



Youth Inclusion And Political Participation In Nigeria's 2023 Election

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Abstract: The study aimed to examine barriers and opportunities for youth engagement, as well as develop strategies to enhance their participation in shaping the future of Nigeria through the electoral system. The study holds significant importance for several reasons, some of which are "Empowering Youth", which means understanding the barriers and challenges faced by Nigerian youth in political participation can help empower them to actively engage in the political process. In this study, the researcher employed a quantitative research design. This design entailed the collection and analysis of numerical data to examine the relationships between variables and quantify the extent of youth inclusion and political participation. The researcher developed structured surveys with closed-ended questions, conducted systematic observations to record specific behaviors, or utilized existing datasets containing quantitative information. The study distributed 400 questionnaires to three local governments in Ogun state, Nigeria. Using regression analysis, the study's collected data was examined. Taking into consideration the findings that were obtained from the data that was acquired, it is clear that young people played a big role in the election process. With 58.7% of respondents agreeing with the statement, and 10.4% of respondents seeing a very high degree of engagement, the majority of respondents agreed that there was a high level of youth involvement. Based on the consensus among respondents, it appears that the younger generation was actively involved in the election process and had a good impact on the outcome.

KEYWORDS: *Election, Nigeria, Political Participation, Youth, Youth Inclusion*

I. Introduction

Almost half of the global population is under 30 years old, marking the youngest demographic ever. Approximately half of the global population is under 30 years old, yet they have

limited influence on the decisions that impact their future (Fortune Europe, January 25, 2023). It is worth noting that a staggering 90% of these young individuals, totaling in the billions, live in the developing world. It was emphasized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 2013 that involving young people in tackling urgent global challenges is crucial.

According to the World Population dashboard by the United Nations, as of January 19, 2024, around 43.8% of the world's population is under 30. Nigeria is experiencing a rise in the number of young people, leading to a phenomenon called the "youth bulge," attributed to the country's continuously expanding population. Although facing challenges with a growing youth population, there are potential economic benefits to increased youth engagement in society and the workforce, provided it is done meaningfully and actively. It is beneficial for governments to leverage the youth population to take advantage of the demographic dividend, which results in a decrease in the dependency ratio compared to the working-age population.

Furthermore, this unexpected gain could be utilised to boost production and expand the workforce. Nigeria has a population of 52.2 million people, making up about 28% of the total population, falling within the young adult age range of 18-35 years old. The population's gender ratio in 2018 was 52.8 to 48.2, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

Mattei (2023) explains that the democratisation process is a complex political procedure that requires involvement from various stakeholders and significant citizen participation to establish a responsive, responsible, and enduring democratic governance system. External actors may be motivated to participate in the process of democratic institutionalisation because of the perspectives of various stakeholders. Roglic (2022) emphasises that the elements of each democratic



effort are crucial in influencing its success. Many research studies have found that political parties are crucial for building and strengthening democratic systems. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) play a crucial role in promoting democratic values, standards, and governance (Biswas, 2023).

According to Kura et al. (2023), economic prosperity, political culture, socio-cultural cohesion/homogeneity, and institutions play a significant role in shaping democratic governance and values. Scholars' research findings have supported this idea. Two more characteristics that can describe the process of democratisation are the elite consensus and the positional location of distinct demographic groupings within the population, which are linked to pluralist government (Walters, 2022). In other words, the effectiveness of a democratic process can be measured by considering the level of involvement of key individuals and groups, including women, youth, minority members, and individuals with disabilities, in the political process (Paudel, 2023). Most countries worldwide have a population dominated by young people and women from a demographic perspective. How individuals participate in politics can significantly affect how inclusive the political process is.

Having a growing teen population has its advantages and disadvantages. It may lead to a more dynamic and engaged workforce. Alternatively, it may result in increased crime, a higher dependency ratio, and alarming poverty rates. To create a united and inclusive society, the government needs to involve the youth (NBS, 2018). Zohdy (2017) emphasizes the importance of involving young people in government to prevent negative consequences like decreased GDP, lower voter turnout, increased violent extremism, crime, and instability. Many programs aimed at youth tend to view them as statistics rather than individuals with the potential to create change.

As per Galstyan (2019), the lack of interest in politics among young individuals is due to its failure to address their relevant issues. Offiong (2018) suggests that the attempts of young Nigerian leaders to encourage national unity will not succeed due to the prevalent ethnic divisions in the country. In modern democracies, older individuals often hold positions of power, while the younger generation, lacking financial resources, tends to be more compliant with politicians. Offiong's submission is incorrect. Offiong believes that political involvement is limited to voting or seeking office. He neglected to point out that French President Emmanuel Macron, who assumed office at 39, was not considered elderly, despite his assumption.

