

Political Participation, Upsurge in Youths' Turnout for 2022 Continuous Voters' Registration and Nigeria's 2023 Electoral Process

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Abstract

Political scientists and others involved in election administration have long been concerned about the importance of young people's participation in politics, particularly in Africa. When it comes to politics, youth play an important role and are expected to play an even larger one through voter registration. Intriguingly, the youth of Nigeria showed remarkable eagerness to participate actively in the just finished 2023 electoral process by turning out in large numbers for the Continuous Voters' Registration (CRV) drive in 2022. Examining the causes of the dramatic increase in young voters' registration in Nigeria's 2023 elections and the effects of this trend on youth participation in politics and the electoral process were the primary goals of this research. This study used a descriptive research strategy based on a survey design. Information was gathered by means of survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Tables and basic percentages were used for quantitative data analysis, while discourse analysis was used for analysing the content of qualitative data. The study's results showed that the youths' rights had been violated on a large scale, particularly in recent years. For instance, the handling of the 2020 End-SARS protest, such as being beaten with the butt of a gun, whips, and fists during arrest; continued torture by the police in detention, and the surge in support for Peter Obi were also factors that contributed to the surge. On the other hand, the implications of the massive turnout for governance and political participation in Nigeria include the youths' ability to speak out against bad governance across ethno-religious lines, and an increase in youth participation in politics. The study concludes that young people

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should be more informed and engaged, that electoral institutions should be strengthened, and that voter registration should be continuous.

Keywords: Youth, political participation, electoral process, upsurge, massive turnout, Continuous Voters' Registration (CVR)

Introduction

Political participation is vital to the sustainability and functionality of any democratic system, serving as a safeguard against arbitrary governance (Zoaka and Ushie, 2022). Political involvement includes various activities through which individuals influence policy decisions and express their worldviews. Young people's participation is particularly critical, not only for democratic stability but also for effective representation. However, without proper identification and voters' registration, citizens, including youth, may be excluded from electoral processes, thus limiting political responsiveness to youth-specific issues.

Voters' registration plays a pivotal role in ensuring inclusive and legitimate elections. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) identify five key functions of voters' registration: (i) ensuring equal representation, (ii) protecting electoral integrity, (iii) enhancing public trust, (iv) influencing policymaking, and (v) strengthening democratic systems (OSCE & ODIHR, 2012). The 2023 general elections in Nigeria highlighted a significant uptick in youth political participation. This surge can be attributed to multiple factors, including increased youth mobilisation via social media, dissatisfaction with systemic governance failures, and the fallout from the #EndSARS protests against police brutality. These factors contributed to an unprecedented wave of youth voters' registration, demonstrating an evolving youth political consciousness and agency. Despite their electoral importance, youth in Africa have historically faced challenges in participating meaningfully in democratic processes. This concern has been amplified by the rise in electoral violence since the 1990s (Nwang, 2023; Skoric & Poor, 2013) and the perception of youth as agents of change due to their demographic strength and innovative potential (Fjerza, Gega & Memaj, 2014).

In Nigeria, voters' registration is essential for participation, yet trends since 1999 reveal a relative decline in registration when compared to population growth (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2016). For instance 57.9 million of 119.3 million (48.5%) of the population registered to vote in 1999; 60.8 million of 139.1 million (45.7%) in 2003; 61.6 million of 147 million (41.9%) in 2007; 73.5 million of 162.9 (45.1%) in 2011; 69.3 million of 181.2 (38.3%) in 2015; 84 million of 195.9 million (42.9%) in 2019, and 93.4 million of 225.1 million (41.5%) in 2023 (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2016; International Foundation for Electoral Systems (2022)). This development arguably led the Nigerian youths to present themselves in an unprecedented manner to register to vote in the 2023 general elections. Several reasons account for this regression: disillusionment with democracy's failure to improve living standards,

electoral violence, and a lack of trust in electoral integrity, especially in controversial elections like those of 2003, 2007, and 2019 (Nwang, 2023). However, exceptions were noted in 2011 and 2019, with increased registrations attributed to robust voter education and mobilization efforts. The 2023 elections stand out, with INEC reporting a significant increase in youth voters' registration. This was fueled by activism, notably the fallout from the #EndSARS protests and a growing desire among youths to influence political outcomes in response to issues such as unemployment and state repression. While existing research has addressed youth involvement in democratic governance, electoral participation, and the influence of social media, limited scholarly attention has been given to youth participation in the voters' registration process itself. This study thus aims to explore the youth-driven surge in the 2023 Continuous Voters' Registration (CVR) in Nigeria, examining its broader implications for governance and political participation.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to explore the massive turnout of youths for the 2022 continuous voters' registration in Nigeria's 2023 electoral process and its implications for governance and political participation. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Determine the factors responsible for the unprecedented massive turnout of youths for the 2022 continuous voters' registration; and
- ii. Explore the implications of the massive turnout for governance and political participation

