



ISRG PUBLISHERS

Abbreviated Key Title: ISRG J Edu Humanit Lit

ISSN: 2584-2544 (Online)

Journal homepage: <https://isrgpublishers.com/isrgjehl/>

Volume – II Issue – IV (July-August) 2025

Frequency: Bimonthly



Regionalism in Politics and its Impact on the Role of Civil Society in Promoting Good Governance in Bo District, Southern Sierra Leone.

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| Received: 19.08.2025 | Accepted: 23.08.2025 | Published: 27.08.2025

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Abstract

Civil society is a crucial pillar of democratic governance, operating as a sphere between families and the state. It encompasses private media, non-governmental political parties, and non-profit organizations that promote participation, accountability, and transparency. In established democracies, civil society strengthens good governance; however, its effectiveness is challenged when politics is influenced by regionalism. This study investigates the role of civil society in addressing regionalism in politics and its implications for good governance in Bo District, Southern Sierra Leone.

Using random sampling, 120 respondents were interviewed from a target population of 174,369, with a calculated sample size of 73 at a 90% confidence level. The sample included 70 males (65%) and 50 females (35%). Findings revealed diverse recommendations for minimizing regionalism in politics. Specifically, 26% of respondents advocated for stronger election laws addressing regional bias, 21% emphasized stopping politicians from promoting tribal politics, and 19% recommended legal sanctions against divisive rhetoric. Additionally, 17% suggested sensitization campaigns, 10% called for equitable distribution of resources, and 8% recommended improved rural education.

Although civil society institutions have attempted interventions such as public education, promoting democratic values, and discouraging tribalism through the media, these measures have had limited success. Regionalism continues to persist, fueled by cultural practices, illiteracy, limited funding, tribalism, and nepotism. These challenges significantly undermine the effectiveness of civil society in promoting unity and sustaining good governance in Bo District.

Keywords: Regionalism, Civil Society, Politics, Good Governance, Democratic Participation, Bo District, Sierra Leone

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2002, Sierra Leone emerged from a 9-year civil war as possibly the poorest country in the world in terms of per capita income and ranked last in terms of the United Nations Human Development Index Allouche (2017). The political and economic history of the country since its independence in 1961 can be easily summarized. After the early governments of Sir Milton Margai and his brother Sir Albert Margai, successive leaders of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), the country was ruled from 1967 by the All People's Congress Party (APC) until it was ejected from power by a military coup in 1992. During this period, under the presidencies of Siaka Stevens until 1985 and subsequently Joseph Momoh, the economy declined almost monotonically and state institutions collapsed. The coup, led by a group of young officers who formed the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), was in response to the widening civil war, which began with the incursion across the border from Liberia of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in March 1991. The disintegration of state institutions created a vacuum that enabled the RUF to succeed easily. Though initially very far from a formidable military machine, they pushed through an open door. There is now an extensive academic literature on the war and its causes Asangna (2017). which links it closely to the collapse of the state Clayton, et al (2015) reproduces a quote from Abu Turay, which rings very true by the end of Momoh's rule; he had stopped paying civil servants, teachers, and even Paramount Chiefs. The central government had collapsed, and then, of course, we had border incursions, resulting in all the automatic weapons pouring over the border from Liberia. The NPRC, the rebels, and the soldiers-turned-rebels all amount to the chaos one expects when the government disappears. None of them is the cause of our problems, but they are symptoms. Wilke, (2015) surveyed ex-combatants and non-combatants to investigate the motivations of those who fought for the RUF (although it is worth noting that 88% of the ex-RUF combatants reported having been forcibly recruited). Grievances also seem to have been important in creating the circumstances that led to the war. These stemmed from the exclusion inherent in the patrimonial style of politics that characterized the country before 1991, as well as from more deeply seated animosities rooted in the local traditional political and economic structures of the society, such as the dominance of chiefs over local resources and assets. In support of some of these ideas, Watts, et al . (2017) found that proxies for poverty and lack of access to education predict voluntarily joining both the RUF and the civil defense groups that fought against the RUF. Most scholars also emphasize the lure of diamond wealth and loot as sustaining the war, though most reject this as an essential source of the war. Since 2002, the country, with the help of the international community, has been rebuilding itself. A democratic election in May 2002 reappointed Ahmad Tejan Kabbah as president with 70% of the vote (he had previously been elected in 1996) and gave his Sierra Leone People's Party.

