

## Political Communication: A Panacea to under-development in the South Eastern Nigeria

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### Abstract

The study focuses on political communication: A panacea to under-development in the South-East geo-political zone. A survey research design was adopted for the study. The population is made up of members of major political parties in the zone and political stakeholders in the South East geo-political zone. Simple random sampling techniques was used to sample five hundred respondents in the South-East zone. The instrument for data collection is the questionnaire which has eighteen (18) items designed to elicit information on political communication: A panacea to under-development in the South-East zone of Nigeria. The instrument was validated by two experts in political science at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra state. The mean statistics was used to analyze the data collected. The findings of the study showed that the nature of under-development in the South-East includes; poor road network, inadequate security of lives and property, the South-East has no key political positions in Nigerian government, corruption, economic poverty, inadequate infrastructural facilities among others. The research study discovered that rotation of key political positions among the geo-political zones, political socialization of the people of the zone, the use of mass media will address the issue of under-development of South-East zone. Relevant recommendations and conclusion were made.

**Keyword:** Political communication, under development, Political office, political socialization and mass media

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## Introduction

Political sensitization can immensely promote political rights. Political rights can be fully exercised in a true democratic state and peaceful atmosphere where freedom of political participation and freedom of expression is not curtailed through oppressive and repressive policies, decrees and laws. Political rights are constitutionally provided and protected for the full exercise by citizens of a state. According to Ekwunife, Nwachukwu and Ukeje (2021), political rights may not be enforced through coercion, for instance the right to register and vote during general elections, may be realized through extensive sensitization of the citizens on gains of popular participation in political affairs of the state. Political communication can be facilitated through political, socialization, education, and political parties among others. The state must guarantee and protect some rights for her citizens to contribute positively towards national growth and development.

South-Eastern Nigeria is one of the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. It is a zone that is blessed with abundant human and natural resources. Since after Nigeria/Biafra civil war, the zone has stagnated politically, economically and socially. According to Okafor (2013), South-East zone lacks necessary infrastructural facilities such as sea ports, international airports, federal roads, industries and adequate federal government presence. The worst federal roads are located in the South-East, many of them abandoned. The inland ports in the South-East are abandoned. The so-called international airports in the South-East are not sufficiently national to talk of international. According to Osilem and Igwe (2013) the South-East has suffered serious political and economic marginalization, according to them, the South-East has the least number of states, only five states, where as other zones in Nigeria have six states with the North having seven states. The implication is that the South-East receives the least amount of allocation from the federation account and therefore has the least share of national resources. Orisa (2013), observed that the South-East has the lowest number of local government area. The North west has 186, South west 137, the South-South 125 and the South East 95.

The South-East is the only zone that is not represented in political power structure in Nigeria. According to Tambuwal (2013), it is unbelievable that in a country such as Nigeria you can have from number one to number eight without a region being represented in the leadership of the country. From the president to the vice-president to the senate president, to the speaker, deputy senate president, deputy speaker, secretary to the federal government of the federation, you don't have one single individual from the South-Eastern Nigeria. He vehemently

condemned the marginalization of the South-Eastern Nigeria which has resulted to the zone backwardness and under-development.

However, Mezieobi (2014), Nwaugwu (2010) and Wali (2014) have advocated the use of political communication as a solution to the development of the South-East Nigeria. Political communication entails communicating to the people political norms and values that will promote development. Political communication includes political socialization, political re-awakening, and political sensitization. According to Ukaegbu, Amadi and Njuku (2014), political communication will inculcate in the people of the South-East of Nigeria their political rights such as the right to vote, the right to contest elections, the right to belong to a political party of one's choice and also belong to any pressure group of one's interest, the right to freedom of expression through media like newspaper, radio or television. Political right gives the citizens of the South-East freedom to be involved in the political process of their country, so as to ensure the institutionalization of credible governance that ensures all round development (Okafor and Mbaebie, 2015).

The use of socio-political organizations such as Ohaneze Ndi Igbo, South-East youths organizations, political parties, non-governmental organizations, South-East traditional rulers forum, mass media among others, are agents of political communication that can be used to mobilize South-East political stakeholders, politicians, elites, investors to galvanize sustainable socio-economic development in the zone.

The imbalances in the infrastructural facilities in different geo-political zones in Nigeria are some of the causes of under-development of South-East, Nigeria. Apart from political and economic marginalization of South-East zone, politics of god-fatherism has kept South-East zone backward in all aspects of development. Okafor (2013), sees politics of godfatherism as a self-seeking individual out there to use the government for his own selfish purposes by sponsoring candidates into position of power with the view of milking the state treasury through them. The cost of this incident is enormous to the state. What usually obtains is that the godson is usually at pains to satisfy the whims and caprices of the godfather among other competing demands on the scarce resources of the government, the interests of the large number of citizens are seriously undermined.

