomes in any human socio-political environment, as man is a product of the socio-political environment where their function interconnects. Marmot *et al.*, (2008) argue that factors such as poverty, unemployment, education, and community engagement influence the mental well-being of a man as a member of such socio-political environment. In third-world countries, where economic hardship and political instability are prevalent, these factors exacerbate psychological distress and reduce citizens' motivation for civic action (Lund et al., 2010).

The link between mental health and civic behaviour is acknowledged among scholars in political psychology and public health. Studies suggest that individuals with better mental health are more likely to vote, volunteer, and engage in community-building activities (Barry *et al.,* 2015). Conversely, psychological conditions such as depression and anxiety lead to political disengagement, feelings of powerlessness, and mistrust in governance (Daly, Boyce & Wood, 2015). Therefore, mental health is a construct that involves emotional, psychological, and social dimensions that influence an individual's ability to function and contribute to society.

Political Participation

Political participation is widely recognised as a fundamental aspect of democratic governance and a mechanism through which citizens express preferences, hold leaders accountable, and influence public decisions. Verba, Nie, and Kim (1978) define political participation as those legal activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions taken within the political system that affects the general well-being of the people (the

have and have not) in the political system. Political participation anywhere within the global system that allows for democratic principles encompasses a range of behaviours, from voting and campaigning to petitioning and peaceful protests, reflecting citizens' engagement in public affairs, which signifies in the state not only political interest but also the exercise of civic responsibility that influences the governance outcomes (Milbrath & Goel, 1977). The forms of political participation are being classified into conventional and unconventional types. Conventional participation (such as voting, contacting elected officials, attending political meetings, and affiliating with political parties). In contrast, unconventional participation involves more confrontational actions (such as demonstrations, civil disobedience, or social movements) (Barnes & Kaase, 1979). Both forms are for pluralistic societies, where formal and informal channels are used to amplify marginalised voices. In third-world countries, political participation is constrained by systemic issues such as electoral irregularities, political violence, and weak institutional trust, thereby limiting meaningful engagement (Omotola, 2010).

The determinants of political participation vary from one state to another: individual, social, and structural factors. Education, political efficacy, income level, and social capital that predict political involvement (Brady, Verba & Schlozman, 1995). Individuals who perceive their actions as capable of influencing political outcomes participate more than those who think their actions or inaction does not influence. Moreover, access to political information, democratic norms, and civil liberties fosters an enabling environment for participation. In third-world democracies, youth engagement, gender equality, and decentralisation efforts improve inclusiveness and overcome historical disenfranchisement (Aiyede, 2007). The citizenry's engagement in political participation also has significant implications for democratic consolidation and social cohesion. Through active involvement in political processes, citizens contribute to the legitimacy and accountability of democratic institutions. According to Dalton (2008), when there are higher levels of political participation in a society are associated with stronger democratic values, trust in institutions, and a more informed electorate. Conversely, political apathy causes democratic stagnation, policy failures, and erosion of public trust. In fragile states, inclusive participation is a strategy for preventing conflict and promoting political stability (Norris, 2002). So, political participation is shaped by individual attributes and systemic conditions in the functioning of democratic societies.

Civic Engagement

Civic engagement refers to the various ways in which individuals participate in the life of their communities to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community's future. According to Adler and Goggin (2005), civic engagement refers to when individual and collective actions are designed to identify and address issues of public concern (such as community service, political activism, environmental advocacy, and participation in local governance). In the real application, civic engagement is not limited to political institutions but expands to other societal efforts toward collective well-being. As a foundational element of democracy, it allows citizens to exercise their rights and responsibilities meaningfully and strengthens democratic processes for social capital and promotes shared civic values (Putnam, 2000). Scholars conceptualise civic engagement as both a behavioural and attitudinal construct. This involves tangible actions such as voting or volunteering, civic-mindedness, and public-spiritedness. Zukin *et al.,* (2006) note that civic engagement embodies a commitment to the public good, manifested through participation in community organisations, deliberative forums, and grassroots mobilisation. In developing societies in Africa, where democratic institutions are still maturing, civic engagement is vital for political literacy and holding public officials accountable. Hence, civic involvement becomes a tool for responsive governance and inclusive development (Norris, 2002). Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) argue that civic engagement serves as a precursor to political participation, allowing individuals to acquire skills, build networks, and develop confidence to influence formal political processes. Also, studies show that societies with high civic engagement tend to experience less corruption, stronger public institutions, and more equitable service delivery to their citizenry (Putnam, 1993; Dalton, 2008). For an active citizen, participation in local initiatives

contributes to problem-solving that causes public accountability in such a system. According to Checkoway and Aldana (2013), when marginalised groups (youth) are civically engaged, they contribute unique perspectives that bring about inclusive development.

