

Social Media, Attitudinal Change and Youth Involvement in Political Processes

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Abstract

The study investigated youth perception and attitude towards voting, the impact of social media on voting behaviour, motivating factors for voting, and gender differences in youth participation in the 2023 general election. It applied the use and gratification theory, which suggests that individuals actively seek media content that fulfils their needs. A phenomenological design was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions. Data was collected through in-depth interviews conducted in three phases: before, during, and after the 2023 general election in Nigeria. Purposeful sampling was used to select diverse participants engaged in political activities, with recruitment conducted through social media platforms. An interview guide with clear and open-ended questions was developed, and semi-structured interviews were conducted. The study findings indicate that youth have diverse motivations and considerations for their participation in the upcoming election, with social media influencing their perceptions and decisions. Concerns about electoral fraud and youth discouragement were expressed,

emphasising the importance of transparency and youth empowerment for increased participation in future elections. The results reflect a combination of optimism and scepticism regarding youth engagement in the electoral process. Based on the study findings, it was recommended that there is need for implementing comprehensive civic education programmes, improving transparency and accountability in elections, promoting youth representation through affirmative action and mentorship, addressing youth-specific concerns, utilising social media for political education, fostering youth collaboration and networking, addressing electoral violence and intimidation, and conducting long-term monitoring and evaluation.

Keywords: Youth, Elections, Media, Politics, and Nigeria

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Introduction

In a democratic society, the electorate holds the prerogative to participate in decision-making processes through popular participation. The process of selecting trustworthy leaders for the parliament through voting is a means of achieving political stability as well as promoting effective and enduring governance. The inclusion of the general public in decision-making processes facilitates equitable distribution of resources and accountability, thereby promoting the advancement of society, governance, and infrastructure. The attitudes demonstrated by the general public during elections are mostly among the youth, who are expected to take the lead in participation during the electoral process due to their huge population size (Osumah, 2016).

In contrast to other nations, the degree of involvement of young individuals in the political sphere in Nigeria remains comparatively inadequate. The aforementioned phenomenon can be attributed to various factors, among which is the political instability prevalent in Nigeria. According to Ogbeide (2013), the involvement of young

people in Nigerian politics is a sensitive topic that elicits scrutiny and concern. The demographic cohort commonly referred to as the "young population" typically encompasses individuals between the ages of 18 and 40 across a majority of nations. Regardless of their age group, young individuals exhibit distinct characteristics.

The aforementioned changes encompass physical, biological, intellectual, emotional, and sexual domains, as well as an augmented sense of autonomy. Since the onset of the democratisation process subsequent to the termination of the military regime in 1999, several research endeavours have been undertaken to scrutinise the political participation and engagement of Nigerian denizens in the progression of democracy and policy formulation within the nation. At present, the examination of the political involvement of young individuals in Nigeria is a developing field of study.

The research has predominantly centred on the participation of young individuals in instances of electoral violence and political thuggery. According to Aghedo's (2014) findings, the political engagement of young individuals is primarily determined by their voter turnout, while instances of political arrest and protest are infrequent. The aforementioned phenomenon can be attributed to the precarious state of governance resulting from prior instances of military intervention, which have had a significant impact on the political socialisation of the Nigerian populace.

Unlike the level of participation in the 1999 election, Nigerian youth have demonstrated a keen inclination towards addressing the unique obstacles that impede progress in their country. Firstly, individuals belonging to this group encounter socio-economic obstacles, such as a lack of employment opportunities and financial hardship. According to reports from the National Bureau of Statistics, the unemployment rate

in Nigeria experienced an increase from 23.1% in the third quarter of 2018 to 27.1% in 2020 (Onuba, 2019; Proshare.com, 2020).

Furthermore, the available data pertaining to corruption indicates a deplorable level of decay within the system. As an illustration, Nigeria was ranked 149th out of 180 countries by Transparency International in 2020, which represents a slight improvement from its 148th position in 2017 (Sahara Reporter, 2018). Young people have come to the realisation that they cannot passively observe their abilities being underutilised. It has been acknowledged that a crucial component of their societal, economic, and political advancement is tied to prevalent issues of corruption, nepotism, cronyism, inadequate performance of public officials, and deficient levels of transparency, accountability, probity, and governance within the government.

