

# An Evaluation of the Political Participation and Representation of Artisans in the Governance of Ondo State, Nigeria Between 2018 and 2023

Akinrolabu, R.<sup>1</sup>, Edema, O. Ph.D.<sup>2</sup>, Oluwatukasi Eyiemi Ph.D.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Public Administration. Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria.

<sup>2,3</sup>Department of Social Sciences. Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

The research aimed to assess the level of involvement and representation of artisans in the governance of Ondo State from 2018 to 2023. Previous studies have shown that artisans make up a substantial portion of Nigeria's population, a trend that is also evident in Ondo State, which was the focus of the work. The study, therefore, examined whether there is a link—or a gap—between the large population of artisans and their presence in both elective and appointive political positions when compared with other groups in the society. The research adopted a combination of primary and secondary data collection methods. Primary data was sourced through interviews, survey techniques, and the administration of a structured questionnaire, alongside Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Secondary data was drawn from relevant documents and literature. In addition, the study made use of secondary information gathered from textbooks, academic journals, online publications, and relevant government documents. The data obtained was analyzed using statistical tools such as percentage distribution, frequency tables, and visual presentations. The research further assessed how factors such as profession, level of education, age, exposure, and other related variables influence political participation and representation in Ondo State between 2018 and 2023, as well as in Nigeria more broadly. The findings of the study are expected to be valuable to scholars, policymakers, and electoral institutions, as they contributed to a deeper understanding of the subject and support further academic inquiry. The study was guided by the theory of participatory democracy, which served as the foundational framework for its analysis.

**Keywords:** Artisan, Participation, Politics, Professional, Representation, Skilled

## INTRODUCTION

Historians have noted how artisans have corresponding relationship with politics, especially in the Machiavellian period. The practical study and firsthand understanding of nature, gained through manual experimentation, influenced emerging methods of learning and scientific practice. This approach eventually became known as a new philosophy of invention, which laid the foundation for what was called the new science. A similar trend appeared among both supporters and critics within the field of Political Science. As Corteguera (2013) notes:

This study explores how political thought intersected with the practical knowledge of artisans, emphasizing the value of their skills and expertise within political life. It also considers how these connections shaped early modern political ideas and behavior, ultimately contributing to the establishment of a new philosophical tradition. More significantly, it highlights how emerging approaches to knowledge became embedded in the intellectual practices and daily conduct of European scholars. In this context, artisans and their working methods served as important models in debates about the strengths and limitations of the developing political sciences (Corteguera, 2013, p. 602).

This has even added to knowledge of occupational science of political economy in production, marketing and cultural expression/engagements (Dicke & Frank, 1996:45). Artisans knowledge of public science played

significant role in Urban economy and politics in nation building and industrialization (Sowell, 1992:8). The articulation of politico-institutional and socio-economic patterns with artisans engagements grew momentum that the power relationship on one side and the business strategies of merchants and artisans on the other hand were considered great to redirect governance on government institutions where they sold their manufactured goods in accordance with existing laws. (Soly, 2008:12).

In pre-modern history, colonial state administration have interfaced with dominant groups that occupied the high positions in the society or state to established a variety of networks between the state and the artisans relations on politics and governance to legitimate practices for artisans communities (Sahai, 2005:48).

According to Sunday, Solomon & Adelore (2019) that:

Artisans make up a significant portion of Nigeria's informal sector workforce, and their contribution to national economic growth is highly significant. They are actively involved in the production and distribution of goods and services, while also fostering a strong entrepreneurial culture among citizens (Sunday et al., 2019:57).

The demographic nature of artisans reflects their successes in what they need and what they produce, which vary based on their social status, ages, interest groups, and professions, with implications for the growth and strength of government institutions in a state like Nigeria (Ezugeru & Ozioko, 2019:28). Again, the political system and social stratification of the societies where artisans dwell have changed significantly across the globe, especially during the age of enlightenment, modernism, and globalization, affecting the quality of their participation in political activities (Wildschut & Meyer, 2016:391).

### **Problem Statement/Justification**

Available evidence indicates that many artisans and professionals in Ondo State faced various forms of marginalization, including old-age challenges, health conditions, low literacy levels, and other limiting factors. These conditions hindered their capacity to actively participate in political activities and to be adequately represented in the state's political landscape between 2018 and 2023.