Acemoglu and Robinson (2012), in *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*, argue that the success or failure of nations is largely determined by the nature of their political and economic institutions. They distinguish between inclusive institutions, which promote participation, accountability, and shared prosperity, and extractive institutions, which concentrate power and resources in the hands of a few elites. Applying this framework to Bo District, regionalism in politics can be viewed as a mechanism through which extractive institutions are reinforced. Political leaders may use regional and ethnic loyalties to secure

power, thereby undermining inclusivity and weakening the effectiveness of civil society in promoting good governance. This dynamic creates an environment where governance serves narrow interests rather than the collective welfare of citizens.

Bangura (2020) examines the challenges and prospects of civil society in advancing governance across West Africa, with insights that are highly relevant to the case of Bo District in Sierra Leone. He argues that civil society organizations (CSOs) often operate in politically polarized contexts where regional and ethnic loyalties complicate their ability to remain neutral actors in governance processes. This perspective aligns with the dynamics in Sierra Leone, where regionalism significantly influences how citizens perceive and engage with CSO activities. Bangura further highlights that despite these challenges, civil society remains a critical vehicle for promoting accountability, transparency, and citizen participation, particularly in post-conflict states striving for democratic consolidation. In relation to the present study, his work underscores both the obstacles and opportunities facing CSOs in mitigating the effects of regionalism while advancing good governance in Bo District.

Kamara (2018) explores the interplay between regionalism and the quest for political legitimacy in Sierra Leone, highlighting how deep-rooted regional and ethnic affiliations continue to shape political competition and governance outcomes. He argues that political legitimacy in Sierra Leone is often contested along regional lines, with leaders relying heavily on regional loyalty to consolidate power rather than on transparent or accountable governance practices. This analysis is particularly relevant to Bo District, where regionalism influences how citizens engage with both political actors and civil society organizations (CSOs). For the present study, Kamara's work emphasizes that regionalism not only undermines the neutrality of governance structures but also complicates the efforts of CSOs to function as impartial advocates of accountability and good governance. His insights provide a critical lens for understanding why regional loyalties remain a persistent barrier to inclusive democratic governance in Sierra Leone.

Sesay (2019) analyzes the role of civil society in Sierra Leone's democratization process after the civil war, emphasizing both the opportunities and constraints faced by these organizations in shaping governance. He notes that while CSOs have been instrumental in promoting peacebuilding, citizen participation, and accountability, their effectiveness is often undermined by political interference, donor dependency, and the persistence of regional and ethnic divides. In the context of Bo District, Sesay's arguments shed light on how regionalism continues to challenge the perceived neutrality of CSOs, sometimes limiting their ability to act as independent watchdogs of governance. His study is particularly relevant to the present research as it underscores that the success of democratization and good governance in Sierra Leone is closely tied to the capacity of civil society to transcend regional loyalties and build inclusive platforms for citizen engagement.

Bangura (2020) provides a comprehensive analysis of the role of civil society in governance across West Africa, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities facing civic actors in fragile democracies. He argues that civil society organizations (CSOs) often operate in environments marked by political instability, weak institutions, and entrenched regional loyalties, which constrain their ability to function as impartial promoters of accountability and transparency. However, Bangura also stresses that CSOs

remain essential for advancing democratic governance, particularly through civic education, advocacy, and community mobilization. In the case of Bo District, Sierra Leone, his work is directly relevant as it illustrates how regionalism can undermine the perceived neutrality of CSOs, while also affirming their potential to bridge political divides and foster good governance when they adopt inclusive and community-driven approaches.

Kamara (2018) critically examines how regionalism has historically shaped the struggle for political legitimacy in Sierra Leone, demonstrating that political authority is often consolidated through regional loyalties rather than through institutional accountability. His study shows that politicians frequently depend on ethnic and regional identities to secure power, thereby reinforcing divisions that weaken democratic practices. This perspective is highly relevant to Bo District, where regional affiliations continue to influence both political behavior and the operations of civil society organizations (CSOs). For the present research, Kamara's work highlights the challenge CSOs face in navigating politically charged environments, as their efforts to promote good governance may be undermined by perceptions of regional bias. His analysis underscores the enduring impact of regionalism on governance and the need for CSOs to adopt neutral, inclusive strategies to foster legitimacy and citizen trust.