Therefore, their strategy involves utilising a functional approach that involves engaging with the system in a peaceful manner. This is achieved through the organisation of cerebral, non-violent movements that utilise hashtags, viral videos, and online movements. These movements are used to convey serious feeds of comments, debates, newsfeeds, and editorial headlines, which serve to nationalise their agenda. Arguably, this cerebral and non-violent tool was also utilised in the just concluded 2023 general election. According to a report from a leading newspaper in Nigeria, during the general elections of February 2023 in Nigeria, the country's youth made their presence felt through active participation both in the virtual space and in physical locations (Tayo, 2023).

Despite this reported level of participation, observation during the election still shows that a significant proportion of young individuals abstain from voting as a result of a lack of knowledge. Moreover, among those who do participate in the electoral process, a limited number of them cast their ballots erroneously, which can lead to the

selection of candidates who may not exhibit traits such as transparency, accessibility, accountability, responsibility, and responsiveness to the desires and goals of the populace. The presence of unfavourable attitudes appears to pose a threat to both the progress and stability of the nation. The potential causes of the unfavourable attitudes exhibited by the younger generation could potentially stem from inadequate voter education, bias, tribalism, a lack of trust in the electoral process and institutions, and electoral violence.

Young individuals may not always be aware of their rights, duties, obligations, and responsibilities to participate in popular exercises such as voting. It is important to note that every individual has an equal opportunity to cast their vote and have it counted. In the absence of adequate voter education, young individuals may potentially adopt a disposition of political laziness. This phenomenon appears to have played a role in the electoral challenges encountered by the Nigerian youth in the just concluded 2023 general election. Therefore, this study intends to investigate youth participation in the political process and its implications for character and attitudinal change.

Statement of problem

Participation in the political process, especially among the youth, is gradually gaining ground. Although the majority of the recorded participation of youth in the electioneering process is mostly social engagement in political processes. As much as engaging the people on social media is not bad in itself, studies have established that this does not translate to massive youth turnout when it's time to vote. Voting in any democratic society cannot be underemphasized. Voting is one of the major ways people participate in elections. Despite youth engaging politely on social media, the awful attitude towards voting is reported to be common among youths in Nigeria. Rather than participating in voting, they are being used by politicians as violence tools so as to foment trouble. This negative attitude could in turn result in youth being

used as political hoodlums, riggers, kingpins, and kidnappers before, during, and after elections.

Through observation, a large number of youths refused to vote in previous general elections due to their ignorance, lack of adequate voters' education, and their right to vote. Some were observed to care about voting or to be people who occupied political posts; even a few of the youth who eventually voted cast their votes for candidates that were responsive to the populace's yearnings for good governance. This attitude invariably affects the growth, aspiration, and desire of citizens. One of the strongholds of Nigerian electoral mobilisation is the youth, and their role cannot be underplayed in social movements.

However, getting the youth to vote is becoming a top priority task because of the exceptional expansion of the youthful population and the nation's disproportionately high unemployment and underemployment rates. Very little empirically has been established about the reality of Nigerian youth political engagement on social media and its impact on voting, despite their enormous population and critical role in the nation's growth. Hence, this study wants to investigate youth participation in voting, focusing on characterization and attitudinal change. Also, perceptions of participating in voting during the general election based on gender will be determined.

Research Questions

1. What is youth perception and attitude towards voting in 2023 general election?
2. Does social media engagement among the youth translate to voting during the 2023 general election?
3. What are the motivating factors for voting in the just concluded 2023 general election?

Theoretical Perspective

The present investigation is grounded in the theoretical framework of Uses and Gratification theory. The theory of use and gratification has its origins in the dominant theory of mass communication (Hossain 2019; Dunne, Lawlor, and Rowley 2013; Al-Jabri, Sohail, and Ndubisi 2015; Hsiao, Chang, and Tang 2015; Williams and Whiting 2013: 2; McQuail 1994; Ruggiero 2000). The genesis of this phenomenon can be attributed to the impetus to comprehend the underlying reasons for the captivation of music and advertisements, including soap opera, among radio and television audiences. According to the research conducted by Herzog on radio communication, it was determined that certain types of communication content are capable of fulfilling the psychological and social requirements of the audience (Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch 2016).