Addressing these issues—some of which may be systemic—would significantly improve their level of engagement, preparedness, and access to political participation, as well as their overall involvement in democratic processes and decision-making.

This study is therefore justified, as it aims to assess the role and level of involvement of artisans in the political participation and representation within Ondo State between 2018 and 2023. To achieve this, relevant literature on artisans, along with scholarly perspectives, has been reviewed and analyzed.

Hence, the final report of the fieldwork and the publication of the manuscript provide a practical perspective on the issue of artisans in statecraft and governance. The research is significant because it provides insight into the public life of artisans in relation to inferiority, ill-health, and illiteracy. Again, it examines how they can develop and express their views in Ondo State, Nigeria, on a range of issues concerning them, including old age, as well as how decisions made with participation and representation will shape artisan communities.

### **Objective(s) of the Study**

1. assessed the extent to which artisans engaged in and were represented in political activities within Ondo State.
2. evaluated how effective the political involvement and representation of artisans were in Ondo State.
3. identified the measures being taken to enhance artisans' inclusion and roles in the political arena of Ondo State.

4. explored and analyzed the factors or obstacles responsible for the limited political participation and representation of artisans in Ondo State, particularly between 2018 and 2023.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This study adopts the theory of participatory democracy as its guiding framework, helping to explain the factors that shape artisans' involvement and representation in Ondo State politics between 2018 and 2023. Participatory democracy blends elements of both direct and representative systems, allowing citizens to take part in decision-making while elected officials manage policy outcomes. The theory emphasizes that ultimate political authority rests with the people, who drive electoral processes and broader political participation in a democratic setting (Sanchez-Pages & Aragonés, 2009:58; Ganba, 2003:445; Pateman, 2012:7). Through this approach, citizens seek to shape government actions either by choosing their leaders or by influencing state decisions. In essence, participatory democracy views involvement in governance as a pathway to representation, enabling citizens to voice their priorities and interests within the political system (Teorell, 2006:789).

The theory has some defects which include: differences between the old and modern democratic practices with or without the importance of morality, as a way of life, the problem of engagement is not to by the factors of values and representation which fundamentally exclude the majority of citizens in the scheme of things. The colonial heritage and the political structure of developing countries (Ogo & Olatunji, 2014: 129).

The linkage of the theory to the study lies in the involvement of artisans in the governance of Ondo State between 2018 and 2023 where the evaluation of their actions and inactions are put into question, which call for review and suggestion for further efforts in their political patronage. Theorists, writers and thinkers of political participation and representation include: Schumpeter, J. (1977), Held, Z (1987), Kolakowshi, L. (1990), Coleman, J. & Ferejohn, J. (1986), Urbinati & Warren (2008) and host of others view political representation and participation theory as the paradigm of evaluating and explaining people's response to political activism and involvement in political system.

## METHODOLOGY

### Location of the Study

The study was carried out in Ondo State, a southwestern state in Nigeria. The state was formed on February 3, 1976, from the former Western Region, and its capital city is Akure. Ondo State lies within the Western geopolitical zone and shares boundaries with Ekiti, Osun, Edo, Ogun, and Kogi States. It consists of 18 Local Government Areas and has an estimated population of about 3.46 million people, predominantly Yoruba, who practice Islam, Christianity, and traditional religions. The state is richly blessed with various natural resources, a large workforce comprising both skilled and unskilled labour, and hosts numerous educational institutions, including primary, secondary, and tertiary schools.

### Study Areas

The research took place in selected urban and rural areas across Ondo State. A total of nine (9) local government areas were selected out of the eighteen (18) in the state. To ensure equal representation, three (3) local governments were randomly selected from each of the three senatorial districts—Central, North, and South—so that all districts were adequately covered in the study.