Scope and Limitations of the Study

It is obvious that in any study involving political participation, most especially in consolidating democracies the most important aspect will be to identify essential factors that encourage or inhibit such participation. Thus, in the study of youth participation in the electoral process, this study will cover youth participation in Nigeria's 2023 electoral process and its connection with the upsurge in youths' turnout for the 2022 continuous voters' registration. Accordingly, the study focuses on the 2022 continuous voters' registration. This period is important, as the voters' registration was engaged for the 2023 general elections.

Significance of the Study

This is a very significant research, which is conducted at a time when Nigeria's electoral process is facing enormous challenges and decline in electoral integrity. Any study therefore, on youth political participation, such as this research work, will surely have fundamental policy implications in the areas of expanding electoral participation (voters' registration, voting, and other citizenry civic engagement) and potentially help practitioners responsible for running elections improve the credibility of the electoral process.

Finally, it is expected that the salient issues raised and addressed in the course of the study will help provoke further studies and academic discourse on relevant aspects of the subject matter towards cumulative advancement of knowledge.

Conceptual Clarifications

Political Participation

The term political participation encompasses a diversity of interpretations by many academics, hence, it is essential to define precisely what it is meant here. In a nutshell, political participation is what average people do to help shape or rally behind the policies and programmes put in place by the government. One facet of political behaviour that Akamare (2003 as cited in Falade, 2014) identifies as concentrating on how individuals engage in politics is political participation. Included in it is an optional pursuit in which anybody can take part, either directly or indirectly. Thus, residents can participate in the political system through a variety of means, such as voting for political leaders, creating policies, organising community events, and other civic actions. A key component of young growth, according to this view, is active participation in political life.

Continuous Voters' Registration

The process of registering to vote often includes finding out who can vote and then compiling a list of all those people called a Register of Voters. In this study, "Continuous Voters' Registration (CVR)" refers to a method of registering to vote that includes re-registering individuals who either became 18 years old after the last registration drive or were unable to do so for various reasons. Electoral officials continually update and maintain an initial Register of Voters, which forms the basis of the continuous voters' registration process. For the most part, CVR in Nigeria includes things like replacing broken or lost voters' cards, registering new voters, transferring registered voters, and updating details.

Youths

Many different interpretations on youth have been offered by literature. When it comes to age groups, for example, the UN considers everybody between 15 and 24 years old to be a youth, whereas the World Bank uses the 12–24 age bracket (Zoaka and Ushie, 2022). In contrast to popular belief, youth is not a fixed concept based on chronological age but rather a stage between childhood and adulthood (Ekot and Momoh (2024)). Accordingly, the youth of today are considered to be in a "transition from dependency to independence" according to the European Parliament (2023). According to the 2012 National Baseline Youth Survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics in Nigeria, the country's youth population, defined as those aged 15–35, is 64 million strong. Therefore, this article uses the 18–35 age group as its defining characteristic, emphasising that "this category represents the most active, the most volatile, and yet the most vulnerable segment of the population, socio-economically and in other respects" (National Youth Policy, 2001, as cited in Afolayan, 2018).

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Empirical Review: Youth and Voters' Registration in Nigeria

There has been a perceptible interest in youth political participation in Africa as reflected in the body of literature in terms of importance, problems, and prospects. The reason for this could be linked to the increased rate of electoral violence experienced across the continent and the youths being viewed by political parties and politicians as important target group based on their special features such as strength, expectations and mental tendency as agents of new ideas. Consequently, nearly all aspects of youth political participation, such as democratic governance processes; youth candidacy in general elections; voters' participation; social media, political apathy, and challenges of political participation, to name some have been addressed.