The theoretical framework posits that media content possesses significant social and political influence and serves as a strategic instrument for achieving specific objectives. In other words, people seek out media messages and content that fulfil their desires and result in eventual satisfaction (Lariscy, Tinkham, & Sweetser, 2011). Thus, news content is tailored to elicit satisfaction from the perspective of the audience. The theory of use and gratification posits that individuals utilise various communication resources available in their physical environment to fulfil their needs and accomplish their objectives (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 2016).

Additionally, the theory posits that the accuracy of the data and information provided is contingent upon individuals possessing a sufficient level of awareness regarding their environment, interests, and motives. The aforementioned interests and motives are acknowledged when faced with responses that exhibit comprehensible and recognisable verbal expression in real-life situations (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 2016). According to the theory, value judgements regarding

the importance of communication to an audience are made based on the audience's orientation towards information that aligns with their goals and interests as consumers (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 2016).

Hence, satisfaction is derived from the achievement of objectives that every information provider has presented to a specific audience with a particular interest. The theory posits that audience gratification can be obtained from a minimum of three distinct sources: media content, exposure to the media itself, and the social context that characterises the situation of exposure to various media. The aforementioned postulations of the use and gratification theory explicate the functions of social media and the involvement of young individuals in the 2023 Nigerian general election. The statement posits that social media content is intentionally crafted with a particular audience in mind and serves a specific purpose.

In addition, the text elucidates the manner in which news content producers disseminate information, including text, images, videos, and audio, through their social media accounts with the intention of achieving a specific objective. The dissemination of data and information through social media platforms serves as a means to promote the engagement of young individuals in the political sphere, particularly in relation to the 2023 general elections. Moreover, the theory underscores that the younger generation engaged in political procedures as a result of the discussions arising from various social media platforms.

Furthermore, the notion that satisfaction is derived from the results of engaging in voting behaviours that oppose a specific candidate elucidates the significance of social media's dissemination and exchange of information. This implies that adolescents are influenced by the content they consume, whether it be through reading, listening, or sharing sentiments via social media. The cumulative impact of

various factors resulted in an increased mobilisation of voters, heightened awareness of candidates, and informed decision-making, ultimately leading to active participation in the most recent 2023 general election.

However, the theoretical framework exhibits certain limitations. The theory assumes that gratification is a social construct. The concept of gratification is a result of social construction, making it challenging to precisely ascertain the degree to which media content serves as a genuine influencing factor for political engagement or decision-making among young individuals in a given context. However, this does not diminish the significance of the theory in elucidating the phenomenon.

Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate the phenomenon of youth participation in the political process and its potential implications for character reformation and attitudinal change. The research aims to shed light on the potential impact of political engagement via social media on youth's personal growth, character development, and attitudinal shifts. This study employed a qualitative approach, specifically a phenomenological design, as it sought to explore the subjective experiences and meanings attributed by young individuals to their political participation. Phenomenology allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' lived experiences, perceptions, and motivations within the context of their political engagement. The present study employed a qualitative methodology for data collection.

The study's data was gathered in three distinct phases: prior to voting, during voting, and post-voting. The study collected primary data by conducting in-depth interviews with young individuals who took part in the 2023 general election in Nigeria. Participants were be selected purposively to ensure representation of a diverse range of youth

engaged in political activities. The sample includes individuals between the ages of 18 and 39 who have actively participated in political campaigns, movements, advocacy groups, or youth organisations involved in political issues.

The study recruited participants via social media platforms, including *Facebook*, *X (Twitter)*, and notably *Nairaland* (www.nairaland.com). The researchers devised an online invitation and consent form utilising Google Forms and subsequently disseminated the hyperlink on the website. The research also employed a snowball sampling method to guarantee that the respondents enlisted additional participants in the investigation. The categorization of individuals as youth was based on their age, specifically within the range of 18–39 years. Any entries exceeding the age of 40 were deemed invalid. Consequently, out of 237 initial entries for the study, a total of 26 young people participated in the three stages of the data collection.