According to Badmus (2018), young Nigerians are eager to participate in politics, especially with the increasing global focus on the country's youth, which contrasts with Offiong's perspective. As per Olufowobi (2018), creating a positive environment for youth involvement is key to boosting their engagement in politics.

Studies indicate that citizen involvement in democratic processes has declined in several democracies since the year 2000. Young people's involvement in politics has remained consistently low when compared to the general population (Pontes, Henn & Griffiths, 2019). However, O'Toole (2016) argues that young people are drawn to and participate in informal and alternative forms of political engagement, despite appearing uninterested in traditional political activities. According to Zohdy (2017), the potential of young people's leadership in development remains largely unexplored in democratic societies. This research focuses on youth inclusion and political participation in Nigeria's upcoming 2023 election.

The statement of the problem for this dissertation is to suggest a way forward to improve Nigerian young inclusion and engagement in politics, particularly in the 2023 general election, and to understand the constraints and challenges they experience. This sets the stage for the research by highlighting the focus on youth inclusion and political participation in Nigeria and the need to address the barriers that hinder their active involvement in politics.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to examine barriers and opportunities for youth engagement, as well as develop strategies to enhance their participation in shaping the future of Nigeria through the electoral system. The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. examine the level of youth participation in the political process during the 2023 General Election,
2. identify the factors that hinder youth inclusion in the political sphere,
3. assess the impact of youth participation on the outcomes of the 2023 General Election,
4. explore the role of political parties and institutions in limiting youth involvement in politics, and
5. Propose policies for enhancing youth inclusion and political participation in future elections.

Significance of the study

The research on "Youth Inclusion and Political Participation in Nigeria" is crucial for



various reasons. Understanding the obstacles and difficulties encountered by Nigerian youth in political participation can empower them to actively participate in the political process, ultimately leading to their empowerment. Addressing these issues will help the study make a valuable contribution to fostering a democracy that is inclusive and representative. Increasing youth involvement in political decision-making can bring diverse perspectives and innovative solutions to societal challenges. This study will provide insights into how youth participation can affect governance and policy outcomes in Nigeria. Encouraging the participation of young individuals in politics is essential for the lasting health and vigor of a democratic society. Studying the factors that impact youth engagement in politics can help improve democratic processes in Nigeria. The study's findings and recommendations can guide policymakers and stakeholders in creating specific strategies to increase youth participation in politics. This can be a valuable asset for influencing upcoming projects and activities.

II. Literature Review

Youth, according to Middaugh, Schofield, and Ballard (2017), is a period characterized by swiftly developing capabilities, autonomy expectations, and identity exploration. Civic participation during adolescence is predictive of voting and volunteering as an adult. In common usage, "youth" refers to the period of one's existence between childhood and adulthood.

The rationality of political participation is a widely held assumption. In other words, individuals partake in political endeavors intending to attain specific objectives, and they decide to do so when the advantages of doing so surpass the disadvantages (Deimel et al., 2021).

The term "election" encompasses various literal meanings, such as selection, extraction, designating something, and appointing an individual to a position from a cohort (Kiani&Sartipi, 2016). The term "election" connotes the process of choosing among several alternatives and entails selectivity (Steele, 2011).

Political groups are essential for democracy. They drive the progress of modern democracy. They serve as hubs for political mobilization and engagement through various social and political activities (Kioupiolis, 2022). Political parties have various functions, including recruitment, mobilization, and participation, which are crucial for engaging young people in politics (Len & Young, 2021).

Scholars have long acknowledged that institutions play a crucial role in shaping political results. Recent research has started to explore the link between institutions and public attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, there has been little focus on how institutions might impact the political engagement of men and women differently (Kittilson&Schwindt-Bayer, 2012). Participating in elections is a prominent method of getting involved in political discussions in contemporary democracies. According to Akoth (2022), electoral institutions play a crucial role in enhancing youth political engagement by coordinating, organizing, and administering elections as mandated by the Constitution.

Encouraging young adults to participate in politics by established political figures can lead to unexpected results. When thinking about political domination, the first group of people that come to mind are godfathers (Allsop, 2020). Some influential figures in politics can encourage youth involvement, but in some cases, political figures may obstruct youth participation for personal gain (Towaju, 2021).

In the 2023 general elections in Ogun State, there was a noticeable increase in youth participation. Youth played a crucial role in advocating for their chosen candidates, making a notable difference in the state. Youths, including those from outside Ogun State, came back to join in the election, demonstrating a strong unity on voting day. They made extensive efforts to create a positive atmosphere by giving out souvenirs, providing free airtime, and organizing prayer groups. Before the elections in Ogun State, certain rural communities were also included in the visits. In the 2023 election, the youth's high level of engagement and initiatives led to significant changes in how young people participate in politics in the state. The youth's growing interest in voter registration and increased involvement in political matters suggest a possible change in the usual pattern, making the 2023 general election stand out.

