**A MULTIFACETED STUDY ON EMOTIONS AS MOTIVATORS AND BIASES IN POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT.**

**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION**

**• BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Emotions have captivated the human mind for centuries, sparking philosophical debates and scientific investigations since the 18th century. Their influence on our thoughts, decisions, and actions is undeniable, shaping our perception of the world and driving us towards specific goals. This influence extends to the realm of politics, where emotions play a pivotal role in shaping public opinion, mobilizing support, and influencing the course of history. Behrouz (2016) defined influence as the power to affect, control or manipulate something or someone. Influence is the capacity or power of persons or things to be a compelling force on or produce effects on the actions, behaviour and opinions of others. It is also the power to change or affect someone or something, the power to cause changes without directly forcing them to happen (Pedraza, 2016).

In the sphere of politics, emotions are not merely passive bystanders; they are active participants, shaping how we perceive political information, form opinions, and engage in political activities. Our views are shaped by our emotions, and that we can better understand and resolve political conflicts by understanding the underlying emotions. The way we consume news influences our political attitudes and behaviour. As people who tend to watch news coverage of violence tend to be more pessimistic about the state of the world and more supportive of punitive policies.

Early philosophers, like David Hume, recognized emotions as the driving force behind human behaviour. He argued that emotions rather than reason, are the primary motivators of our actions. Charles Darwin further explored this concept, highlighting the evolutionary significance of emotions in survival and adaptation.

In ancient times, emotions like fear and anger were often employed to mobilize support and sway public opinion. The Roman concept of “Pax Romana” for instance, aimed to promote stability and unity, while revolutionaries incited fear and resentment against oppressive regimes.

The on-going conflict in Ukraine is a complex and tragic event, and it is impossible to fully understand it without considering the role of emotions. Fear has been a powerful motivator for Russia and Ukraine. The fear of NATO expansion justifies Russia invasion of Ukraine, while Ukraine on the other hand has used fear to mobilize its population and gather international support.

**• STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

The excessive emotionality in political discourse poses a significant threat to rational decision-making, social harmony, and societal progress. Over the years, it has been proved that humans are rational and irrational in their decision-making. The rise of social media and the proliferation of information, regardless of its accuracy, have amplified this issue. Citizens are often bombarded with conflicting narratives, making it difficult to discern fact from fiction and contributing to a climate of mistrust and polarization. This has led to the decline in public trust in political institutions and a decrease in constructive political engagement.

A recent survey by the Edelman Trust Barometer (2023) found that only 46% of respondents worldwide trust their governments. The tone of political discourse has taken a more emotional turn, heated rhetoric, personal attacks and a lack of respect for opposing viewpoints. Experience has shown that politics have continued to suffer lack of trust, polarization and disengagement in political activities and that growth indices are having a downward slope. This has brought the pertinent question: Are there enough measures and controls to curb this excessive emotionality and what measures can be taken to promote rational discourse inpolitical settings?

As Nassim Nicholas Taleb (2012) warns, ‘The more a society drowns its citizens in emotions, the more likely it is to control them’.

**• RESEARCH QUESTIONS.**

The study will be guided by the following research questions.

• How do emotions influence the perceived costs and benefits of political engagement?

• What factors moderate the relationship between emotions and political engagement?

• What are the effects of emotional biases on political polarisation?

**• OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of the study are to:

• examine the range of emotions that motivate political engagement.

• review the factors that moderate the relationship between emotions and political engagement.

• assess the effect of emotional biases on political polarization.

**• RESEARCH HYPOTHESES.**

Also, in line with the objectives and research questions are the hypotheses of this study.

**H1.** Positive emotions like hope during political activities boost perceived benefits and lower perceived costs, leading to increased participation compared to negative emotions like anger.

H2. Whether positive or negative, the impact of emotions on political engagement can be strengthened or weakened by individual factors like personality and coping mechanisms

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.**

This research has significant implications for various stakeholders, including:

• Provide valuable insights for policy makers and political leaders in developing strategies to promote informed and inclusive political participation.

• Inform the design of the effective interventions and educational programs that promote emotional intelligence and critical thinking skills in the political sphere.

• Contribute to the development of new theories and frameworks for understanding the complex interplay between the emotions, cognition, and political behaviour.

**1.7 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This study examines the multifaceted influence of emotions on political engagement. It will consider the effects on politics in Nigeria especially her contemporary political system.

**1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS.**

**EMOTIONS:** A person’s internal state of being and involuntary physiological response to an object or a situation, based on or tied to physical object or a situation, based on or tied to physical state and sensory data.

**POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT:**  The act of participating in the political process, including voting, contacting elected officials, and attending protests.

**CULTURAL VARIATIONS:** Differences in the way emotions are expressed and interpreted across different cultures.

**COGNITIVE BIASES:** Errors in thinking that can lead to irrational decisions and judgements.

**1.9 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY**

The study is divided into five (5) chapters.

**Chapter One: Introduction**

• Background of the study

• Statement of the problem

• Research questions

• Objective of the study

• Research hypotheses

• Significance of the study

• Scope of study

• Organization of study

**Chapter Two: Literature Review**

• This chapter evaluates the works of other researchers on the subject, their approaches, and researcher’s criticism of their stance where necessary.

**Chapter Three: Methodology**

• Thischapter focuses on the methodology of the study, including the research design, participant selection, data collection methods (e.g., interviews, questionnaires) and data analysis procedures.

**Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Results**

• This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected through interviews and questionnaires. It details the findings of the study and interprets their meaning in relation to the research questions and objectives

**Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations**

• This chapter summarizes the key finding of the study, draws conclusions based on the results, and provides recommendations for future research or action.

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