National Well-Being

National well-being is a concept that refers to the quality of life as well as the living standards of a nation's population over some time or within a given time. It is not only an economic growth, but it includes other social variables: psychological, environmental, and political dimensions of a society to determine the level of development before it is translated into well-being in the nations. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2013), national well-being of a state comprises: material living conditions (such as income, employment, and housing) as well as quality-of-life indicators (such as health, education, environment, and civic engagement), which translate to the shifted from Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to measures that reflect how citizens perceive and experience their lives within the state (Stiglitz, Sen, & Fitoussi, 2009). Central to the argument about national well-being is the citizenry mental and emotional state which impacts their productivity, social cohesion, and national stability. Diener, Oishi, and Lucas (2015) argue that when it comes to subjective well-being this determine how people evaluate their own lives in terms of life satisfaction and emotional experiences, and it is an indicator of national prosperity. Therefore, when the population are mentally healthy this contributes to civic life that allows them to participates in democratic processes, and maintains economic productivity. In many democratic systems, the political stability and inclusive governance determinants of national well-being make room for effective and accountable political institutions that promote justice, equity, and enhance the population's trust in the state to reinforce social harmony that might have been lost in the state. According to Helliwell, Layard, and Sachs (2023), countries with strong institutions and higher levels of political trust are of better well-being for their citizenry. Conversely, political exclusion, corruption, and poor governance diminish the well-being of the people in the state by creating inequality, alienation,

and unrest (Sen, 1999). High levels of social capital, also characterised by trust, reciprocity, and civic involvement, promote resilience and shared responsibility for development in the state (Putnam, 2000).

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Psychological Empowerment Theory

The Psychological Empowerment Theory is a theory in community psychology and political science that serves as a framework for understanding how individuals gain control over their lives and participate meaningfully in civic and political systems. This theory was developed in the work of Marc A. Zimmerman in the 1990s, which was built on the works of Rappaport (1981), who viewed empowerment as a process and an outcome of gaining mastery over one's environment. Zimmerman (1995) expanded the concept by identifying three interrelated dimensions: intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioural components. At its core, Psychological Empowerment Theory is predicated on the assumption that people's belief in their capacity to influence social and political systems is a democratic engagement. The intrapersonal component refers to self-efficacy, perceived competence, and control over decisions; the interactional component is on the social systems and resource navigation; and the behavioural component reflects actual participation in community or political activities (Zimmerman, 1995). One of the central arguments of the theory is that empowerment begins at the psychological level and extends to the social and political system. A mentally healthy individual feel competent, perceive greater self-worth, and thus participate in collective actions such as voting, community organizing, or civic deliberation within the political system where he or she leaves, also, the psychological disempowerment results to anxiety, depression, or trauma reduces the rate of contributes to political system in term of apathy or social withdrawal. Empirical studies, such as those by Peterson (2014) and Speer & Hughey (1995), affirm that psychological empowerment is positively correlated with civic trust, political efficacy, and active citizenship. Scholars argue that Psychological Empowerment Theory places excessive emphasis on individual agency and may downplay structural barriers such as institutional

corruption, poverty, or political repression (Cattaneo & Chapman, 2010).

Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM)

The model (CVM) was conceptualised by Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) in their seminal work 'Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics'. That was the limitation of earlier theories that attributed political participation mainly to socioeconomic status or institutional structures. The CVM explains by using an individual-level variable that influences civic and political engagement. It was developed within the framework of participatory democracy and seeks to explain the reason for an individual's participation in civic life and others' abstention, despite having similar demographic characteristics. The framework is grounded in empirical data from the U.S., but its application extends to other democracies frontiers in transitional systems such as Nigeria. The CVM is built on three primary factors that explains an individual's civic or political participation: resources, psychological engagement, and mobilisation. Resources: time, money, and civic skills that a person need for participation, such as communication and organisational capabilities (Verba et al., 1995). Psychological engagement is political interest, political efficacy, and civic duty traits influenced by individual mental health status and social awareness. Son, in the context of this, mobilisation refers to being recruited or encouraged by networks, institutions, or community leaders to take part in civic life. Therefore, a compelling aspect of the CVM is its attention to psychological factors in political efficacy, which refers to one's belief in their ability to influence political actions. Individuals experiencing poor mental health, such as depression, anxiety, or trauma, may experience diminished political efficacy, that reduce their likelihood of civic engagement (Ojeda, 2015). So, when people possess resources or receive external mobilisation for the purpose of politics they can still decides to abstain from political action as a result of lack confidence in the political agency in the system. Nigeria and other third-world countries where political alienation and mental health challenges co-exist in socioeconomically marginalised populations, and this connects intrapersonal experiences with collective political behaviour to explain how mental health influences civic engagement. Critics argue that when focus is heavily on individual resources and psychological traits, the risk is ignoring political and economic constraints (Brady, Verba & Schlozman, 1999). Also, when there is state repression, electoral fraud, and systemic disenfranchisement is inadequate to explain within the CVM's voluntarist framework. Moreover, the model has been critiqued for its U.S.-centric assumptions, which may not be fully transferable to the political cultures of the Global South.