Using a thematic analysis approach, the collected interview data was transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically. The development of overarching themes and sub-themes came after closely reading the transcripts to generate the initial codes. The analysis was iterative, with the themes refined and validated through discussions among the research team. The analysis was continuing until data saturation was achieved, no new themes or insights emerged, and a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon was obtained.

Result

Table 1: Participants sociodemographic information

S/N	Name (real name withheld)	Gender	Age	Three stages of participation
1	MRA	Male	28	Yes
2	MAA	Male	24	Yes
3	ABE	Female	31	Yes
4	ABB	Male	20	Yes
5	ACD	Female	33	Yes
6	SDA	Male	25	Yes
7	VES	Male	30	Yes
8	KAN	Female	30	Yes
9	NDA	Male	27	Yes
10	VED	Male	31	Yes
11	VRS	Female	19	Yes
12	DCC	Female	39	Yes
13	VVS	Female	34	Yes
14	BVS	Female	23	Yes
15	BSR	Male	26	Yes
16	SRG	Female	28	Yes
17	BRS	Female	21	Yes
18	WAF	Female	20	Yes
19	HEH	Female	22	Yes
20	TSG	Female	32	Yes
21	ZMR	Male	36	Yes
22	NRE	Female	39	Yes
23	ZMT	Female	33	Yes

24	NGD	Female	25	Yes
25	ERS	Female	28	Yes
26	HEE	Male	25	Yes

Source: Field study (2023)

Table 1 presents the sociodemographic information of the participants in the study. The participants' names have been withheld for confidentiality purposes. There is a total of 26 participants, including both males and females. The age of the participants ranges from 19 to 39 years. All participants have been involved in the three stages of the data collection process: before, during, and after the 2023 election.

Table 2: Responses before and during voting in the 2023 general election in Nigeria

Q1: Would you participate in the coming election and why?	Q2: What informs your choice of candidate in the coming general election?	Q3: Do you think Nigerian youth will participate in the voting process of the fourth coming general election, and why?	Q4: How would you describe social media's influence on youth participation in the coming election?
Yes, because I think I like a few of the candidates.	I am a presidential candidate because I believe it is time for a younger president.	Yes, because I think the majority of the youth are tired of the present administration.	Social media has mostly informed the youth about a better candidate.

Yes, because it is my right to vote.	My candidate is from the eastern part of the country.	The ruling political party's policies are not human-friendly.	SM has helped a lot of youth know more about candidates contesting in the election.
Yes, because it is my civic duty to do so.	My preferred candidate is credible and young.	Yes, because youths have been badly affected by the ruling party's economic policies.	A lot of youth are encouraged to participate because of the information at their disposal through various social media platforms.
Yes, because I am tired of the present administration.	My chosen candidate is well experienced in public governance.	Yes, because X (Twitter) was banned some time ago.	Political engagement on social media has created more political awareness among youth.
Yes, because I need to contribute to the development of my nation through voting.	My candidate has a political track record of governance.	Yes, because of too much insecurity and bad governance generally.	Social media has a lot of influence on youth participation because it is mostly where they get information about almost everything they need to know.

Source: Field study (2023)

Table 2 presents the responses of participants before and during the voting in the just concluded 2023 general election in Nigeria. The table includes four questions (Q1–Q4) and some of the participants' corresponding answers. In the first question, the majority of the participants' responses indicate that they are willing to participate in the election. Reasons cited include liking a few of the candidates, considering it their right to vote, seeing it as a civic duty, and being tired of the present administration (bad governance). However, question two, which examined what informed participants choices of most preferred candidates, shows that the majority of the participants' choices of candidates are influenced by factors such as the candidate being younger, coming from a specific region of the country, being credible and experienced in public governance, and having a political track record of governance.