This study's theoretical framework centers on Group Theory and explores how social groups and collective action can enhance youth inclusion and political participation in Nigeria's upcoming 2023 election. This research seeks to improve our understanding of how group dynamics can empower and mobilize young people for active political participation by applying the principles of Group Theory to the study of youth engagement in the political process.

Group Theory offers a structure for examining how individuals behave and interact in a



group environment. It delves into the formation, operation, and impact of groups on their members' behavior. Group Theory is utilized in this study to explore how social groups influence youth political engagement.

III. Methodology

In the study on youth inclusion and political participation in Nigeria, the researcher would employ a quantitative research design. This design entails the collection and analysis of numerical data to examine the relationships between variables and quantify the extent of youth inclusion and political participation. The researcher will develop structured surveys with closed-ended questions, conduct systematic observations to record specific behaviors or utilize existing datasets containing quantitative information. The population of the study includes the total number of participants ranging from the oldest to the youngest 1,757,600. This constitutes the total number of participants in this study including ages 18-35 years.

Three Ogun state local governments will get questionnaires for the study. The local governments are Abeokuta South, Sagamu, and Ado OdoOtta. These local governments span Ogun State's three senatorial districts. By integrating these local administrations, researchers hope to gain information from a variety of state regions. The study will use stratified and cluster sampling. The researcher will stratify the population by Ogun State local governments via stratified sampling. This guarantees sample local government representation.

The researchers will next randomly choose study participants using cluster sampling within each stratum. This includes randomly picking individuals from defined groupings, such as neighborhoods or communities. These sampling methods allow researchers to gather a representative sample from the target population in chosen Ogun State local governments. Using regression analysis, the study's collected data will be examined

A population-representative sample size will be chosen using the formula below. Using Taro Yamane (1964) limited population formula.

Where:

n= sample size

N= population size

E= level of precision (0.05)

N= 1,757,600

n=1,757,600

$$\frac{1 + 1,757,600 (0.0025)}{1,757,600}$$

$$\frac{1 + 4394}{1,757,600}$$

4395.

n= 399.9

Sample size = 400

The study will distribute 400 questionnaires to three local governments in Ogun state, Nigeria.

Respondents' responses to questions in the questionnaire

IV. Results

What is your perception of the level of youth participation in the political process during the 2023 general election in Nigeria?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very low	21	5.5	5.5	5.5
	Low	53	13.8	13.8	19.3
	Moderate	44	11.5	11.5	30.8
	High	225	58.7	58.7	89.6
	Very high	40	10.4	10.4	100.0
	Total	383	100.0	100.0	



In your opinion, how does youth participation in the 2023 general election impact voter turnout?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No impact	63	16.4	16.4	16.4
	Lo impact	63	16.4	16.4	32.9
	Moderate impact	68	17.8	17.8	50.7
	High Impact	132	34.5	34.5	85.1
	Very high impact	57	14.9	14.9	100.0
	Total	383	100.0	100.0	

What do you think is the impact of youth participation in the 2023 general election on election results?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No impact	21	5.5	5.5	5.5
	Lo impact	21	5.5	5.5	11.0
	Moderate impact	233	60.8	60.8	71.8
	High Impact	86	22.5	22.5	94.3
	Very high impact	22	5.7	5.7	100.0
	Total	383	100.0	100.0	

Do you think institutions provide equal opportunities for youth to participate in politics during the 2023 general election?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	40	10.4	10.4	10.4
	Disagree	132	34.5	34.5	44.9
	Neutral	80	20.9	20.9	65.8
	Agee	109	28.5	28.5	94.3
	Strongly Agree	22	5.7	5.7	100.0
	Total	383	100.0	100.0	

Which of the following factors do you believe contribute to or hinder youth inclusion in the political sphere in Nigeria?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Lack of access to political resources and opportunities	42	11.0	11.0	11.0
	Limited representation of youth issues in political agendas	152	39.7	39.7	50.7
	Socioeconomic barriers to political involvement	142	37.1	37.1	87.7



Lack of political education and awareness among youth	36	9.4	9.4	97.1
Others	11	2.9	2.9	100.0
Total	383	100.0	100.0	