Sesay (2019) investigates the role of civil society in Sierra Leone's democratization process following the civil war, highlighting how CSOs have contributed to peacebuilding, political participation, and governance reforms. He notes, however, that their work is constrained by weak institutional capacity, limited resources, and the persistence of regional and ethnic divisions that shape political engagement. These challenges often undermine the perceived neutrality of CSOs, making their interventions susceptible to misinterpretation as partisan or regionally biased. In relation to Bo District, Sesay's findings are significant because they show how regionalism continues to shape citizen trust in civil society and influence the extent to which CSOs can effectively promote transparency and accountability. His work underscores that for democratization and good governance to succeed in Sierra Leone, CSOs must overcome regional divisions by fostering inclusive and community-driven approaches that cut across political boundaries.

Abdullah (2017) examines the complex relationship between democracy, governance, and regionalism in Sierra Leone, arguing that regional and ethnic loyalties remain central to political organization and power distribution. He contends that these divisions not only influence voting behavior but also undermine institutional development and the establishment of impartial governance structures. This analysis is particularly relevant to Bo District, where regionalism continues to shape public perceptions of both political actors and civil society organizations (CSOs). For this study, Abdullah's work underscores how regionalism acts as a structural barrier to good governance by weakening accountability and eroding trust in institutions meant to serve the public interest. His insights highlight the critical need for CSOs to operate as neutral and inclusive actors, capable of transcending regional divides in order to promote democratic consolidation and sustainable governance in Sierra Leone.

Bangura (2020) provides an in-depth exploration of the role of civil society in shaping governance in West Africa, focusing on the challenges that hinder their effectiveness and the prospects for strengthening democratic institutions. He argues that civil society organizations (CSOs) often operate in environments dominated by

political patronage, weak state institutions, and regional or ethnic loyalties that constrain their neutrality and legitimacy. Despite these obstacles, Bangura emphasizes that CSOs remain vital actors in promoting accountability, transparency, and citizen participation, particularly in fragile democracies. Applied to Bo District in Sierra Leone, his insights are significant as they reveal how regionalism complicates the work of CSOs by reinforcing public perceptions of bias, while also highlighting the potential of these organizations to build trust and advance good governance when they engage inclusively and independently across political and regional divides

Sesay (2019) critically examines the contributions of civil society to democratization in Sierra Leone's post-war context, noting both their achievements and the structural challenges that limit their effectiveness. He highlights how civil society organizations (CSOs) have been instrumental in advancing peacebuilding, promoting civic participation, and fostering accountability, but he also stresses that their work is often undermined by donor dependency, weak institutional capacity, and the pervasive influence of regional and ethnic loyalties. These dynamics, according to Sesay, create difficulties in sustaining CSO neutrality and public trust, particularly in politically polarized environments. In the case of Bo District, his analysis is directly relevant, as it shows how regionalism continues to shape citizen perceptions of CSOs and influence the success of their governance initiatives. Sesay's work therefore underscores the importance of CSOs adopting inclusive, community-driven strategies that cut across regional divisions in order to effectively promote good governance.

Patrimonial Rule and Institutional Transformation in African Politics

Though the deep roots of the phenomenon are therefore complex, what is clear is that the strategy is complementary to certain types of political institutions Belozarov (2023). Throughout Africa, the creation of patrimonial rule went hand in hand with changes in political institutions. This involved a strengthening of the executive, which was achieved by a move away from parliamentary to presidential constitutions. One can think of several reasons why being a president was more attractive than being a prime minister for politicians such as Stevens. Still, there is a natural distinction between presidential and patrimonial Hanson & Kopstein (2022). It also involved a reduction in accountability, which was implemented by the suspension of democracy. During the consolidation, patrimonial power was also concentrated in the central state and capital city. Anten, et al (2022) tend to emphasize fundamentals such as population density and resource endowments as the main reasons for the lack of incentives to build states, rather than the institutional inheritance of colonialism.

Colonial Legacies, Resource Politics, and the Evolution of Patrimonialism in Sierra Leone

Allouche, (2017) stated that Some of these ideas apply to Sierra Leone. Like most Sub-Saharan African countries, Sierra Leone was arbitrary and, the Western Areas aside, made up of a patchwork of different pre-colonial states and polities with different languages, histories, and cultures. At independence, there was probably little notion of a national identity or agreed rules for structuring the contest for power, and this no doubt led different groups to perceive that the Stakes were very high. Sierra Leone also seems to be well with ideas of the gatekeeper state. centered on Freetown, and of course, the Protectorate was ruled indirectly through a system of chiefs institutionalized by the British in the

1890s. Civilian control of the military was also highly problematic, and Sierra Leone even appears as a case study in Baynham (2021) of a society where the colonial military recruitment policies gave post-independent civilian governments' severe problems. For instance, the British recruited primarily from the South of the country, and this is one of the reasons why the Mende-dominated corps opposed the election.