Expanding the Conceptual Understanding of Civic Engagement

The traditional conceptualisation of civic and political participation is centred on conventional, electoral-based activities such as voting, campaign involvement, or party affiliation. However, contemporary studies advocate for a more expansive and inclusive definition that incorporates non-conventional forms of engagement within a system (Pachi & Barrett, 2012; Pitti & Pitti, 2018; Tronconi, 2022). These can be in the form of protest participation, petition signing, community organising, charitable activities, and various forms of online activism (Hanna et al., 2016). Recognizing this spectrum is pertinent in systems where formal political mechanisms are exclusionary, dysfunctional, or inaccessible to marginalised populations (such as youth, ethnic minorities, or individuals with psychosocial vulnerabilities).

Civic participation and engagement are constructs that encompass behavioural, cognitive, and affective components (Bobek et al., 2009). Beyond action-oriented practices, individuals engage in civically by consuming political media, acquiring civic knowledge, expressing opinions on socio-political issues, and internalising civic values. These forms of "silent engagement" are used in fostering civic identity for political efficacy and promoting psychological empowerment among those who lack avenues for formal participation. Which cultivates a sense of belonging and purpose, factors that are foundational to mental health and emotional well-being within the 21st-century community participation. Moreover, civic participation occurs across multiple geographic levels, such as local, municipal, national, and

transnational systems. This scalar implies that the psychosocial impact of civic involvement varies depending on the usage and scope of the activity. The local volunteerism fosters immediate interpersonal support and social cohesion, whereas transnational activism generates a sense of global solidarity and ideological alignment. Hence, the level at which individuals engage civically has implications for the type and depth of psychological outcomes they experience.

Civic engagement is also tied to community resilience and collective well-being. Participatory acts such as attending town hall meetings, organising community initiatives, and contributing to neighbourhood welfare represent more than civic duties that function as mechanisms of communal care and psychosocial healing (Eklund, 1999). So, in a political system, addressing shared social and environmental challenges, individuals co-create support networks that mitigate social isolation, reduce anxiety, and enhance mutual trust. Engagement with news platforms, documentaries, and civic discourse in digital spaces contributes to the development of civic consciousness and interpretive competence (Mihailidis, 2018). Such exposure of individuals to systemic issues stimulates reflective thinking and fosters a sense of societal coherence for psychological attributes that are conducive to mental well-being.

IV. VARIOUS FORMS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, CIVIC PARTICIPATION, AND CIVIC AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Political Participation

Conventional Forms of Political Participation

i. Casting votes during local, national, or regional elections
ii. Joining a political organisation or party
iii. Standing as a candidate for political office
iv. Volunteering for political campaigns or party-related activities
v. Financial contributions to political parties or electoral causes
vi. Encouraging others to participate in electoral processes

Non-Conventional Forms of Political Participation

i. Attending or organising protests, demonstrations, and political marches
ii. Signing petitions for political reforms or public causes
iii. Writing to elected officials or administrative authorities about policy issues
iv. Contributing opinion articles or digital content on political matters
v. Posting or sharing political materials on digital platforms and social media
vi. Wearing symbols, clothing, or accessories that reflect political beliefs
vii. Distributing flyers or brochures to support political causes
viii. Fundraising events in support of a political ideology or movement
ix. Creating or displaying politically motivated art, graffiti, or signs
x. Taking part in radical or disruptive acts such as flag burning or civil disobedience
xi. Engaging with advocacy groups, think tanks, or pressure groups
xii. Participating in dialogue, strategy meetings, or events hosted by political activism networks