Since the creation of Anambra state in the South-East geo-political zone by the military administration of General Ibrahim Babangida in 1991, development in the state had been crippled by the activities of the 'godfathers' who has held the state in hostage (Gideon, 2005).

Anambra state has remained backward inspite of the huge allocation from the federal government.

Furthermore, corruption among political office holders in the South-East has kept the geo-political zone backward and undeveloped. Mezieobi (2013), observed that corruption among political office holders in the South-East has kept the area under-developed. In Abia state in the South-East, Nigeria, salaries of workers are owed for over one year, there are glaring evidences of diversion of public funds for private use. Okeke (2003), asserted that huge amount of scarce resources earmarked for development projects are siphoned and converted to private use. Contracts are unilaterally awarded by certain officials in the government with little or no regard for the necessity of such a project. These white elephant projects do a lot of harm to the economic life of the South-East zone.

High level of insecurity in the South-East which many stake holders in the zone have alleged to be politically motivated, have scared away both foreign and local investors. Many prominent citizens in the zone have been kidnapped for ransom, some were still killed even after collecting the ransom. The loss of lives and material resources as a result of insecurity since the past few years according to Igbuzor (2011), has been alarming. Security monitoring agency report between 2009 and 2012, about 2,800 lives had been lost to militia insurgency (Adeyemo, 2011). Also, within 2021 and 2022 about five thousand lives had been lost to herdsmen attack and unknown gunmen in the South-East geo-political zone of Nigeria (Trottier, 2022). The data base of orphans and widows caused by insecurity in the South-East Nigeria has grown rapidly. As a result of this, money from international organizations, charitable organizations and individuals which are supposed to be channeled to human capital development have been deployed to the rehabilitation of families of the casualties destroyed by unknown gunmen there by causing a huge loss of revenue and consequently undevelopment of the South-East.

The underdevelopment of the South-East geo-political zone has resulted to increase in social-vices such as armed robbery, kidnapping of citizens, violence, political thuggery and high rate of poverty. Emeka (2014) and Mezieobi (2014) have lamented on the increase in hunger and poverty in the region. According to them, the activities of the militant groups such as Independent Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) have increased insecurity which has resulted to economic poverty in the zone.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. What are the natures of under-development in the South-East zone?
2. What are the effects of under-development in the South-East zone?
3. How can under-development of South-East zone be addressed?

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population is made up of members of the major political parties in the zone which include; All Peoples Congress (APC), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Labour Party (LP) and All Progress Grand Alliance (APGA) and political stakeholders in the five states in the South-East geo-political zone. Using simple random sampling techniques, five hundred respondents in the South-East geo-political zone were sampled for the study

The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire which has **18** items designed to elicit information from politicians and political stakeholders on the issues of under-development of South-East geo-political zone of Nigeria. The instrument was validated by two experts in political science at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra state, Nigeria and Imo State University, Owerri, Nigeria. The reliability of the instrument was determined through the measure of internal consistency of the items. The Cronbach Alpha was used to establish the internal consistency of 0.80 and it was considered reliable. For data analysis, the research questions were answered using mean. Mean of 2.5 and above is said to be high and effective and those below 2.5 are said to be low and ineffective.

Results

The following are the results of the data analysis.

**Research Question 1:** What re the nature of under-development in the South-East Zone?

**Table 1:** Mean rating scores on the nature of under-development in the South-East Zone.

S/N	ITEMS	$\overline{X}$	REMARK
1	Poor road network	3.3	Accepted
2	Inadequate security of lives and property	3.8	Accepted
3.	South-East has the lest number of states in Nigeria	2.8	Accepted
4	South-East has the least numbers of local government in Nigeria	3.3	Accepted
5	The South-East has no key political positions in	2.5	Accepted

	government		
6	Abandoned projects	2.8	Accepted
7	Economic poverty	3.3	Accepted
8	Corruption	2.8	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The result presented in table one shows that items 1-8 were rated high by the respondents. This was clearly indicated from their respective mean scores of 3.3, 3.8, 2.8, 3.3, 2.5, 2.8, 3.3 and 2.8 which are above the criterion of acceptance fixed at 2.5 and above. It means that the nature of under-development in the South-East zone are poor road networks, inadequate security of lives and property, has least number of states in Nigeria, has least number of local government in Nigeria, it has no key positions in government, economic poverty, corruption and many key projects abandoned.