**Table 1: Design outlay for selecting study area locations**

| S/N | Senatorial District | Local Govt. to be Selected | Number of Community Selected                       | Total Number Selected on same Basis |
|-----|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1   | Ondo Central        | (i) Ondo West              | Igbado, Fagbo Ondo Town, Laje & Bagbe              | 5                                   |
|     |                     | (ii) Akure South           | Igbatoro, Aponmu, Ilara Mokin, Oke Aro, Akure Town | 5                                   |

|   |            |                         |                                                       |    |
|---|------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|----|
|   |            | (iii) Ifedore           | Igbaro Oke, Ipogun, Owena, Ijare, Isarun              | 5  |
| 2 | Ondo State | (i) Okitipupa           | Ode Aye, Ilu Titun, Iju Odo, Okitipupa Town, Igbotako | 5  |
|   |            | (ii) Oke-Igbo/Ile-Oluji | Ile-Oluji, Oke-Igbo, Ifetedo, Bankemo, Oloruntele     | 5  |
|   |            | (iii) Ese-Odo           | Asere, Akina Zion, Epemubon, BaikiriBibokpepiri       | 5  |
| 3 | Ondo North | (i) Owo                 | Ipele, Uso, Emure-Ile, Isuada, Ijebu-Owo              | 5  |
|   |            | (ii) Akoko South-East   | Okeagbe, Ikaramu, Ese, Irun, Eriti                    | 5  |
|   |            | (iii) Akoko South-West  | Akungba, Oba, Oka, Supare, Ayegunle                   | 5  |
|   | 3          | 9                       | 45                                                    | 45 |

### Justification for the Study Locations

Nine (9) out of the eighteen (18) Local Government Areas in the state were chosen for the research. This selection was made to ensure fair representation of the entire state. The forty-five (45) communities drawn from these Local Government Areas were considered suitable and reflective of the study focus.

### Sampling Frame / Target Participants

The study involved respondents across the selected communities, with artisans as the principal target population because the study focused on their political participation and representation. Youths, students, community leaders, professionals, and academics were included as supplementary respondents and sources of relevant information.

### Interview and Data Collection Methods

To effectively achieve the objectives of the research, both primary and secondary sources of data were employed. Primary data were obtained through questionnaires, oral interviews, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), while secondary information was sourced from relevant textbooks, academic journals, and credible online materials. The collected data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, and other descriptive statistical tools.

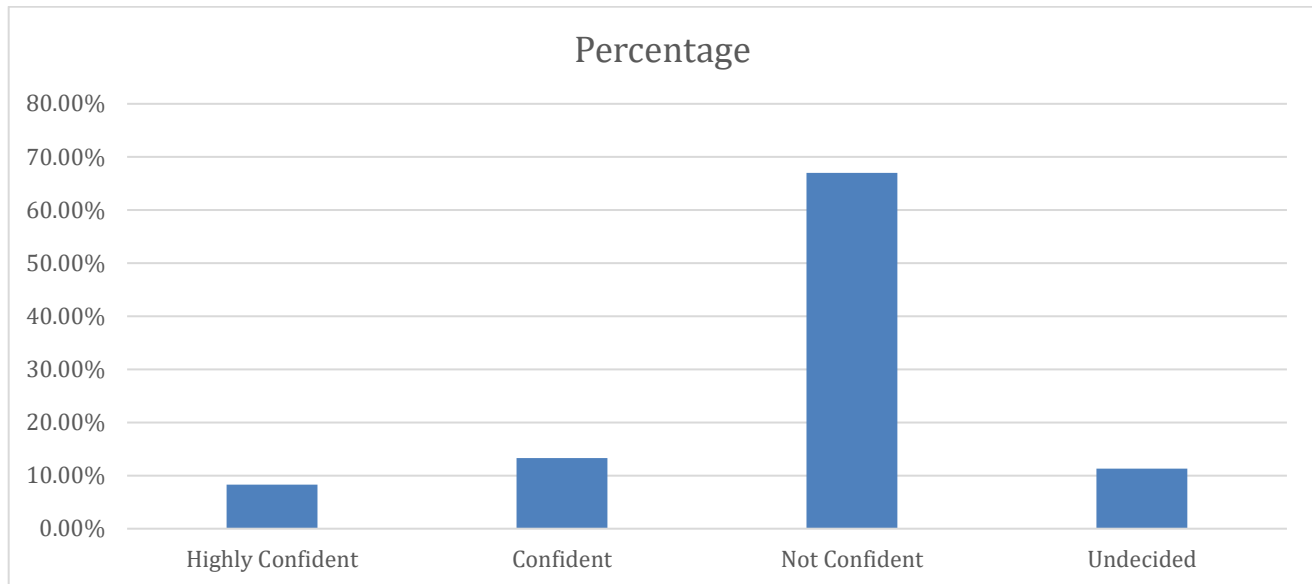
### Method Of Data Collection

Six hundred (600) structured questionnaires were administered, and 20 informant interviews were conducted to elicit data from the respondents. The 600 questionnaires constitute the sample size used in the analysis presented in Tables 2–5; each of these tables has a total frequency of 600.