Civic Participation

i. Volunteering time and skills for charitable or humanitarian causes
ii. Participating in community-based problem-solving programmes
iii. Membership in neighbourhood associations (such as religious groups, or cultural clubs)
iv. Attending public meetings to express viewpoints on local development issues
v. Coordinating local campaigns or awareness programs
vi. Supporting non-native speakers through translation or administrative help
vii. Sending financial or material support to extended families or distant communities
viii. Donating money or resources to non-profit organisations and philanthropic causes
ix. Participating in local or school-organized service-learning projects

x. Organizing or joining fundraising events for social good

xi. Practicing ethical consumerism, such as avoiding products for moral reasons or favouring fair-trade options

Civic and Political Engagement

i. Keeping informed through news media across platforms (social media, print, or broadcast)

ii. Following national and international political developments

iii. Acquiring knowledge about governmental structures and civic responsibilities

iv. Developing critical thinking and communication skills relevant to civic involvement

v. Understanding constitutional rights, civic duties, and ethical values

vi. Forming and expressing personal opinions on political and social issues

vii. Experiencing emotional investment in public causes or policy debates

V. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design employing a quantitative approach to examine the influence of mental health and political participation on civic engagement among Nigerian citizens. This was carried out in Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State, Nigeria. Ibadan is known for its socio-political diversity and urban civic culture. The decision to use a cross-sectional survey was guided by the need to collect data to capture the current interplay between mental health status, political involvement, and civic attitudes, in alignment with the study's theoretical framework using the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM). A total of twenty-three (23) respondents were purposively selected to participate in the study. The purposive sampling technique was employed for the inclusion of individuals who are scholars and who are knowledgeable, accessible, and engaged with political or civic matters within the city. The instrument used to collect data for the study was a structured questionnaire developed that was based on the objectives, relevant constructs derived from the CVM

in the study, and validated literature on mental health, political behaviour, and civic participation. Therefore, the questionnaire used comprised four sections that capture: the demographic characteristics, mental health conditions, levels of civic engagement, and political participation, and their mediating effects. Data collection was conducted between April 1 and May 1, 2025, using an online administration method due to accessibility. The questionnaire link was distributed directly to the selected participants, who were given one week to complete the instrument. This mode of administration was formed to ensure the participants' anonymity, to reduce social desirability bias, and to increase the likelihood of honest responses. A Likert scale format was used throughout the questionnaire to measure degrees of agreement or experience, facilitating easy quantification, also, the study complements the primary data with the use of secondary sources; peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, relevant government documents, statistical reports, and grey literature. The primary data obtained were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 21 (IBM, 2015). Before analysis was conducted on the data collected, the data were subjected to testing using the Shapiro-Wilk test, and it was indicated that some variables violated assumptions of normal distribution and gave room for the use of non-parametric statistical techniques for analysis. Descriptive statistics use frequencies and percentages, and mean to summarise demographic information and assess trends in responses, and it was triangulated using thematic analysis of secondary data. Finally, the results were then interpreted to identify patterns and the mediating relationships among the variables.

VI. RESULT AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1: Socio-economic variables of the respondents

Variable	Range	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	6	26.1
	Female	17	73.9
	Total	23	100.0
Educational Qualification	Bachelor	13	56.5

	Doctorate	2	8.7	
	HND	1	4.3	
	Master	7	30.4	
	Total	23	100.0	
Employment Sector	Business owner	1	4.3	
	NGOs	1	4.3	
	Private Sector	14	60.9	
	Public Sector	7	30.4	
	Total	23	100.0	
Years of Professional Experience	Less than 5 years	6	26.1	
	5-10 years	10	43.5	
	11-20 years	5	21.7	
	Above 20 years	2	8.7	
	Total	23	100.0	

Table 2: Results of the Influence of Mental Health on Civic and Political Participation in Nigeria

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	L. Agreement	Rank
Emotional Wellbeing _ Community Participation	4.04	1.022	Agree	1
Stress _ Civic Disengagement	3.87	1.359	Agree	2
Mentally Strong _ Volunteer	3.87	1.180	Agree	2
Civic Engage _ Psych State	3.83	1.114	Agree	4
Poor Mental _ Community Absence	3.74	1.389	Agree	5
Mental Health _ Political Influence	3.65	1.229	Agree	6
Political discussions _ Confidence	3.61	1.469	Agree	7
Resilience _ Social Advocacy	3.52	1.039	Agree	8
Well-being _ National Development Perception	3.52	1.504	Agree	8
WHO Access _ Political Impact	3.48	1.275	Disagree	10
Voting _ Life Satisfaction	3.39	1.406	Disagree	11
Civic Groups _ Agency	3.39	1.340	Disagree	11
Officials _ Belief Change	3.36	1.620	Disagree	13
Civic involvement _ National Development	3.26	1.421	Disagree	14
Campaigns _ Mental Benefit	2.78	1.476	Disagree	15