Also, in Q3, participants expressed the belief that Nigerian youth would participate in the voting process. Reasons given include youth being tired of the present administration, youth being affected by unfavourable economic policies of the ruling party, and the availability of information on candidates through social media platforms. In Q4, participants perceived social media as having a significant influence on youth participation in the election. Social media platforms are seen as a source of information about candidates and their policies, creating political awareness among youth and encouraging them to participate in the political process. Generally, the responses suggest that participants have various motivations and considerations when it comes to their participation in the upcoming election, with social media playing a prominent role in shaping their perceptions and decisions.

Table 3: Responses after voting in the 2023 general election in Nigeria

Q1: How would you describe the electioneering process in general, and why your choice of description?	Q2: How would you describe the turnout of young people during the election?	Q3: Based on the electioneering process, do you think Nigerian youth might be willing to participate in the subsequent general election, and why?	Q4: What do you think should be done to increase youth participation in the electioneering process in Nigeria?
This election wasn't satisfactory because there was too much fraud in the electoral process.	There was massive youth turnout during some elections, like the presidential election. However, based on the result of the [residential election], a lot of youth were discouraged from participating in the gubernatorial elections.	A lot of youth were discouraged after the presidential election because of the perceived insincerity of the electoral umpire.	I think the electoral umpire should be more transparent in the electoral process.
There was too much fraud in the process.	Youth were interested in participating in the process. However, they got	The process was mired in electoral fraud in different states across the country. This	Youth should be more enlightened about their vital roles in

	discouraged after the presidential election because of the ingenuity of the electoral umpire or institute.	might affect the youth's willingness to participate in subsequent elections.	the electoral process and governance.
Tribalism was the reason some young people voted, not based on the candidate's manifesto.	Youth turnout was average in general.	I think Nigerian youth are gradually getting interested in who governs them, which might influence participation in the subsequent electoral process.	Electoral violence and fraud should be drastically reduced to encourage more youth participation.
The process was not totally free, and fear surrounded the electorate.	Youth turnout was encouraging in the southern part of the country compared to previous elections.	I don't think the youth might want to participate further than they did this year because a lot of the youth were discouraged about how the election result was fraudulently manipulated and resented in several states.	Electoral laws should further encourage more young people's participation in the electoral process, such as contesting for vital positions.

The process was mired in electoral fraud.	There was massive youth turnout in the south during the presidential election, majorly	No, because Nigerian youths are disappointed in the outcome of some of the results. Most importantly, the presidential and some gubernatorial results	Political parties can encourage more young people to contest for inclusion.
The process was averagely good compared to what it used to be before now.	When compared to elections in 2015 and 2019, youth turnout is gradually increasing but not yet as much as expected in terms of their population size both in the country and the registered number for the election.	I think awareness is increasing in every general electoral circle, so more participation should be expected from the youth in the subsequent election.	Transparency in the electoral process would encourage more youth participation in the election.

Source: Field study (2023)

Table 3 presents the responses of participants after voting in the 2023 general election in Nigeria. The table includes four questions (Q1–Q4) and the participants' corresponding answers. The summary from the first question showed that the majority of the participants' descriptions of the electioneering process varied. Some describe it as unsatisfactory, citing reasons such as fraud, electoral irregularities, the ingenuity of the

electoral umpire, and tribalism influencing voting choices. Others consider the process to be marred by electoral fraud or averagely good compared to previous elections. In the second question, participants' descriptions of the turnout of young people also vary. Some mention a massive youth turnout, especially during the presidential election.

However, it is noted that youth turnout decreased or varied across different elections, with some youth getting discouraged after the presidential election. Responses based on question three showed that participants' opinions differed about Nigerian youth's willingness to participate in subsequent general elections. Some express optimism, stating that Nigerian youth are gradually getting interested in governance and that their participation might increase. Others mention that youth might not be willing to participate further due to discouragement from fraudulent manipulation of election results. However, based on the responses gathered from the last question, participants suggest various measures to increase youth participation.

These include increasing transparency in the electoral process, reducing electoral violence and fraud, enlightening youth about their roles in governance and the electoral process, and creating electoral laws that encourage more young people to participate, such as allowing them to contest for important positions. Therefore, the responses highlight concerns about electoral fraud, discouragement among youth, and the need for transparency and youth empowerment to enhance their participation in subsequent elections. The opinions indicate a mix of optimism and scepticism regarding youth engagement in the electoral process.