**Table 2: Could you ascertain the level of participation and representation of artisans in the politics of Ondo State?**

| Response         | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------|-----------|------------|
| Highly Confident | 50        | 8.3%       |
| Confident        | 80        | 13.3%      |
| Not Confident    | 402       | 67.0%      |
| Undecided        | 68        | 11.3%      |

**Fig 1: level of participation and representation of artisans in the politics of Ondo State**

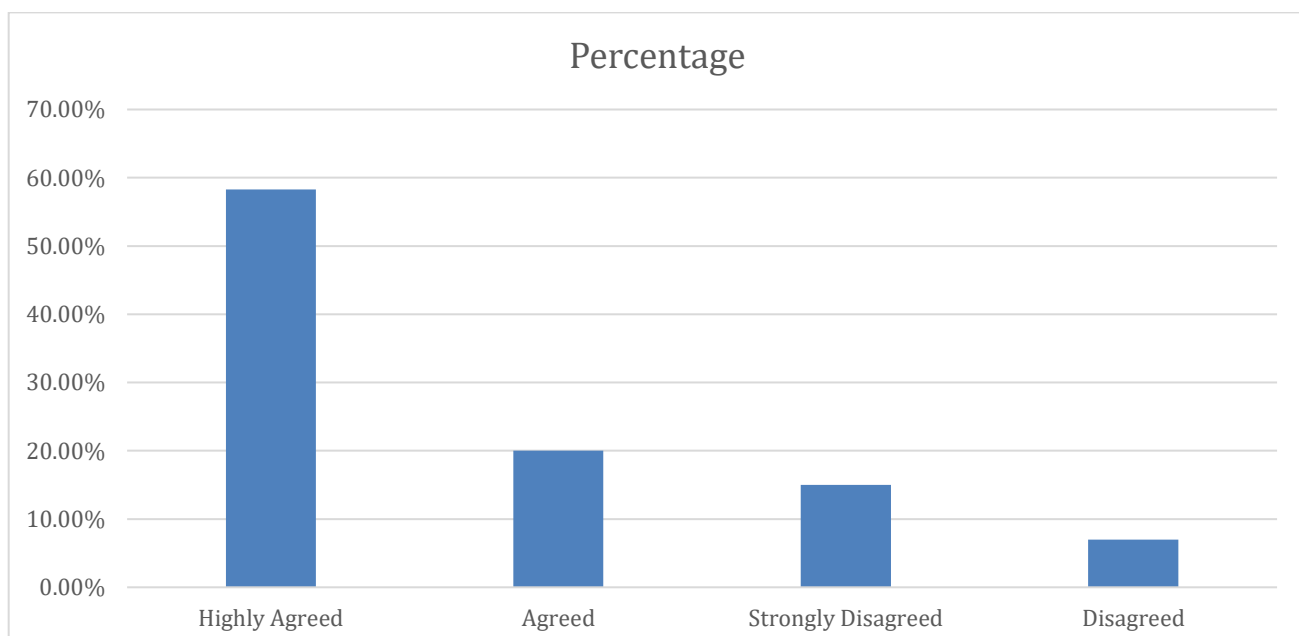


The result from Table 2 and Figure 1 indicated that 50 (8.3%) of the respondents were highly confident and 80 (13.3%) were confident, while 402 (67.0%) were not confident and 68 (11.3%) were undecided. The outcome of the analysis revealed that 402 (67.0%) of the respondents, who formed the majority, were not confident about the level of artisans' participation and representation in the politics of Ondo State.