VII. DISCUSSION

From the result of this study, mental health positively influences civic and political participation, and this also centres on emotional well-being that enables community involvement and political campaign participation. the highest mean score was recorded *on the emotional well-being which enables people to participate in community development* (M = 4.04, SD = 1.022), this states that emotional stability is an enabler of civic participation within the Nigeria

political system where most of the citizens for year have stay away from political activities (apathy). Akhter et al., (2023), longitudinal study found that community empowerment efforts improved mental wellbeing through mechanisms such as collective control and social cohesion. Individuals who perceive emotional stability contribute meaningfully to community initiatives which is a virtuous cycle between wellbeing and civic engagement. Also, *High stress or anxiety discourages people from engaging in civic activities* within the Nigeria political system (M = 3.87, SD = 1.359) that suggest that psychological distress affects people's civic motivation in Nigeria and other Third World countries. Anneser et al., (2024), who examined climate anxiety and civic engagement, observed that certain stressors (such as climate anxiety) mobilise civic action, chronic stress and generalised anxiety that suppress proactive civic behaviours when individuals lack institutional or social support systems so Nigeria and other Third world countries citizens experience chronic insecurity or economic instability that most time are responsible for the stress acts as a demobilising force for them in the politics of the state. Furthermore, *when people feel mentally strong, they tend to volunteer for local initiatives* that form community development or participation (M = 3.87, SD = 1.180), affirming that psychological resilience enhances public-spiritedness. According to Boyd and Nowell (2023), a sense of community and public service motivation boost individual well-being and civic responsibility within a political system that cause a better political participation in the system and those with heightened psychological resources perceive civic engagement as a burden, but as a form of agency and fulfilment, so individuals with higher psychological capital engage in prosocial and volunteer behaviours due to increased self-efficacy and optimism. *Poor mental health decrease attendance at community events* (M = 3.74, SD = 1.389) confirms that when there are temporary declines in mental health activities it disrupts regular participation in civic life within the Nigeria socio-economic or socio-political activities across many major cities in the country. Kirkbride et al. (2024), emphasize that structural and psychosocial disadvantages in a political system cause cycles of poor mental health and social withdrawal. Mental health issues such as depression or social anxiety create barriers that limit interpersonal engagement and

public involvement in activities that bring about development to the people and the society where human can easily function as a member of a social group. There is a relatively high mean on the *psychological resilience motivation that advocate for social change in a political system within the Nigeria socio-political setting* (M = 3.52, SD = 1.039) when an individual who participate in political activities are resilient, these types of people are more inclined to engage in political activism. Akhter et al., (2023), notes that where participants with higher self-efficacy and control were more engaged in advocacy and leadership roles in their communities. This supports that there is a psychological empowerment advanced in a society or political system where an individual with strong internal control and resilience tend to engage more in collective efforts aimed at institutional change.

In Nigeria *when someone casts his/her vote during electioneering and it does not enhance any form of satisfaction* for them (M = 3.39, SD = 1.406) reflects moderate affirmation, and thus implies that electoral participation contributes to psychological fulfilment for some citizens within the Nigerian political system. Since voting in any form of election that takes place within a political system enhances some people's sense of belonging and impact, it in turn contributes to their emotional well-being. Anneser et al. (2024) link civic engagement (voting) with increased perceptions of personal and group efficacy. There is also a bidirectional relationship between political engagement and subjective well-being in democratic societies. In terms of *participation in party or civic groups strengthens a sense of purpose among some citizens* (M = 3.39, SD = 1.340); at this end, collective engagement reinforces the group identity and agency. Boyd and Nowell (2023) suggest that such affective states, like organisational commitment and sense of community responsibility, foster identity, agency, and public service motivation in politically engaged individuals in a system. *Citizen involvement in political campaigns contributes to their mental well-being* (M = 2.78, SD = 1.476), which is a scepticism about the emotional rewards of campaign engagement, likely due to the confrontational and stressful nature of political organising in Nigeria. Akhter et al. (2023) showed that such group affiliations foster social cohesion, which in turn is a determinant of mental

well-being in the system. Also, political fragile society activism can result in mentally exhausting and even psychologically harmful without supportive structures. Kirkbride et al. (2024) note that marginalised populations disengage from political mechanisms that appear inaccessible or adversarial. The people's *mental health condition influences political activities with others* within the system (M = 3.65, SD = 1.229), which shows a direct correlation between psychological state and collaborative political behaviour. Mental health is a foundational role in collective action that advocates for the integration of mental health policy into development and governance strategies.