V. Discussion of Findings

Youth inclusion, which is crucial for a healthy and inclusive democracy in Nigeria and other nations, involves youth participation in decision-making processes, policies, and initiatives that affect them (Trivelli and Morel, 2021). Youth encounter many barriers to political participation. Survey data shows various hurdles to young political participation in Nigeria. In the poll, 39.7% were concerned about political discourse and decision-making neglecting youth problems, priorities, and opinions. This illustrates that young Nigerians' opinions are routinely neglected, separating the political elite from their needs. 37.1% said socioeconomic restrictions prevent young political participation. Many youth encounter institutional barriers to political involvement in a poor and unequal society. 11.0% of respondents said restricted political networks, platforms, and resources hinder youth political participation. Without proper tools and assistance, many young people struggle to manage political involvement, excluding them from politics. Despite only 9.4% of responders, this highlights the need to educate young Nigerians about politics. The study found that the environment causes all youth inclusion difficulties. Thus, settings where adolescents can freely express their thoughts and be heard are necessary to enhance youth involvement (Pietila et al., 2021). Mentorship, youth councils, advisory committees, and youth-led projects can help. Youth participation makes policies and programmes more relevant, efficient, and sustainable. Youth programmes improve when needs and ambitions are met. Young people gain confidence and self-esteem via empowerment and affiliation (Brar-Josan, 2015).

Understanding how youth engagement affected the 2023 Nigerian General Election, The study found that many respondents thought youth involvement affected elections. Youth engagement in the 2023 general election had a high and very high influence, according to 34.5% and 14.9% of respondents. The study also found that 17.8% believe young engagement moderates elections. This suggests moderate recognition of youth electoral dynamics. The study's statistics reveal that many people recognize youth engagement's impact on political dynamics and outcomes. Youth

engagement strongly influences elections and political outcomes. This fosters youth participation in democratic processes and enables youngsters to define their nations' political futures (Brar-Josan, 2015). Dixon (2022) says young inclusion goes beyond symbols. Give teens real chances to make life-changing decisions. High-impact youth involvement illustrates that young people can influence elections. This confirms Pietila et al.'s (2021) claim that young voters alter election narratives, agendas, and governance by bringing new ideas, energy, and change demands to politics.

Data shows that various extrinsic variables restrict adolescent political participation. Political parties and institutions in Nigeria created these exogenous pressures. Data includes institutional, economic, cultural, and social standards and limited political resources and possibilities. The literature reviewed found that political parties that engage citizens in political recruitment and government formation through campaign activities have a major impact on the political environment and youth involvement, while electoral institutions, entrusted by the Constitution with coordinating, organizing, and administering elections, can significantly increase youth involvement. This reduces youth political engagement in 20213. Young people are similarly limited to political party or institution benefits. Godfathers may easily motivate youth during election season due to their wealth and status. They campaign and rally with youth from the primary to the general election (Turnbull, 2020). Vote buying, ballot box snatching, result collation disruption, and political opponent intimidation plague Nigerian elections (Nwankwo, 2023). Young people recruited by political leaders perpetrate and worsen these irregularities. These influential figures may motivate young people to engage in controversial behavior if election outcomes don't match their preferences (Cheeseman et al., 2021). Post-election violence in Nigeria has killed hundreds. The Constitution gives electoral institutions the power to coordinate, plan, and run elections, which can engage young (Akoth, 2022).

VI. Conclusion

The General Election of 2023 was a remarkable and significant event in which young



people played an important part. The current trend of youth involvement may change as a result of their excitement, engagement, and novel methods of political participation. This research makes a significant contribution to the expanding body of literature on the topic of youth involvement in political processes. It also emphasizes the significance of acknowledging and empowering young people as active agents of change.

In conclusion, the results of the research offer significant insights into the extent to which young people will participate in the general election which will take place in 2023. According to the majority of respondents, the large impact that young people had on the political process may be inferred from the high degree of public participation that they experienced. The young people displayed their dedication to influencing the political environment by actively campaigning, mobilizing support, and working towards a common objective at the same time. This research contributes to our understanding of the political engagement of young people and highlights the significance of providing young people with the tools they need to bring about good change in society.

VII. Recommendations

- 1. Promote Youth Political Participation:** Create targeted campaigns and activities. Voter education, youth-led political forums, and politician mentorship are examples.
- 2. Solve Inclusion Barriers:** Determine and solve youth political inclusion barriers. This can include campaigning for policy reforms including lowering the political candidature age restriction, funding young candidates, and enacting affirmative action to ensure youth participation.
- 3. Assess the Impact of young engagement:** Conduct extensive research on how young engagement affected the 2023 General Election. This can show the value of youth involvement and convince officials to include them in future elections.
- 4. Promote Institutional Changes:** Work with political parties and institutions to promote youth involvement policies. This includes supporting internal party reforms like youth quotas in candidate selection and youth policy priorities.
- 5. Create Comprehensive young strategies:** Propose strategies to increase young political engagement in future elections. This can include youth-friendly voting systems, funding for youth-led initiatives, and forums for youth to voice their concerns and ideas.

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