Kura, Shehu and Ladan (2023) conducted a study on youth political participation in Sokoto State, Nigeria. The authors examined the role of political parties and (social) media in strengthening youth political participation in Sokoto. It further explored the extent to which trust in political parties and electoral institutions (INEC & SIEC) influences youth political participation and analysed the factor of godfathers as dominant political actors in youth political participation. Findings from the study revealed that political parties are important pillars of political activities and thus are the platforms for youth political participation. The paper advocated a reform to strengthen INEC regulatory functions and to amend party constitutions to ease youth participation in all areas of party activities, including party primaries, congresses, membership, party finance, campaigns, etc. The work only focused on youth participation in terms of political parties and the media, without recourse to youth participation in registering to vote.

Study by Obisesan (2020) examined the roles of social media on youth's political participation in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. It further interrogated the roles played by these communication tools in the emancipation and agency of youths while also revealing the implications the devices may have on the democratic processes and aspirants. The study concluded that the social media contributed to citizens' power and agency through debates and narratives which were instrumental in agenda-setting for the ruling class and citizens' democratic expectations. The study is solely concerned with the influence of social media on youth political participation ignoring youth participation in voters' registration.

Zoaka and Ushie's (2022) considered the prospects of youth participation in Nigeria's 2023 general elections in relation to their antecedents to political participation through Nigeria's democratic history, as well as the challenges faced by the youths and generally Nigeria's democratic process. The findings of the paper indicated that Nigerian youths have been active participants in the political process of the country from independence till date, irrespective of the form of government, whether military or civilian. The paper however identified challenges such as poverty, godfatherism, age limitations, etc, as impediments to youth participation in electoral process in Nigeria. Like other articles, this work failed to consider youth participation in the voters' registration.

Akinyetun (2021) interrogated the relationship between youth political participation, good governance, and social inclusion in Nigeria. The findings of the study indicate that there is significant positive relationship between youth political participation and good governance on one hand and significant positive association between youth political participation and social inclusion on the other hand. The study recommended that the government should create Leadership and Democratic Institutes [LDI] across the states of the federation and establish an Online Leadership Orientation Agency [OLOA] to utilise various social networking sites to provide free leadership courses, webinars, and orientation on the art of governance and the promotion of social inclusion among youth. Again, this study did not discuss youth political participation in relations to voters' registration.

Abdulyakeen's (2021) examined the challenges and prospects of youth participation in the democratisation and governance processes in Nigeria's fourth republic. The paper discovered that despite various international communiqués to ensure increased participation of the vulnerable segments of the society in their national political process, Nigeria is still ranked among those countries with low Youth Participation as a result of corruption, monetisation of Nigerian politics and the incessant discrediting of the youth by the elders. The finding also reveals that rather than engage youth meaningfully, they have been constantly used as political thugs in the electoral process by the political class. The study concluded by contending that youth participation in democracy and governance is critical but largely depends on the quality of the population of the youth. This work however seems more concerned with only the challenges encountered by youths in participating in the governance processes and the suggested solutions, but ignoring youth participation in registering for the voting exercise, which this study revolves around.

Sule, Sambo and Saragih (2021) examined Nigeria's democratisation, youth participation, and exclusion from politics. The work discovered that youths were barred from participating in Nigeria's 2019 general elections in terms of contesting and winning of elective seats emanating from heavy use of money in party financing and campaign expenditure. The study thus recommended viable alternative for youth to participate in Nigerian politics actively by establishing political parties and lowering the cost of obtaining party nomination and contest. The study is however limited by concentrating only on how party financing affects youth participation.

In their study, Ekot and Momoh (2024) investigated the level of youth participation at the party level during 2023 general elections in Nigeria. The study contended that the African Democratic Congress (ADC) recorded the highest number of youth participation at the party level during the 2023 general elections, while the three dominant political parties during the 2023 general elections namely Labour Party (LP), Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), and All Progressives Congress (APC) were not among the leading political parties that encouraged youth participation at the party level during the 2023 general elections. The study recommends among other things that Interparty Advisory Council (IPAC) which is the umbrella body for

political parties in Nigeria should work closely with the various political parties' leadership on ways to increase youth participation at the party level like the reduction of the party nomination/interest form.

Soluade, Moliki, Balogun, Adebajo, and Oyekanmi (2024) assessed the levels of student voter apathy, reasons for voter apathy, and the implications of voter apathy during students' union elections on Social Studies and Political Science students. The findings of the study showed that voter apathy among Social Studies and Political Science students during students' union elections is high. In addition, Social Studies and Political Science as a course has an influence on students' active participation and voting during students' union elections. The study recommended that voting during students' union elections should be made compulsory for the students of Social Studies and Political Science and that the management of higher institutions of learning must adopt e-voting to de-radicalise students' elections and enhance active participation of students during students' union elections. However, the study is only limited to the level of political participation by the youths in voters' participation and not voters' registration.