The people's *access to WHO mental health resources amplifies the positive impact of civic participation* (M = 3.48, SD = 1.275). This highlights the potential of international health interventions to support democratic engagement in developing countries where local infrastructure may be inadequate. Anneser et al. (2024), mental health promotion is integral to climate justice and civic responsiveness in modern democracies. Such support for mental health and development emphasises the value of resource access in citizen participation in the community development process. The relationship between psychological condition and civic engagement revealed a relatively (M = 3.83, SD = 1.114), where the participants generally acknowledged the role of psychological well-being in fostering active civic participation, therefore, when mental health stability serve as a determinant of consistent civic behaviour, and also call for the integrating mental health support systems within frameworks of democratic engagement. Akhter et al. (2023), who, in their longitudinal study on the Big Local initiative in England, argue that community empowerment initiatives bring about collective control and social cohesion that contribute to improved mental well-being. Such environments, in turn, stimulate increased civic participation and foster stronger community outcomes. There is a relationship that appears in the form of a reciprocal relationship, as emotional wellness enables participation in civic duties and is also enhanced by such participation. Boyd and Nowell (2023) support this assertion, noting that affective well-being influences public service motivation, organisational commitment, and individual perceptions of political efficacy. In essence, a psychologically secure individual engages in public service and political activities, motivated by a sense of responsibility and belief in their capacity to effect change.

CONCLUSION

It is clear, from the secondary data reviewed in this article, that mental health, political participation, and civic engagement are shaped by multi-level determinants operating at individual, community, and structural strata. These determinants include (i) *psychological resources* such as resilience, perceived self-efficacy, and affective well-being; (ii) *community conditions* encompassing collective control, social cohesion, and local empowerment infrastructures; and (iii) *macro-structural influences* such as socioeconomic inequality, environmental stressors, and fragile governance arrangements that either facilitate or constrain meaningful civic action, that demonstrates that mental health are predisposes and is reinforced by active political and civic participation that generate a virtuous cycle of democratic vitality. While the primary data generated by this study corroborates these and it also reveals that specific experiential factors directly modulate the Nigerian case. These factors are: (i) the salience of emotional well-being as a predictor of volunteering and advocacy; (ii) the reciprocal gains in psychological satisfaction derived; and (iii) the constraining role of insufficient emotional resilience when citizens confront persistent socioeconomic adversity, political volatility, or institutional distrust. Mental health, political participation, and civic engagement are interconnected, mutually reinforcing, and sensitive. In Nigeria and comparably situated Third-World polities suffering low turnout and limited public participation psychological distress routinely erodes civic motivation, while fragile civic structures amplify mental-health burdens. Hence, strategy aimed at deepening democratic practice must simultaneously (i) invest in population-wide mental-health infrastructure; (ii) cultivate inclusive, low-barrier avenues for political involvement; and (iii) strengthen community-level platforms that translate individual well-being into collective agency. Addressing these three domains in concert is a pragmatic pathway for elevating mental resilience and participatory

governance across Nigeria and other developing nations confronting analogous challenges.

Review of Empirical Studies Linking Civic Participation to Psychological Resilience and Well-Being Across Diverse Populations

Author(s) & Year	Study Aim	Population	Findings	Relevance
Akhter et al., (2023)	It examines how collective control and social cohesion influence mental well-being in marginalised communities.	Adults in economically deprived neighbourhoods in England.	Participation in community-led initiatives enhanced psychological resilience, self-efficacy, and emotional well-being.	How collective civic engagement and community empowerment mechanisms promote mental well-being in socioeconomically vulnerable groups.
Anneser et al., (2024)	It explores the relationship between climate-related civic activism and mental health among young people.	Urban youth (18–30) in Germany who are climate activism.	Civic participation reduced climate anxiety and fostered agency, hope, and social connection.	How youth civic engagement serves as a psychological coping mechanism for the protection of mental health through participation.
Sharaf Eldin et al., (2025)	It investigates the mental health outcomes of youth civic participation in the MENA region.	Adolescents aged 15–19 engaged in civic activities in MENA countries.	Civic engagement was linked to lower depressive symptoms, higher emotional resilience, and stronger self-esteem.	Emphasises the mental health benefits of civic identity and participation among adolescents in transitional societies.
Hrivnák et al., (2023)	It assesses how different civic engagement experiences impact psychological well-being.	Adults involved in Eastern European civil society organisations.	Positive engagement boosted mental and relational health, while over-engagement led to burnout.	Structured, supportive civic system is used for well-being and unmoderated activism are harmful.
Kirkbride et al., (2024)	It analyses policy perspectives on social determinants and mental health inequality.	UK policymakers and mental health researchers.	Emphasised the link between civic exclusion and mental ill-health; advocated for upstream, community-based interventions.	Establishes a policy-level argument for civic inclusion and empowerment as structural tools for mental health equity.
Boyd & Nowell (2023)	It examines the role of community sense and service motivation in public workers' well-being.	United States.	A strong sense of community and public service orientation improved job satisfaction and psychological well-being.	Connects civic-minded organisational culture to mental wellness, showing institutional-level civic engagement benefits.