The APC in 1967 mounted a coup to block the transfer of power. Though Stevens quickly moved to replace Mende officers with northerners, his primary strategy was to emasculate the military, something which proved a disaster when the RUF invaded. This being said, the intensity of patrimonialism in Sierra Leone might not have been anticipated in 1961. For one, unlike most Sub-Saharan African countries, it had a national language, Krio, something which is associated with political stability in Tanzania or with excellent development outcomes in Botswana. Second, though there were distinct ethnicities in Sierra Leone, these were not based on the type of socioeconomic differences seen in Rwanda or Burundi, and at no point does the civil war seem to have degenerated into anything approximating an ethnic conflict. Indeed, though Nyokabi, et al (2017) data show that being Mende does predict membership in the RUF; this effect comes only from those who were coerced into joining the movement. This effect almost certainly stems from the fact that the RUF began in the south of the country, which is more explained by the 13 African countries with easy political rule, and there may have been some other factors that may have exacerbated the intensity of patrimonialism in the country. Most commonly cited is not the extent of natural resources but the form. It is widely observed that the alluvial nature of diamonds and their widespread distribution across the country makes it very difficult for the state to control diamond mining. This breeds illegality, smuggling, and evasion, and as Crawford, & Botchwey, (2017). puts it, it is a situation highly conducive to the maintenance of legal norms and bureaucratic state structures. It seems pretty likely that the failure of the British colonial state and post-independence governments to bring the diamond mining economy under the control of formal state institutions helped to stimulate different ways to control it and extract wealth from it. The contrast with the deep-mined, capital-intensive diamonds of Botswana is interesting.

Another factor often quoted in favor of Sierra Leonean distinctiveness is an undertow of Socioeconomic and political conflicts are missing in most African countries. For example,

According to Richards, (2011) historical roots of the civil war, stemming from egalitarian patterns of access to land and resources, and many have written about the extent of gerontocracy in Sierra Leone and the grievances this created amongst the young men. It is possible that the existence of a large stratum of disillusioned young men also facilitated the creation of patrimonialism has been excluded from local resources, and they may have valued it very highly, as they were being overcharged by the political patrons in Freetown. It may also have been that is an added incentive to undermine the bureaucracy and create a shadow state in the post-the independence period came from the fact that the state inherited from the colonial powers was dominated by Krios, while politics was dominated by people and interests from the former protectorate Ganson & M'cleod (2019). Finally, the fact that the Mende and the Temne, each with about 30% of the population, formed the basis of the two main political parties gave politics a type of location in Liberia and Charles Taylor more than

anything else. Political Economy Fundamentals since 2002, having laid out some possible factors that led to the adoption of patrimonialism in Sierra Leone, let me now turn to the second question: have things changed in Sierra Leone in such a way as to remove the underpinnings of patrimonialism? We can address this question in two ways: one with a general discussion of the changing environment and one with a more specific discussion of how the SLPP and APC regimes have behaved and to what extent this is similar or different from what was observed before 1992.

2. Methodology

The study employs a cross-sectional design with mixed methods of research approaches involving questionnaires. This study also uses a descriptive survey research method. The descriptive survey is chosen for the study because it allows the researcher to study phenomena that do not allow for manipulation of variables Handema, et al (2023). The result of such an investigation makes it possible to find an explanation of the social phenomenon in question. The survey design was used because it provided a means to contextually analyse the role of Civil Society in promoting good governance in the Bo community, Southern Sierra Leone. The research design shall also help in measuring the respondents' attitudes, opinions, habits or any of the variety of education or social issues in a large population.