Discussion of findings

Based on the findings presented in this study, specifically in Table 2, it is evident that the responses of the participants reflect a range of motivations and considerations regarding their participation in the 2023

general election in Nigeria. These findings provide insights into the factors that influence participants' choices and perceptions, as well as the role of social media in shaping their decision-making processes. In response to the first question (Q1) regarding willingness to participate in the election, participants cited multiple reasons for their readiness to engage in the electoral process.

These reasons include liking certain candidates, considering voting their right, recognising it as a civic duty, and expressing dissatisfaction with the present administration's governance. This suggests that participants are driven by both personal preferences and a sense of responsibility towards their nation. Furthermore, the second question (Q2) delved into the factors informing participants' choices of preferred candidates. The responses indicate that participants' decisions are influenced by various considerations. These include the candidate's age, regional affiliation, credibility, experience in public governance, and track record in political leadership.

These factors reflect the participants' desire for change, representation from specific regions, and confidence in candidates with relevant experience and a proven record of effective governance. Regarding participants' beliefs about Nigerian youth participation in the voting process (Q3), the responses indicate a general consensus among participants. The reasons given for expecting youth involvement include their disillusionment with the current administration, the adverse impact of the ruling party's economic policies on young people, and the availability of candidate information through social media platforms. These findings highlight the perception that youth are actively seeking alternatives and are likely to participate in the election to voice their concerns and push for change.

Lastly, participants' views on the influence of social media on youth participation (Q4) reveal a strong acknowledgment of its significance.

Social media platforms are seen as crucial sources of information about candidates, their policies, and the overall political landscape. Additionally, social media is credited with creating political awareness among youth and motivating them to actively participate in the electoral process. This finding underscores the transformative power of social media in shaping political discourse and mobilising young voters.

The findings discussed above align with previous research highlighting the impact of personal preferences, civic duty, dissatisfaction with governance, candidate characteristics, and social media on voter behaviour and youth participation in elections (Boulianne, 2015; Osumah, 2016; Marcos-Marne et al., 2019; Ojolo & Adeoluwa Adewumi, 2020; Obisesan, 2022). The results emphasise the need for counsellors, mass communicators, and social scientists to consider these factors when designing interventions, crafting persuasive messages, and conducting research related to character reformation, attitudinal change, and youth engagement in the political process.

The findings obtained from the participants' responses in Table 3 provide valuable insights into the perception of Nigerian youth regarding the 2023 general election and their willingness to participate in subsequent elections. The discussion below will delve into these findings, supported by relevant citations. It is evident that there were concerns about the electoral process, with participants highlighting issues such as fraud, the ingenuity of the electoral umpire, and tribalism influencing voting choices. This aligns with the existing literature on elections in Nigeria, which has documented challenges related to electoral fraud, lack of transparency, and the influence of ethnic and regional factors on voting patterns (Osumah 2010; Bariika Nornubari Vite et al., 2020). The participants' descriptions reflect the need for electoral reforms and increased transparency to restore confidence in the electoral process.

Secondly, the turnout of young people during the election was mixed, according to the participants. While some mentioned massive youth turnout, particularly during the presidential election, others noted a decrease in participation after the election due to discouragement caused by perceived electoral irregularities. This finding resonates with the notion that youth participation in elections is influenced by various factors, including their perception of the credibility of the process and the impact of their votes (Akinyetun, 2021). It also highlights the need for continuous engagement and motivation among young people throughout the electoral cycle to sustain their participation.

Furthermore, participants expressed diverse opinions regarding the willingness of Nigerian youth to participate in subsequent general elections. Optimistic views suggest that youth interest in governance is gradually increasing, leading to an expected rise in their participation in future elections. This perspective aligns with the notion that increased political awareness and growing dissatisfaction with the status quo can motivate youth to engage in the political process (Akinyetun, 2021; Osumah, 2016). However, some participants expressed scepticism, citing discouragement caused by fraudulent manipulation of election results, particularly in the presidential and gubernatorial races. This highlights the importance of addressing issues of electoral integrity and building trust among young voters to sustain their engagement in subsequent elections.