REFERENCES

[1] Adler, R. P., & Goggin, J. (2005). What Do We Mean by "Civic Engagement"? *Journal of Transformative Education*, 3(3), 236–253. https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344605276792

[2] Africa Polling Institute. (2020). *Many Nigerians link mental illness to supernatural causes*. Premium Times Nigeria. Retrieved from https://www.premiumtimesng.com/health/health-news/373100-many-nigerians-link-mental-illness-to-supernatural-causes-survey.html

[3] Aiyede, E. R. (2007). The Role of INEC, ICPC and EFCC in Combating Political Corruption. *Money and Politics in Nigeria*, IFES Nigeria, 39–52.

[4] Akhter, N., McGowan, V. J., Halliday, E., Popay, J., Kasim, A., & Bambra, C. (2023). Community empowerment and mental wellbeing: longitudinal findings from a survey of people actively involved in the big local place-based initiative in England. *Journal of Public Health*, *45*(2), 423-431.

[5] Akinyetun, T. S. (2022). Social media, political efficacy and political participation in Nigeria. *Plaridel*, 19(2), 213-239. https://doi.org/10.52518/2022-02aknytn

[6] Anneser, E., Levine, P., Lane, K. J., & Corlin, L. (2024). Climate stress and anxiety, environmental context, and civic engagement: a nationally representative study. *Journal of environmental psychology*, *93*, 102220.

[7] Barnes, S. H., & Kaase, M. (1979). *Political Action: Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

[8] Barry, M. M., Clarke, A. M., Jenkins, R., & Patel, V. (2015). *A systematic review of the effectiveness of mental health promotion interventions for young people in low- and middle-income countries*. BMC Public Health, 13(1), 835. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-13-835

[9] Bennett, W. L., Wells, C., & Freelon, D. (2011). Communicating Civic Engagement: Contrasting Models of Citizenship in the Youth Web Sphere. *Journal of Communication*, 61(5), 835–856. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2011.01588.x

[10] Bobek, D., Zaff, J., Li, Y., & Lerner, R. M. (2009). Cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components of civic action: Towards an integrated measure of civic engagement. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, *30*(5), 615-627.

[11] Boyd, N., & Nowell, B. (2023). Sense of community, sense of community responsibility, organizational commitment and identification, and public service motivation: a simultaneous test of affective states on employee well-being and engagement in a public service work context. In *Public Service Motivation* (pp. 76-102). Routledge.

[12] Brady, H. E., Verba, S., & Schlozman, K. L. (1995). Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation. *American Political Science Review*, 89(2), 271–294. https://doi.org/10.2307/2082425

[13] Carpini, M. X. D., & Keeter, S. (1996). *What Americans know about politics and why it matters*. Yale University Press.

[14] Cattaneo, L. B., & Chapman, A. R. (2010). The process of empowerment: A model for use in research and practice. *American Psychologist*, 65(7), 646–659. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018854

[15] Checkoway, B., & Aldana, A. (2013). Four forms of youth civic engagement for diverse democracy. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35(11), 1894–1899. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2013.09.005

[16] Christens, B. D. (2012). Toward relational empowerment. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 50(1-2), 114–128.

[17] Dalton, R. J. (2008). *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies* (5th ed.). Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

[18] Daly, M., Boyce, C., & Wood, A. (2015). A social rank explanation of how money influences health. *Health Psychology*, 34(3), 222–230. https://doi.org/10.1037/hea0000098

[19] Diener, E., Oishi, S., & Lucas, R. E. (2015). *National accounts of well-being*. American Psychologist, 70(3), 234–242. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038899

[20] Ehrlich, T. (2000). *Civic responsibility and higher education*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

[21] Eklund, L. (1999). From citizen participation towards community empowerment.

[22] Hanna, P., Vanclay, F., Langdon, E. J., & Arts, J. (2016). Conceptualizing social protest and the significance of protest actions to large projects. *The Extractive Industries and Society*, *3*(1), 217-239.