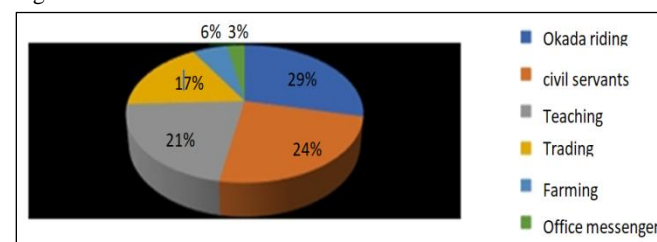
Objective of the Study

1. To find out the Occupational distribution of Respondents
2. To determine the Prevalence of Biasness in politics in the study area
3. To Assess the Magnitude of regional Politics in the Study
4. To determine whether People are involved in politics based on their tribes and regions
5. To examine the Causes that made people to involve in politics based on tribes and Region

Research Objective 1

To find out the Occupational distribution of Respondents

Figure 1



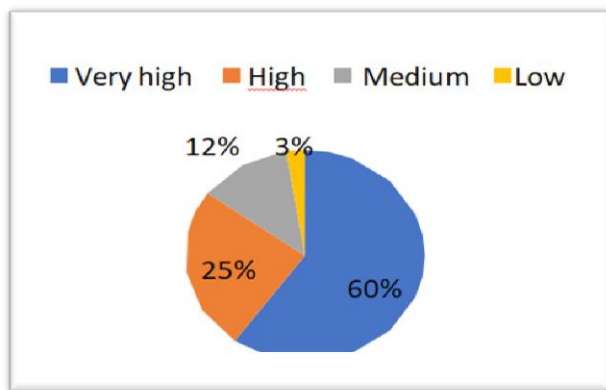
Source: Research Data 2025

Figure 1 reveals that 20 (29%) of the employed population were self-employed by okada riding, 17 (24%) were civil servants, 15 (21%) were teachers, 12 (17%) were traders, 4 (6%) were farmers, and 2 (3%) were office messengers. Thus, a larger number of those employed were Okada riders.

Research Objective 2

To determine the Prevalence of Biasness in politics in the study area

Figure 2

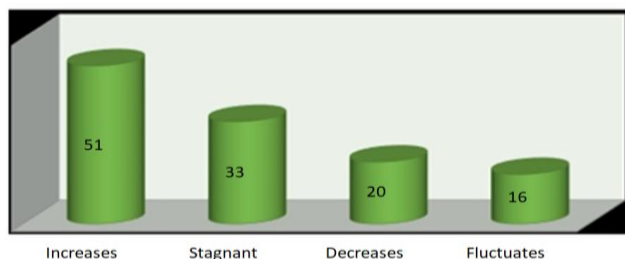


Source: Research Data 2025

Figure 2 showed that 72 (60%) respondents affirmed that the rate of regional politics is very high, 30 (25%) attested that it is high, 15 (12%) believed the rate is medium, and 3 (3%) firmly held that it is low. This manifests that regionalism in politics is practised at a very high rate in the study area.

Research Objective 3

To Assess the Magnitude of regional Politics in the Study
Figure 3

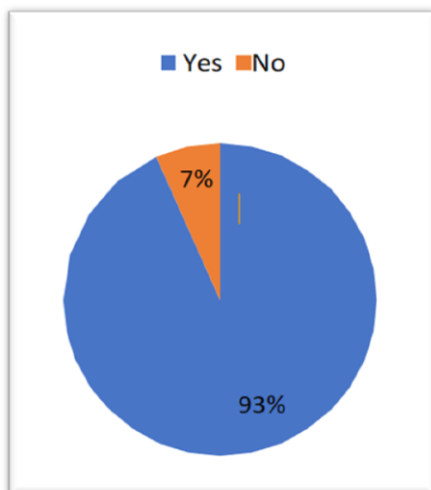


Source: Research Data 2025

According to the graph in Figure 3 above, 51 (42.5%) respondents believed the magnitude of regional politics increases, 33 (27.5%) thought it is stagnant, 20 (17%) felt it is on the decrease, and 16 (13.3%) knew it fluctuates. In summation, the majority of respondents confirmed that regionalism in politics is increasing.

Research Objective 4:

To Determine whether People are involved in politics based on their tribes and regions
Figure 4

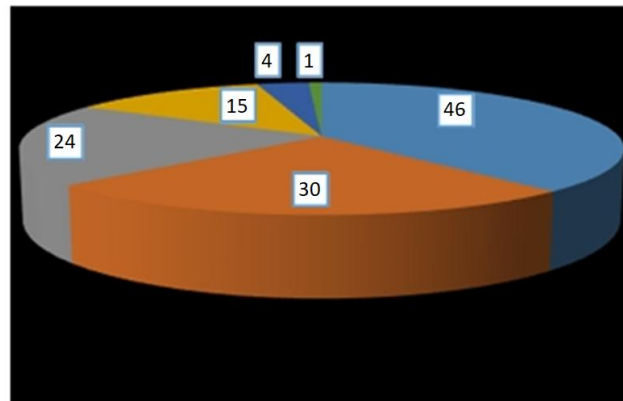


Source: Research Data 2025

Figure 4 above shows that 112 (93%) of those who responded to the questionnaire believed that people involved in politics based on tribal lines and region, while 8 (7%) respondents disagreed with that. This indicates that most people in the study area are involved in politics due to their tribe and region.