Against the background of discouragement on the part of the citizens in the electoral process and the resultant indifference displayed in the 2022 voters' registration exercise mostly in the southern and eastern parts of Nigeria, Oguchi and Jooji (2020) examined the credibility of the current electoral process. Findings from the study revealed that the form of electoral process in Nigeria lacks credibility, evident in the boycott of the voters' registration exercise mostly in the southeastern states owing to lack of confidence in the system.

Okide, Amulu, and Alozie (2021) using a distributed database conducted a study on improving voters' registration and voting process in Nigeria. The authors noted that till now, the voting method often adopted by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is one that mandates voters to cast votes only in the polling units where they were registered, thus undermining the confidence of citizens in exercising their franchise. The work therefore aimed at devising a system capable of allowing voters to cast their votes regardless of their registered location from any part of Nigeria. Achieving the above will make available a user-friendly graphical interface, deliver voting process easily, reliably and more quickly. The article however only examined voter registration in general terms without looking at the participation of any category of voters such as the youths.

Odi, Ikwueze, Okafor and Nwobodo (2022) examined the influence of Peter Obi's media engagement on 2022 Voters' Registration among the Youths of Nkanu West L.G.A Enugu State. The work investigated how the media engagement of Mr. Peter Obi - the Presidential candidate of the Labour Party in the 2023 general elections, impacted on the 2022 voters' registration among the youths in part of a local government in the southeastern part of Nigeria. Finding showed that the Peter Obi media engagement influenced their behaviour in registering for the voters' registration exercise. Consequent on the above, the study recommended among others that the candidates standing for political positions should engage the media especially

social media for future political campaigns capable of affording the electorates the interactive opportunity with candidates contesting for elections.

Overall, the study conducted by Odii, Ikwueze, Okafor and Nwobodo (2022) appears to be the sole existing research that closely aligns with the subject matter of this study. However, the study only focused on one of the factors responsible for the surge in the 2022 voters' registration, i.e., the influence of Mr. Peter Obi of the Labour Party, neglecting other factors, which is the centre-piece of this study.

Theoretical Framework: Relative Deprivation Theory

Relative Deprivation Theory being one of the cornerstone ideas of sociology is described as the unpleasant sensation of a mismatch between one's rightful expectations and one's actual situation. In the social sciences, it refers to subjective rather than objective experiences or calculations of societal, political, or economic deprivation. Thus the term is inextricably linked to the similar terms of poverty and social exclusion. Social and political scientists have made the astute observation that according to relative deprivation theory, individuals may become involved in social movements or armed conflicts in order to gain what they perceive as being desperately needed in their lives, such as money, rights, political voice, or status (Longley, 2021).

After studying military units, the writers of *The American Soldier* methodically applied the notion and discovered that relative deprivation is caused by the perceived gap between anticipation and attainment. According to Longley (2021), social scientists in the field of social science have pointed to relative deprivation and more specifically, temporal relative deprivation as a possible catalyst for social movements and deviance. In the most extreme cases, this deviance can manifest as political violence, rioting, terrorism, civil wars, and other forms of social deviance, like crime.

Several issues have led to criticism of Relative Deprivation Theory. One major complaint is that it does not address the question of why certain marginalised individuals do not join social groups that aim to improve their situation. Secondly, the theory fails to address the fundamental causes of conflict, including shortages of resources, lack of organisation, displacement, and individual beliefs. Lastly, it fails to take into account the fact that conflicts often stem from avarice and physical location (Gur, 1970, as cited in Tripathi, n.d.).

The theory of relative deprivation theory (RDT) provides an explanation for why some people feel dissatisfied with their lives compared to others (Grasso, Yoxon, Karampampas, and Temple, 2017). This theory is highly applicable to the political participation of young people in Nigeria's electoral system. Here, the notion is that people will protest in order to regain their rights if those rights are frustratingly disrespected or continuously violated. The enormous turnout of young Nigerians to register to vote in the 2022 general elections and the subsequent 2023 elections is evidence of this. Some of the major causes of the surge, as outlined in this work, include, among other things, the following: the handling of the 2020 End-

SARS protest (the excessive use of force against protesters), the surge in support for Peter Obi, and the extensive human rights violations committed by the disbanded Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) officials in 2020. In particular, the young people of Nigeria asserted that the End-SARS protest was formed out of their frustration and deprivation over the alleged infringement of their fundamental rights by the now-defunct End-SARS Nigeria police. One could therefore claim that the huge attendance for the continuous registration procedure in 2022 was motivated by the reasons mentioned above as well as others, such as widespread distrust of the government and the decline of Nigeria's security agencies.