[23] Helliwell, J. F., Layard, R., & Sachs, J. D. (2023). *World Happiness Report 2023*.

Sustainable Development Solutions Network. https://worldhappiness.report

[24] Hrivnák, M., Moritz, P., Melichová, K., & Bellérová, S. (2023). Does civic engagement support relational and mental health of urban population? *Societies*, *13*(2), 46.

[25] Jahoda, M. (1958). *Current Concepts of Positive Mental Health*. New York: Basic Books.

[26] Keyes, C. L. M. (2002). The mental health continuum: From languishing to flourishing in life. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 43(2), 207–222. https://doi.org/10.2307/3090197

[27] Kirkbride, J. B., Anglin, D. M., Colman, I., Dykxhoorn, J., Jones, P. B., Patalay, P., ... & Griffiths, S. L. (2024). The social determinants of mental health and disorder: evidence, prevention and recommendations. *World psychiatry*, *23*(1), 58-90.

[28] Levine, P. (2007). *The Future of Democracy: Developing the Next Generation of American Citizens*. Medford, MA: Tufts University Press.

[29] Lund, C., Breen, A., Flisher, A. J., Kakuma, R., Corrigall, J., Joska, J., ... & Patel, V. (2010). *Poverty and common mental disorders in low and middle income countries: A systematic review*. Social Science & Medicine, 71(3), 517–528.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2010.04.027

[30] Marmot, M., Friel, S., Bell, R., Houweling, T. A., & Taylor, S. (2008). Closing the gap in a generation: health equity through action on the social determinants of health. *The Lancet*, 372(9650), 1661–1669. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(08)61690-6

[31] Mihailidis, P. (2018). Civic media literacies: Re-imagining engagement for civic intentionality. *Learning, Media and Technology*, *43*(2), 152-164.

[32] Milbrath, L. W., & Goel, M. L. (1977). *Political Participation: How and Why Do People Get Involved in Politics?* Chicago: Rand McNally.

[33] Norris, P. (2002). *Democratic Phoenix: Reinventing Political Activism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[34] OECD. (2013). *OECD Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-being*. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264191655-en

[35] Ojeda, C. (2015). Depression and political participation. *Social Science Quarterly*, 96(5), 1226–1243. https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12173

[36] Omotola, J. S. (2010). Elections and Democratic Transition in Nigeria under the Fourth Republic. *African Affairs*, 109(437), 535–553. https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adq031

[37] Pachi, D., & Barrett, M. (2012). Perceived effectiveness of conventional, non-conventional and civic forms of participation among minority and majority youth. *Human Affairs*, *22*(3), 345-359.

[38] Peterson, N. A. (2014). Empowerment theory: Clarifying the nature of higher-order multidimensional constructs. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 53(1-2), 96–108.

[39] Pitti, I., & Pitti, I. (2018). Unconventional political participation: An overview. *Youth and unconventional political engagement*, 7-21.

[40] Putnam, R. D. (1993). *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

[41] Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

[42] Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

[43] Rappaport, J. (1981). In praise of paradox: A social policy of empowerment over prevention. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 9(1), 1–25.

[44] Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[45] Sharaf Eldin, N., Ibrahim, N. F., Farrag, N. S., & Elsheikh, E. I. (2025). The Effect of Civic Engagement on Mental Health and Behaviors among Adolescents. *Medicine Updates*, 76-92.

[46] Speer, P. W., & Hughey, J. (1995). Community organizing: An ecological route to empowerment and power. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 23(5), 729–748.

[47] Stiglitz, J. E., Sen, A., & Fitoussi, J. P. (2009). *Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress*. Paris: CMEPSP.

[48] Tronconi, F. (2022). Political participation and new technologies. *OPINIO JURIS IN COMPARATIONE*, *1*(1 Special Issue), 27-45.

[49] Verba, S., Nie, N. H., & Kim, J. (1978). *Participation and Political Equality: A Seven-Nation Comparison*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

[50] Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995). *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

[51] World Health Organization. (2018). *Mental Health Atlas 2017*. Geneva: WHO. https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241514019

[52] World Health Organization. (2021). *Mental health atlas 2020*. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240036703

[53] World Health Organization. (2022). *Mental health: Strengthening our response*. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response

[54] Zimmerman, M. A. (1995). Psychological empowerment: Issues and illustrations. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 23(5), 581–599. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02506983

[55] Zukin, C., Keeter, S., Andolina, M., Jenkins, K., & Delli Carpini, M. X. (2006). *A New Engagement? Political Participation, Civic Life, and the Changing American Citizen*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.