Research Objective 5:

To Examine the Causes that made people to involve in politics based on tribes and Region
Figure 5



Source: Research Data 2025

Figure 5 shows the causes that made people get involved in politics based on tribe and region. On In that note, 46 (38%) of the respondents pointed to regional superiority, 30 (25%) believed tribal security, 24 (20%) were sure of enhancing preferential interest, 15 (13%) showed amass Regarding wealth, 4 (3%) respondents said they do not know, and 1 (1%) said our leaders. Overall, all the above are causes that made people get involved in politics based on tribe and region.

3. Result and Discussion

Figure 1 shows the varying levels of political participation in Bo District influenced by regional affiliations. The data indicates that citizens strongly identify with regional political structures, which appears to affect their involvement in local governance initiatives. This aligns with findings by Sesay (2019), who noted that regionalism can both mobilize and polarize political participation in Sierra Leone. The high level of regional influence suggests that civil society organizations (CSOs) may face challenges in promoting inclusive governance, as their initiatives could be perceived as favoring certain regional groups. This underscores the need for CSOs to design programs that are regionally neutral while fostering community engagement

The predominance of Okada riders and traders highlights the growing importance of the informal sector in shaping civic participation and political engagement. As noted by Gyimah-Boadi (2019), informal sector workers are increasingly vocal in political discourse, particularly in contexts where formal employment opportunities are limited. Civil servants and teachers, on the other hand, represent more formalized groups that traditionally play significant roles in civil society through unions and professional associations. Their combined 45% share suggests that state-employed individuals still form a critical part of organized civic activism.

The relatively low representation of farmers (6%) reflects wider trends of rural-to-urban migration and the declining role of agriculture in shaping civil engagement, despite its centrality to

Sierra Leone's economy (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). The marginal presence of office messengers (3%) further underscores the limited influence of low-skilled, low-income groups in political participation.

Overall, the figure suggests that civil society in Bo District is shaped by a mixture of informal sector actors and formal state employees. This composition has important implications for good governance, as it reflects a convergence of grassroots mobilization from informal workers and institutional influence from professional groups. Such diversity can strengthen civic advocacy, but it also highlights the challenges of balancing interests across socio-economic divides.

The findings revealed that biasness was very eminent among others and the practiced was reported to be very high. It was also reported that the practice is on the increase. Additionally, regionalism in politics is not helping in any way as believed by majority of the respondents. Awareness campaign groups have been established against the issue of regionalism politics and several approaches were used such as media engagement, sensitization, focus group discussion, stakeholders' engagement and workshops to educate the public about the negative impact of regionalism in politics.

Figure 2 continue to highlights the extent to which civil society actors are engaged in governance promotion within the district. The data shows that CSO participation is moderate, with some communities demonstrating high engagement while others are minimally involved. This pattern may reflect the interplay between regional political loyalties and access to CSO programs. According to Bangura (2020), regionalism can limit the outreach of civil society initiatives if certain areas are politically marginalized. Therefore, CSOs in Bo District need to adopt strategies that mitigate regional biases to ensure equitable involvement in governance processes.

The figure presents the level of civil society participation in promoting good governance in Bo District against the backdrop of regional political dynamics. The data reveals that while civil society organizations (CSOs) play an active role in fostering accountability, transparency, and citizen engagement, their reach and effectiveness appear to be uneven across different communities. This variation is strongly linked to the influence of regional politics, which continues to shape citizens' trust and willingness to collaborate with CSOs.

The figure suggests that in communities where political and regional identities are more entrenched, CSOs encounter challenges in mobilizing citizens and influencing governance processes. This aligns with Sesay (2019), who argues that regionalism in Sierra Leone often constrains the neutrality of civic actors, as their initiatives may be interpreted through the lens of ethnic or regional allegiance. Similarly, Bangura (2020) emphasizes that CSOs in politically polarized regions must constantly negotiate their legitimacy to maintain credibility across different constituencies.