Study Area

The study area adopted for the purpose of this study is Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Research Design

Descriptive survey research was adopted for this study. This design involves the use of quantitative methods of data gathering for the study.

Population of the study

The study population includes the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) officials, university academics, political party officials, civil society organisations, National Orientation Agency (NOA), public servants, farmers, traders, artisans, students, and business owners.

Sampling Techniques

Multistage sampling technique was adopted in the selection of respondents for the study. The first stage was devoted to the purposive selection of two local governments from each of the three Senatorial Districts. The local governments include: Ado-Ekiti and Irepodun/Ifelodun from Ekiti Central; Ido/Osi and Oye-Ekiti from Ekiti North; and Ikere-Ekiti and Ekiti South West from Ekiti South Senatorial district, were selected on ground of proximity. A purposive selection of one town from each local government was done in the second stage. Consequently, Ado-Ekiti and Iyin-Ekiti; Ifaki-Ekiti and Oye-Ekiti; and Ikere-Ekiti and Ilawe-Ekiti were selected from Ado-Ekiti, Irepodun/Ifelodun, Ido/Osi, Oye, Ikere and Ekiti South West Local Governments respectively. Ado-Ekiti, a city and five other towns were selected because of their strategic positions as either the state or local government headquarters.

The final stage was devoted to the selection of respondents from such as the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) officials, university academics, political party officials, civil society organisations, public servants, farmers, traders, artisans, students, and business owners. Under this stage, respondents from politicians (local governments' and ward executives were purposively selected from two wards in the six selected towns. The politicians were thus selected from the All Progressives Congress (APC), the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), and the Labour Party (LP) as the three most active parties that participated in the presidential election. In this wise, two wards were selected based on the nearness of the geographical

location of each of the wards in the towns in the study areas. In Ado-Ekiti, Ado 'D' Ijigbo and Ado 'I' Dallimore were selected; in Iyin-Ekiti, Iyin I and Iyin II were selected; in Ifaki-Ekiti, Ifaki I and Ifaki II were selected; in Oye-Ekiti, Oye I and Oye II were selected; in Ikere-Ekiti, Oke Osun and Afao/Kajola were selected, while in Ilawe-Ekiti, Ilawe I and Ilawe II were selected.

Strategic Sampling was however used to select respondents from INEC officials (senior and junior) and public servants (senior and junior), while simple random sampling was used to select respondents from each of the identified strata. Finally, simple random sampling was also used to select respondents such as: farmers, traders, artisans, students, business owners and others in the selected towns.

Sample Size

The sample size for the study is in two strands: in-depth interview size and questionnaire sample size. Primary data was collected through in-depth interview of selected key respondents based on purposive sampling technique, with the selection of twelve (12) respondents for in-depth interview. The selected sample was based on their expertise on the subject matter. A combination of purposive stratified and sample random techniques was used in drawing samples for the administration of questionnaires to the respondents. In all, a total of six hundred and fourteen (614) respondents were selected; fourteen (14) from in-depth interview and six hundred (600) from questionnaire.

Sources of Data Collection

The study adopted the mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) to gather data. Sources of data collection were both primary and secondary. Primary data was collected through structured questionnaire and in-depth interview. In-depth interviews were conducted with the following categories: the Residential Electoral Commissioner of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Ekiti State, University Academics, Political Party officials, Director, National Orientation Agency (NOA), and Civil Society Organisations. The secondary data was gathered through a documentary review, which covers publications from INEC, newspaper reports, and relevant journal articles.

Method of Data Analysis

The method of data analysis was both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Data gathered from questionnaire were analysed quantitatively using tables and simple percentages, while content analysis was used to analyse information generated during the in-depth structured interview sessions and secondary data.