**Table 3: Are you in support of more active participation and representation of artisans in the politics of Ondo State?**

| Response           | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| Highly Agreed      | 350       | 58.3%      |
| Agreed             | 120       | 20.0%      |
| Strongly Disagreed | 90        | 15.0%      |
| Disagreed          | 40        | 6.7%       |

**Fig 2: Active participation and representation of artisans in the politics of Ondo State**

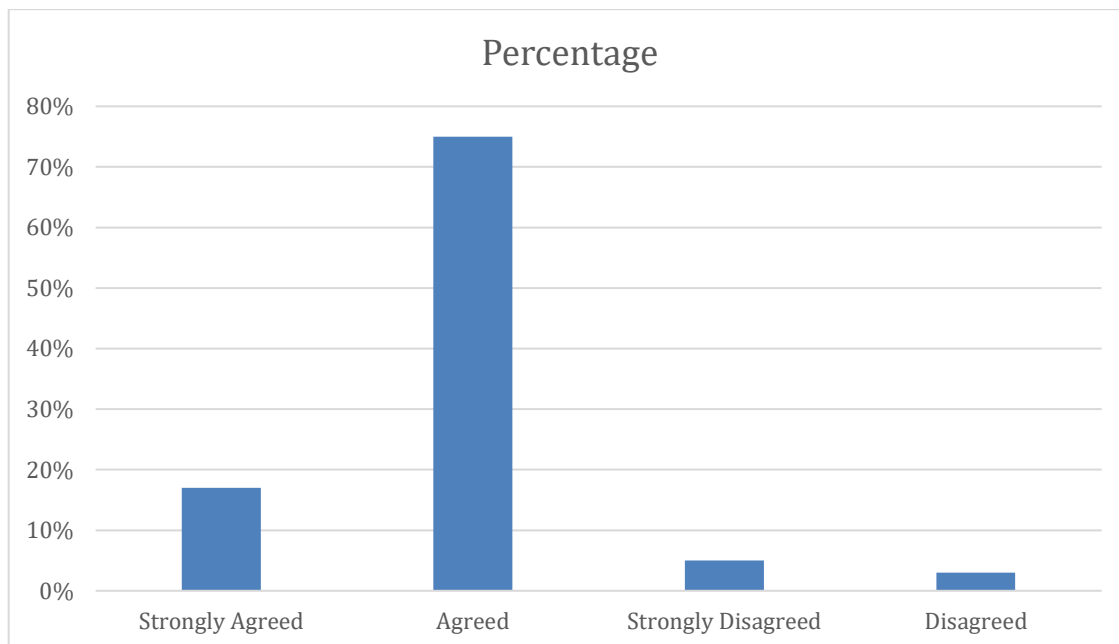


The result from Table 3 and Figure 2 revealed that 350 (58.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 120 (20.0%) agreed, while 90 (15.0%) strongly disagreed and 40 (6.7%) disagreed. Based on the above analysis, 470 (78.3%) of the respondents favored a more active role for artisans in political participation and representation in Ondo State.

**Table 4: Do you agree that artisans' political participation and representation in the politics of Ondo State can be more effective and efficient?**

| Response           | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| Strongly Agreed    | 100       | 16.7%      |
| Agreed             | 450       | 75.0%      |
| Strongly Disagreed | 30        | 5.0%       |
| Disagreed          | 20        | 3.3%       |

**Fig 3: Artisans' political participation and representation in the politics of Ondo State can be more effective and efficient**



From Table 4 and Figure 3 above, the result indicated that 100 (16.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 450 (75.0%) agreed, while 30 (5.0%) strongly disagreed and 20 (3.3%) disagreed. The result revealed that 550 (91.7%) of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that artisans could be more efficient and effective in political participation and representation in Ondo State, indicating a positive perception of their engagement.