At the same time, the figure highlights areas where CSOs have succeeded in transcending regional divides by fostering inclusive participation. This supports Kamara's (2018) observation that civil society, when effectively engaged, can act as a counterbalance to regional political dominance by promoting community-driven accountability mechanisms. Thus, Figure 2 underscores the dual reality: while regionalism presents obstacles to good governance in

Bo District, CSOs still retain the potential to mitigate these effects through targeted and impartial interventions.

Figure 3 illustrates respondents' perceptions of the impact of regionalism on the effectiveness of civil society organizations (CSOs) in promoting good governance in Bo District. The data indicates that a significant portion of participants view regional political loyalties as a major barrier to CSO operations, particularly in areas of accountability advocacy, policy monitoring, and citizen mobilization. This suggests that regionalism does not only influence political representation but also shapes how governance interventions by non-state actors are received at the community level.

The findings echo Kamara (2018), who argued that entrenched regional and ethnic loyalties in Sierra Leone create skepticism toward CSO activities, often framing them as politically biased rather than neutral. Similarly, Sesay (2019) notes that regionalism erodes trust in civic institutions, limiting their capacity to function as impartial actors in the governance space. This challenge is evident in Bo District, where respondents associate CSO effectiveness with perceived political alignment.

Nonetheless, the figure also highlights that a segment of respondents believe CSOs can overcome regional divides through community-driven initiatives and grassroots engagement. This supports Bangura's (2020) position that civil society, when it operates independently and inclusively, has the potential to bridge political divides and enhance transparency in governance. The data therefore underscores the dual role of regionalism: while it constrains CSO effectiveness by reinforcing political bias, it simultaneously challenges these organizations to innovate in building credibility and trust across communities.

Figure 4 presents respondents' assessment of the extent to which regionalism influences citizens' trust in civil society organizations (CSOs) as agents of good governance in Bo District. The data reveals that a considerable proportion of participants perceive regional politics as a factor that weakens public confidence in CSO activities. Where regional political loyalties are strong, CSO initiatives are often viewed with suspicion, and their efforts to promote transparency, accountability, and citizen participation are sometimes interpreted through partisan lenses.

This finding is consistent with Abdullah (2017), who argues that in Sierra Leone, regionalism continues to shape social and political interactions, often undermining neutral governance structures. Similarly, Sesay (2019) emphasizes that regional divisions erode the perceived impartiality of civic institutions, thereby limiting their ability to function as trusted mediators between the state and citizens.

However, the figure also shows that a segment of respondents maintain trust in CSOs regardless of regional affiliations, pointing to the potential of these organizations to build legitimacy through inclusive engagement. Bangura (2020) highlights that civil society can overcome regional mistrust by adopting transparent practices, fostering grassroots participation, and ensuring their programs address community needs across political lines. Thus, Figure 4 underscores the importance of CSOs adopting strategies that prioritize neutrality and inclusivity to strengthen governance outcomes in Bo District.

Figure 5 highlights community perceptions of the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in mitigating the negative effects of

regionalism on good governance in Bo District. The data suggests that while regional political loyalties continue to shape citizen engagement, CSOs are increasingly recognized as important actors in promoting dialogue, inclusiveness, and accountability across divided communities. A notable proportion of respondents reported that CSOs have helped to reduce political tensions by facilitating civic education, community sensitization, and advocacy for transparency in local governance.

This finding resonates with Bangura (2020), who asserts that civil society can serve as a bridge in polarized political environments, fostering social cohesion while holding state actors accountable. Similarly, Abdullah (2017) emphasizes that in Sierra Leone's fragile democratic context, CSOs play a vital role in counterbalancing the negative impacts of regionalism by promoting citizen-centered governance structures.

Nevertheless, the figure also reveals skepticism among some respondents, who argue that certain CSOs are themselves perceived as regionally biased or politically aligned. This observation aligns with Sesay (2019), who cautions that civil society in Sierra Leone often struggles with maintaining neutrality in highly politicized contexts. The implication is that for CSOs to maximize their effectiveness in Bo District, they must strengthen their independence, adopt transparent practices, and engage communities across political divides.