PRESENTATION OF DATA AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1: Interview Respondents

State	INEC REC.	Party Officials	Civil Soc. Org.	Academics	NOA	TOTAL
Ekiti	1	6	2	4	1	14

Source: Field Survey Data, 2024

Table 2: Questionnaire Respondents

S/N	Respondents	Towns						Sub-Total	Grand Total
		Ado Ekiti	Iyin Ekiti	Ifaki Ekiti	Oye Ekiti	Ikere Ekiti	Iawe Ekiti		
1.	INEC Officials (Senior Officers) (Junior Officers)	0406	0406	0406	0406	0406	0406	2436	60
2.	Public Servants (Senior Officers) (Junior Officers)	0812	0812	0812	0812	0812	0812	4872	120
3.	Farmers	05	05	05	05	05	05	30	30
4.	Traders	12	12	12	12	12	12	72	72
5.	Artisans	15	15	15	15	15	15	90	90
6.	Students	30	30	30	30	30	30	180	180
7.	Business Owners	04	04	04	04	04	04	24	24
8.	Others	04	04	04	04	04	04	24	24
	Total								600

Source: Field Survey Data, 2024

Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 3: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	352	58.7
	Female	248	41.3
	Total	600	100
Age	18 – 30	151	25.2
	31 – 40	137	22.8
	41-50yrs	167	27.8
	51-60yrs	93	15.5
	≥61yrs	52	8.7
	Total	600	100
Educational Qualification	Non-Formal Education	202	33.7
	Primary School Leaving Certificate	152	25.3
	O’level Certificate	113	18.8
	ND/NCE	57	9.5
	B.Sc/HND	31	5.2
	Postgraduate	28	4.7
	Others	17	2.8
	Total	600	100
Occupation Status	INEC Officials	60	10.0
	Public & Civil Servants	120	20.0
	Farmers	30	5.0
	Traders	72	12.0
	Artisans	90	15.0
	Students	180	30.0
	Business Owners	24	4.0
	Others	24	4.0
	Total	600	100

Source: Field Survey Data, 2024

Table 3 shows that a total of 600 questionnaires representing 96.7 were correctly filled and returned. It further shows that the majority of the respondents are male 352 (57%); most of the respondents are between 41-50 years old 167 (27.8%); respondents 28 (4.7%) are the most educated; while the largest respondents in terms of occupational status are the students 180 (30%).

Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative data obtained in the study were analysed on the basis of the research questions generated.

Research Question 1: What are the factors responsible for the massive turnout of youth in the 2022 Continuous Voters' Registration in Nigeria?

Table 4: Factors Responsible for the Massive Turnout for the 2022 Continuous Voters' Registration in Nigeria

S/N	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	UD (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1.	Widespread violation of human rights, especially the youths, by the disbanded Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) officials in 2020	397(66.2)	136(22.7)	1(0.2)	45(7.5)	21(3.5)
2.	Handling of the 2020 End-SARS protest (excessive use of force against protesters)	373(62.2)	127(21.2)	2(0.3)	58(9.7)	40(6.7)
3.	Unemployment by the youths	289(48.2)	161(26.8)	3(0.5)	86(14.3)	1(10.2)
4.	Use of social media platforms	372(62.0)	142(23.7)	02(0.3)	54(9.0)	30(5.0)
5.	The eight-month long strike by ASUU in 2022	167(27.8)	183(30.5)	5(0.8)	115(19.2)	130(21.7)
6.	Increased confidence in the Electoral Process	145(24.2)	171(28.5)	7(1.2)	157(26.2)	120(20.0)
7.	Surge in support for Peter Obi	393(65.5)	117(19.5)	1(0.2)	57(9.5)	32(5.3)
8.	Increased level of political awareness	139(23.2)	177(29.5)	4(0.7)	125(20.8)	155(25.8)
9.	Dissatisfaction with the existing major political parties	344(57.3)	147(24.5)	2(0.3)	74(12.3)	33(5.5)
10.	Not too young to rule Act	109(18.2)	182(30.3)	9(1.5)	127(21.2)	173(28.8)

Source: Field Survey Data, 2024

Table 4 reveals the view of respondents on the factors responsible for the massive turnout for the continuous voters' registration in Nigeria in 2022. The table shows that the widespread

violation of human rights by the disbanded Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) officials in 2020 ranked highest with 397 (66.2%) and 136 (22.7%) of the respondents agreeing and was followed by the surge in support for Peter Obi, 373 (62.2%) and 127 (21.2%); handling of the 2020 End-SARS protest, with excessive use of force against protesters, 373 (62.2%) and 127 (21.2%); dissatisfaction with the existing major political parties, 344 (57.3%) and 147 (24.5%); use of social media platforms, 372 (62.0%) and 142 (23.7%); unemployment by the youths, 289 (48.2%) and 161 (26.8%); the eight-month long strike by ASUU in 2022, 167 (27.8%) and 183 (30.5%); increased level of political awareness, 139 (23.2%) and 177 (29.5%); and the not too young to rule Act, 109 (18.2%) and 182 (30.3%).