Lastly, participants provided suggestions to increase youth participation in the electoral process. The recommendations included enhancing transparency, reducing electoral violence and fraud, empowering youth through education on their roles in governance, and creating favourable electoral laws that encourage young people to contest for important positions. These suggestions align with previous research, which emphasises the significance of transparency, youth empowerment, and

institutional reforms in fostering youth political participation (Osumah, 2016; Ogunfeso et al., 2021; Akinyetun, 2021).

Conclusion and recommendations

This study has been able to provide valuable insights into the factors influencing youth participation in the 2023 general election in Nigeria. The findings highlight the motivations and considerations of young voters, as well as the role of social media in shaping their perceptions and decisions. Findings from the study showed that participants expressed a willingness to participate in the election, citing reasons such as liking certain candidates, considering it their right and civic duty to vote, and being dissatisfied with the present administration.

Furthermore, the participants' choices of preferred candidates were influenced by factors such as the candidates' age, regional background, credibility, experience in public governance, and track record. Furthermore, participants acknowledged the potential for Nigerian youth to participate in the voting process, citing reasons such as dissatisfaction with the present administration's economic policies and the availability of information on candidates through social media platforms.

Additionally, social media was perceived to have a significant influence on youth participation, as it served as a source of information about candidates and their policies and created political awareness among youth. These findings underscore the importance of addressing youth concerns, enhancing transparency and accountability in the electoral process, promoting youth representation, and leveraging social media for political education. By implementing the recommended strategies, including strengthening civic education, fostering transparency, promoting youth-friendly policies, and facilitating youth collaboration, stakeholders can work towards increasing youth engagement and ensuring their active participation in subsequent elections.

Conclusively, the results of this study emphasise the need for targeted efforts to empower and involve young people in the political process, as their participation is crucial for the development of a vibrant and inclusive democracy in Nigeria.

Based on these study findings, the following are recommended:

Strengthen Civic Education Programmes: Implement comprehensive civic education programmes in schools and communities to educate young people about their rights, the importance of political participation, and the electoral process. These programmes should emphasise critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and the role of youth in shaping the future of the country.

Enhance Transparency and Accountability: Improve transparency and accountability in the electoral process to build trust among young voters. Electoral institutions should ensure fair and credible elections, investigate and address allegations of electoral fraud, and provide timely and accurate information to the public. This can help restore faith in the electoral process and encourage youth to participate.

Promote Youth Representation: Encourage political parties and organisations to actively involve young people in decision-making processes and promote youth representation in political positions. This can be achieved through affirmative action policies, mentorship programmes, and support for young candidates running for office.

Foster Youth-Friendly Policies: Develop and implement policies that address the specific concerns and interests of young people. This includes addressing youth unemployment, improving access to quality education, providing affordable housing, and promoting entrepreneurship opportunities. By addressing these issues, young people will be more motivated to participate in elections and engage in the political process.

Utilise Social Media for Political Education: Leverage the power of social media platforms to provide accurate and balanced information about candidates, their policies, and the electoral process. Create campaigns and initiatives that promote digital literacy, critical thinking, and the responsible sharing of information. Social media can be an effective tool for engaging young voters and increasing their political awareness.

Encourage Youth Collaboration and Networking: Facilitate opportunities for young people to collaborate, network, and exchange ideas on political issues. This can be done through youth-led organisations, forums, and conferences. By connecting with like-minded individuals and engaging in discussions, young people can become more informed and empowered to participate in the political process.

Address Electoral Violence and Intimidation: Take proactive measures to prevent and address electoral violence and intimidation, which can discourage youth participation. Strengthen security measures during elections, enforce laws against electoral violence, and provide channels for reporting incidents. Creating a safe and inclusive electoral environment is essential for encouraging young people to exercise their right to vote.

Long-Term Monitoring and Evaluation: Continuously monitor and evaluate the impact of interventions aimed at increasing youth participation in elections. This will help identify successful strategies and areas for improvement, allowing for adjustments and refinements in future initiatives.

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