**Table 5: Do you accept the notion that artisans are not educated and wise enough to participate and engage in the politics of Ondo State?**

| Response          | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Strongly Accepted | 14        | 2.3%       |
| Accepted          | 23        | 3.8%       |
| Strongly Rejected | 78        | 13.0%      |
| Rejected          | 485       | 80.8%      |

**Fig 4:**

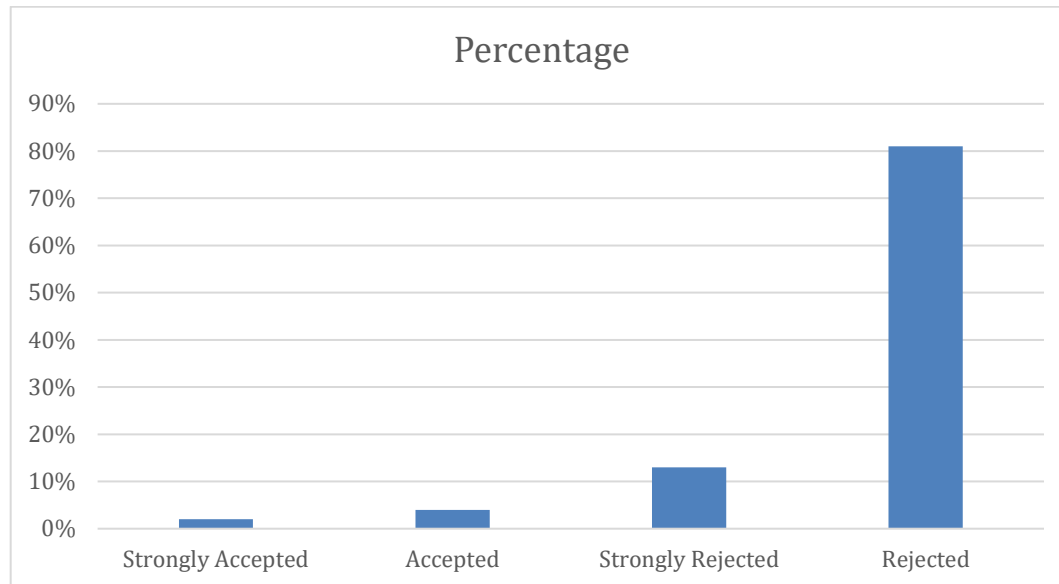


Table 5 and Figure 4 showed that 14 (2.3%) of the respondents strongly accepted and 23 (3.8%) accepted, while 78 (13.0%) strongly rejected and 485 (80.8%) rejected. Based on the above analysis, it is evident that 563 (93.8%) of the respondents rejected or strongly rejected the idea that artisans were not competent in the politics of Ondo State.

### Data Analysis and Technique

Simple percentages, frequency counts, and key-informant interviews were used to analyze the data collected from the fieldwork.

### Summary of Findings

1. Contributed to knowledge on artisans' political participation and representation in the politics of Ondo State between 2018 and 2023.
2. Identified factors responsible for artisans' exclusion from political participation and representation in the politics of Ondo State.
3. Ascertained the level of political participation and representation of artisans in the politics of Ondo State.
4. Assessed the level of efficiency and effectiveness in the political participation and representation of artisans in the politics of Ondo State.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis in Tables 2 to 5 presents the results on artisans' political participation and representation between 2018 and 2023. Table 2 shows that 402 (67%) of the respondents, who constituted the majority, were not confident about the level of artisans' participation and representation in the politics of Ondo State. Table 3 shows that 350 (58.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that more roles should be given to artisans in political participation and representation. Furthermore, Table 4 revealed that 450 (75%) of the respondents agreed that artisans could be more effective and efficient in politics, while Table 5 showed that 485 (81%) of the respondents rejected the view that artisans must be educated and wise enough before they could participate and be represented politically in Ondo State.

### Expected Contributions

The study provided further exposition on the more pragmatic attention where artisans' involvement in politics has been examined. Again, it would add value if the study addresses the level of their participation and representation of artisans in the politics of Ondo-State and Nation at large.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It could therefore be inferred from the empirical research study that artisans have been under-represented, marginalized, and excluded from the politics of Ondo State between 2018 and 2023, as there were very few artisans included in elective and appointive positions. Therefore, the study recommends that political parties should agree to involve and accommodate artisan aspirants so that they can engage fully in the political process and in the politics of Ondo State. An enabling environment through electoral law that recognizes citizens/Nigerians (artisans) should be provided. In recognition of the rights of artisans in Nigeria and across the world, artisans should be encouraged to participate actively in democracy and governance as a form of human capital development that will enhance the systemic representation needed for the overall growth of politics in Ondo State and Nigeria as a whole.

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