Research Question 2: What are the implications of the massive turnout for governance and political participation in Nigeria?

Table 5: Implications of the Massive Turnout for Governance and Political Participation in Nigeria

S/N	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	UD (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1.	Unification of Nigerian youths from different ethno-religious groups to achieve a common goal of speaking with one voice against bad governance.	367(61.2)	163(27.2)	2(0.3)	43(7.2)	25(4.2)
2.	Constitutes a force capable of altering the existing voting pattern	120(20.0)	155(25.8)	10(1.7)	133(22.2)	182(30.3)
3.	Capability of influencing the Government in adopting policies capable of aligning with the preferences of the youths	247(41.2)	253(42.2)	4(0.7)	51(8.5)	45(7.5)
4.	Constitutes a form of demand for accountability and transparency	311(51.8)	189(31.5)	3(0.5)	34(5.7)	63(10.5)
5.	Increased youth participation in politics	143(23.8)	167(27.8)	2(0.3)	171(28.5)	117(19.5)

Source: Field Survey Data, 2024

Table 5 captures the respondents' responses on the implications of the massive turnout for governance and political participation in Nigeria. Findings from the table reveal that the unification of Nigerian youths from different ethno-religious groups to achieve a common goal in speaking against bad governance was ranked highest with 367 (61.2%) and 163 (27.2%) agreeing, and was followed by demand for accountability and transparency, 311 (51.8%) and 189 (31.5%); adoption of policies capable of aligning with the preferences of the youths, 247 (41.2%) and 253 (42.2%); increased youth participation in politics, 143 (23.8%) and 167 (27.8%); and alteration of existing voting pattern.

Qualitative Analysis

The report of the interview showed that all participants participated in the voting registration process and had voters' registration cards. 90% of study participants admitted that there was massive turnout of youths in the 2022 Continuous Voters' Registration.

Factors Responsible for the Massive Turnout for the 2022 Continuous Voters' Registration in Nigeria

According to the interview transcript, everyone who took part in the process of registering to vote also had a voter's registration card. Researchers found that 90% of people who took part in the survey blamed the high turnout for Nigeria's continuous voters' registration in 2022 on the severe human rights violations committed by the dissolved Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) officers in 2020. The strength of unity during the #EndSARS campaign to end police brutality brought the youth of today into the public eye, according to one of the interviewees. The youth bloc in Nigeria is still on the rise today. They are essential to our democratic system.

Although the widespread violation of human rights by the disbanded Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) officials is considered to be the primary factor, other factors that have been mentioned include the following: the surge in support for Peter Obi; the handling of the 2020 End-SARS protest, which involved the excessive use of force against protesters; dissatisfaction with the major political parties that are currently in power; severe economic conditions; unemployment among young people; the eight-month strike by ASUU in 2022; an increased level of political awareness; and the fact that youths are not too young to rule Act 2022.

Implications of the Massive Turnout for Governance and Political Participation in Nigeria

Based on the findings of the qualitative interviews, it was discovered that the massive turnout for the continuous voters' registration in 2022 has significant implications, particularly with regard to governance and political participation. Among the implications of the upsurge, the findings of the study revealed that the respondents said that the unification of Nigerian youths from various ethno-religious groups to speak with one voice against bad governance placed top among the implications of the upsurge. Following are some responses that attest to this:

The majority of Nigeria's marginalised youth, comprising 35.6% of the total population, took part in one of the biggest demonstration movements since the country's democratic transition in 1999, known as the #EndSARS movement. The movement's main objective was to end police brutality, intimidation, and oppression; events were recorded in 25 out of 36 states, including Lagos, Abuja, Rivers, Enugu, Kano, and Plateau. The movement mainly sought to liberate young Nigerians from the ethno-religious tensions that typically characterise the framing of Nigeria's domestic security and political issues. Young Nigerians from all six geopolitical zones united around a common goal: to end police brutality, oppression, and intimidation.

Interviews reveal other implications to include: alteration of existing voting pattern, adoption of policies capable of aligning with the preferences of the youths, a form of demand for accountability and transparency, and increased youth participation in politics.