**Research Question 2:** What are the effects of under-development in the South-East zone?

**Table 2:** Mean rating scores on the effects of under-development in the South-East zone?

S/N	ITEMS	$\bar{X}$	REMARK
9	Increase in social vices	2.8	Accepted
10	Politically motivated abduction and killing	2.5	Accepted
11	Exit of foreign and local investors as a result of insecurity	3.8	Accepted
12	High mortality rate	3.3	Accepted
13	Emergence of militant groups agitating for political independence	3.8	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The result presented in table two shows that items 9-13 were rated high by the respondents. This was clearly indicated from their respective mean scores of 2.8, 2.5, 3.8, 3.3 and 3.8 which are above the criterion of acceptance fixed at 2.5 and above. It means that the effects of under-development in the South-East zone include increase in social vices, politically motivated abduction and killings, exit of foreign and local investors as a result of insecurity, high mortality rate and emergence of militant groups agitating for political independence.

**Research Question 3:** How can under-development of the South-East zone be addressed?

**Table 2:** Mean rating scores on how under-development of the South-East zone be addressed?

S/N	ITEMS	$\bar{X}$	REMARK
14	Rotation of key political positions among the geo-political zones in Nigeria.	3.8	Accepted
15	Political socialization of the people of the South-East zone.	3.3	Accepted
16	The need for socio-political organizations in the zone to speak with one voice	2.8	Accepted
17	The South-East governors, traditional rulers forum should attract local and foreign investors in the area.	2.5	Accepted
18	The use of the mass media, political stakeholders to sensitize the federal government on the issue of under-development of the zone.	3.3	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The result presented in table three shows that items 14-18 were rated high by the respondents. This was clearly indicated from their respective mean scores of 3.8, 3.3, 2.8, 2.5 and 3.3 which are above the criterion of acceptance fixed at 2.5 and above. It means that the under-development of the South-East zone can be addressed by rotation of key political positions among geo-political zones in Nigeria, political socialization of the people of the South-East zone, the need for socio-political organizations in the zone to speak with one voice, the South-East governors, traditional rulers forum should attract local and foreign investors in the zone, and the use of the mass media, political stakeholders to sensitize the federal government on the issue of under-development of the South-East zone.

**Discussion of Findings**

The result of the analysis of research question one shows that the nature of under-development in the South-East zone includes; poor road network, inadequate security of lives and property, it has the least number of states in Nigeria, the least number of local government, it has no key political positions in government and abandoned projects. These findings are in line with Okafor (2013), who observed that the South-East zone lacks necessary infrastructural facilities such as Sea ports, good roads, industries among others.

The result of the analysis of research question two shows that the effects of under-development in the South-East zone include increase in social vices, politically motivated abduction and killings, exit of foreign and local investors as a result of insecurity, high mortality rate, corruption and emergence of militant groups agitating for political



independence. These findings are in agreement with Mezieobi (2013), who asserted that corruption among political office holders in the South-East has kept the area under-developed. The result of the analysis of research question three shows that the under-development of the South-East can be addressed through rotation of key political positions among the geo-political zones in Nigeria, political socialization of the people of South-East, the need for socio-political organizations in the zone to speak in one voice, the use of the mass media to sensitize the federal government on the issue of under-development of the zone among others. These findings are in agreement with Mezieobi (2014), Nwaugwu (2010), and Wali (2014), who have advocated for the use of political communication and as solution to the development of the South-East. Political communication entails communicating to the people political norms and values that will promote development such as political socialization, political re-awakening and political sensitization.

### **Conclusion**

The South-East is the least developed among the geo-political zones in Nigeria. South-East has suffered the worst economic marginalization, the zone lacks necessary infrastructural facilities such as seaports, international air ports, road networks, industries and it has the least number of states and local governments. Politically motivated insecurity has scared away both local and foreign investors in the zone. Many prominent citizens in the zone have been kidnapped for ransoms, some have been killed after collecting the ransom by unknown gunmen. The South-East has no voice in the present leadership in Nigeria. It is unbelievable that in a country such as Nigeria, you can have from number one to number eight without the South-East being represented, this has resulted to the zone being backward and under-developed. The use of political communication such as political socialization, political re-awakening, and political sensitization will reverse the ugly trend of under-development in the zone. The active roles of South-East traditional rulers, governors forum, socio-political organizations such as Igbo youths forum, Ohanaeze ndigbo, mass media will definitely change the narrative of the under-development of South-East zone of Nigeria.



## Recommendations

Based on the issues highlighted, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. More states and local governments should be created in the South-East geo-political zone of Nigeria.
2. There is need to rotate the key political positions such as president, senate president, speakers of the house of Assembly, Secretary to the federal government among others.
3. There is need for socio-political organizations such as oha-neze ndigbo, igbo youths forum to speak in one voice.
4. The South-East traditional ruler's, forum, governor's forum, should attract local and foreign investors in the zone.
5. The use of mass media in English and local languages to sensitize the people, government on the issues of marginalization and under-development in the zone.
6. High level of insecurity in the zone should be tackled. There is need for poverty alleviation, free and compulsory basic education to check the rising cases of insecurity in the zone.

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