Thus, Figure 5 underscores a paradox: while regionalism undermines trust and equitable participation, civil society remains a critical vehicle through which good governance can be nurtured—provided that these organizations maintain neutrality and inclusivity in their operations.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

The study established that regionalism in politics remains a significant barrier to the promotion of good governance in Bo District, Southern Sierra Leone. While civil society serves as an essential instrument in fostering democratic participation, accountability, and transparency, its effectiveness has been undermined by entrenched practices of tribalism, nepotism, and cultural loyalties. Findings revealed that regional bias in elections, uneven resource distribution, and the propagation of divisive political rhetoric hinder the establishment of inclusive governance. Although civil society institutions have attempted strategies such as public education, advocacy campaigns, and media sensitization, their efforts have produced limited results due to challenges including illiteracy, lack of funding, and weak enforcement of legal frameworks. Therefore, unless regionalism in politics is addressed comprehensively, the role of civil society in strengthening good governance will remain constrained.

From the forgoing, it is clear that the roles played by civil society groups are vital in the political, social and economic development of this country. Such roles can be viewed from dimensions viz: Improving the quality of governance, developing the capacity of governments to apply the principles of accountability, transparency and openness; and working towards gaining the commitment of all elected officials, public servants, and NGOs to good governance. CSOs therefore serve as the internal correctional mechanism to check and balance the activities of government to avoid wasteful spending, misappropriation and embezzlement of funds and help determine or prioritize the needs of the people. Therefore, a vibrant

civil society is semi Quinone to the sustenance of any nation's development.

From the research, it could be concluded that regionalism in politics is seriously practiced in the research area despite the fact that various effort has been made to counter such practice. People in this part of the world cast their votes in elections based on regional sentiment and tribal lines. On that note, politicians are quite aware of the fact that people think the country is divided into political party strong holds. The study area is a victim of underdevelopment because politicians believe that whether they develop their communities or not they will be voted in based on tribal or regional sentiments as long as they are given the symbol.

However, the causes that promote the practice of regionalism in politics are illiteracy, nepotism, cultural differences, stereotype and tribalism which is the main cause of regionalism in politics. These causes on the other hand have serious impact such as deprivation, tribal differences in the award of scholarship based on tribe, stereotype, petty jealousy, under development and economic benefit on the people and country as a whole. These impacts show how regionalism in politics can affect large scale of national development in the study area. Additionally, institutions such as Campaign for good governance, open government initiative, attitude and behavioral change secretariat, civil society, fambul tok international and atunda ayenda country wide were established to moderate the issue of regionalism in politics.

These institutions developed several approaches like educating the public about the dangers of regional politics, democratic system of governance, discouraging tribalism through the media so that people can be aware of the negative impacts in engaging into such practices and encourage the spirit of unity among all. These institutions and their approaches have not succeeded in any way since the practice is on the increase in every part of the study area. Furthermore, serious challenges lie on the path of stakeholders in mitigating regionalism such as the cultural practices of people, illiteracy, and lack of funding, tribalism and nepotism. These challenges affected the success of stakeholders in the fight against regionalism in politics to a great extent in the study area.

Recommendations

Below are the following Recommendation and Suggestions;

The possible recommendations put forward by respondents in the bid to mitigate regionalism in politics in the research area calls for government to upgrade the laws that deal with the electioneering process especially regionalism related issues. Respondents recommended on stopping politicians propagating the idea of tribal and regional politics. Legal actions should be put in place against any politicians who preach bad politics especially in the period of elections. Proper and regular sensitization should be done at all levels. Eradication of biasness in the distribution of resources country-wide.

Donor Partners need to strengthen formal civil society groups which have the capacity for major intermediation roles between government and the communities in raising awareness about democracy and exacting accountability. Churches and human rights groups are more likely to defend the democratic order per se and serve as conscience of the nation. Their reputation for non-partisanship can help them perform these roles better.

These organizations can directly bring issues to the public sphere through their prophetic challenges of denouncing abuses and suggesting alternatives. These organizations also have symbolic capital or the power of ritual. They can leverage ritual to be mediators and reconcilers in conflict and can provide an alternative vision or doctrine of a better life. They have to be encouraged to use this symbolic capital or their ability to suggest an alternative to engage in policy processes. They must be capacitated to build their engagement skills and information management capacities. The media can be capacitated to negotiate different subcultures in the public sphere.

The government should enact and enforce stricter laws to curb regionalism, especially in the electoral process. Civil society organizations should intensify sensitization campaigns on the dangers of regional and tribal politics to foster national unity. Fair and equitable allocation of resources across all regions is crucial in reducing political bias and grievances. Stakeholders should provide financial and technical support to empower civil society institutions to operate more effectively. Legal and disciplinary actions should be taken against politicians who promote tribalism or regional politics. Expanding access to quality education, particularly in rural areas, will help reduce illiteracy and promote informed political participation.

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