Discussion of Findings

This study looked at the massive youth turnout in Nigeria's continuous voters' registration in 2022 and how it affected governance and political involvement in the country's 2023 elections. In order to answer the research questions it set out to answer, the study set out to accomplish two goals.

Factors Responsible for the Massive Turnout for the 2022 Continuous Voters' Registration in Nigeria

The study's results showed that a number of factors contributed to the spike in 2022's continuous voters' registration participation in Nigeria. So, one piece of quantitative evidence suggests that the extensive human rights violations committed by the now-defunct Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) in 2020 were a major component in the registration exercise's enormous turnout. The majority of respondents in the research agreed that the increased participation in continuous voters' registration was due in large part to the homicides, assaults, harassment, and lack of freedom of speech perpetrated by the disbanded police unit. Consistent with the conclusions drawn from the Human Rights Watch report, which reads as follows:

"In Nigeria, citizens are subjected to a wide range of brutalities, including but not limited to: beatings, random shootings, injuries, and deaths; the use of excessive physical restraints like leg chains and handcuffs; the needless use of firearms against both suspects and innocent bystanders; and the torture of suspects in order to extract confessions and extortion of gratification" (Human Rights Watch, 2018).

The qualitative data obtained from the in-depth interview support the quantitative data as majority of the respondents submitted that police brutality against innocent citizens was the main factor why Nigerian youths turned out in their high numbers to register.

Implications of the Massive Turnout for Governance and Political Participation in Nigeria

The study reveals that there are substantial effects on participation in politics and administration brought about by the spike in Continuous Voters' Registration in 2022. This claim was in line with the majority of interviewees who stated that the most significant consequence of the surge was the need for young people of all ethnic and religious backgrounds in Nigeria to band together in opposition to corrupt leadership. Quantitative statistics collected from large respondents lends credence to this claim, since they all agreed that young Nigerians used their civic and political rights to protest injustice and call for political change from their leaders.

Conclusion

As earlier noted, the participation of youths in the political process is critical in determining the stability of the democratic process and governance. It is the position of this study that the Nigerian youths presented themselves in an unprecedented manner to register to vote in the 2023 general elections. Accordingly, the study reveals that factors such as widespread violation of human rights by the disbanded SARS officials, excessive use of force against protesters of the 2020 End-SARS, the Peter Obi movement, etc, awakened the drive of the Nigerian youths to bring about change which resulted in the youths' massive registration for the general elections.

The study therefore contends that the massive turnout has implications for governance and political participation in Nigeria: first, varied ethno-religious groups were unified to achieve a common goal; second, it was a form of demand for accountability and transparency from the government; third, the turnout has the capability of influencing the government to adopt policies capable of aligning with preferences of the youths; fourth, the turnout's capability of turning the youths into a force capable of altering the existing voting pattern and finally capable of increasing youth participation. The study concludes that the youths are capable of actively participating in any political process provided the citizens can secure the confidence of the government authorities; ensure the existence of functional political parties, and appointment of qualified youths into key positions of authority.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Effective continuous voters' registration. Although the efforts of INEC (Independent National Electoral Commission) paid off in that voters' registration drives were relatively successful in the lead up to the 2023 general elections, experts and election stakeholders have however stressed that more work would be needed in future to ensure higher rates of youth voters' registration.

- ii. Formulation and improvement of functional performance of political parties that would enable youth contest elections. In order to gain the trust and confidence of young people, political parties should keep improving their functional performance.
- iii. Appointment of qualified youths into key positions of government. More youths should be involved in the work of government, either through appointments or as candidates in elections.
- iv. Improved and continuous civic education. By instilling a sense of responsibility and participation, youths can be taught about the democratic process, the significance of voters' registration, and the impact it has on their lives.
- v. Participation of social media and digital platforms. By engaging social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, a wider audience of the youths can be reached to encourage voters' registration.
- vi. Strengthening of electoral institutions. Where electoral institutions functioned well, youth participation was strengthened. Where they are not, election results would be treated with skepticism and suspicion.
- vii. Improved political participation. The youth of today should understand that actively participating in our democratic process is one of the finest ways to influence leadership and policymaking. Therefore, this can only come to fruition if young people become actively involved in politics. Bringing the same level of interest that young people have in political processes to entertainment programs like Big Brother Naija, Naija Got Talent, and the English Premier League on television can greatly enhance their political participation.

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