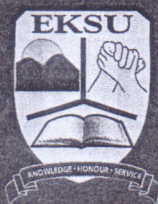


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**Youth Electoral Participation, Youth Electoral Violence And Electioneering Process In Osun State****Isiaq, A.A.; Fagbamila, D. O.; Fagbamila, A.S & Orekoya, Olawande**Department of Sociology,
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olufagba@gmail.com**Abstract**

Youths in Nigeria are part of the driving force of political activities like in the electoral process. Their enthusiasm toward participation in elections in Nigeria has been sustaining the democratic election value in the country. It is however observed that youths are not popular as elector or occupants of political office(s) upon all their vigorous involvement in all other political events. This research assessed the motive for youths' participation in the electoral process in Osun State which is the study area. Also, the mixed research design was used such that both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered through questionnaire and in-depth interview. Descriptive statistics of tables, frequency distribution and percentages were used to analyse the questionnaire while content analysis was used to analyse the in-depth interview. Our findings revealed that youth's population in Osun state are mostly low-income earners, gasping for economic sustenance and therefore consider election participation as a survival means. They participate mostly in the electoral process, not because of loyalty to exercise their civic right, but it is due to factors like material gifts from the politicians, job promises and, or infrastructural facilities promises by the adult politicians etc. The research, therefore, recommended that governments at all levels in Nigeria should consider youth for better electoral education, while INEC and political parties should also work out mechanisms internally aimed at enhancing youth participation at the governance level.

Introduction

The local government in Nigeria is the closest In every democratic setting, an election is seen as a potent tool for choosing the desired leader into the elective position. In Nigeria, the current democratic dispensation was ushered in 1999 and has been characterized by various forms of violence, engineered by youths, though sponsored by politicians to rig or disrupt the election process. Records in Africa show that the youth are in the demographic majority and political (leadership) minority in Africa (Cleen, 2011). This has been the trend since colonial era when the youth all over Africa was at the forefront in the struggle for decolonization, political independence, and social liberation. Virtually all the key nationalists in Africa started as student union activists in Europe, America, and Africa. And many of them, who attended the Manchester pan-African conference in 1945, did so as student nationalist activists. Students have also been the vanguard and cadres of both old and new social movements in Africa. Their struggles had been animated by youth idealism and anxiety informed by a lived essentialism and social history (El- Kenz, 1996; Cleen, 2011).

All over the world, there is both a universal and specific context for the understanding of youth participation in politics and these had been informed or determined by the role and nature of productive forces in the society, the balance of forces, peer

influence and perception of generational, gender, racial divisions etc.

However, the historical development of Election in Nigeria dates back to the colonial period, between 1922 and 1959, saw the British Crown given residents of Lagos and Calabar limited franchise based on direct elections by secret ballot in line with the provisions of the elective principle of the Clifford Constitution of 1922. Despite the limitations that characterized earlier elections during the colonial era, for example, where a franchise is only restricted to Lagos and Calabar and which only involved Nigerians earning not less than 150 to 100 pounds, that still set the pace for modern elections in Nigeria.

Over the years, the franchise to Nigerians has widened such that earlier limitations to political participation by Nigerians have been constitutionally redressed. Besides, it appears that representation has been dominated by the men while youths have often been relegated to the background. Youth have suffered political marginalization in Nigeria since independence. Even though we massively see youth participating in voting, they are uncommonly elected into political offices in Nigeria.

Significantly speaking, the spate of violence experienced in pre-election, during an election and



post-election exercises in Nigeria, which are majorly anchored by youths is on the high side. It occurs in form of thuggery, use of force to disrupt political meetings or voting at polling stations or the use of dangerous weapons to intimidate voters and other electoral processes or to cause bodily harm or injury to any person connected with electoral processes (Usman, 2015). The resultant effect of this violent act, therefore, is inconclusive elections or cancellation of the votes. Such gesture may not be healthy to our nascent democracy in Nigeria.

The marginalization of Nigerian youths in the arena of politics particularly during elections and appointments into political offices has called for this research. Since the time Nigeria gained independence, what has been her experience is the recycling of the old generation of politicians in political offices, while youths have been excluded. It is clear that youths are rather been used by adult politicians as an instrument to advance their own political interest. Moreover, adult politicians in Nigeria engage in a recycling of political positions. Preferences seem not to be given to the youth, and the youths are already enshrined in their shackles.

Youths are common occupants of electoral activities in Nigeria as they are always spotted at the forefront of electoral interplay, for instance in vote casting and vote monitoring to elect occupant (s) of political offices. Despite the fact that youths have the right to vote and to be voted for, coupled with the fact of their diligence in exercising their civic right, it is observed that very few proportions of the youths are interested in participating genuinely in elections, that is, few of the youths in Nigeria participate in electoral activities after their electoral right. Even those who participated in the election may be employed as political hooliganism, thus causing violence and threatening the social order of the polity as a whole. This goes a long way in marring the election processes. The research thus tends to answer the following questions:

1. What are the nexus among youth participation, youth electoral violence and electioneering process in Osun state?
2. What is the extent of youth participation in last general election in Osun state?
3. What are the motivating factors that enhance youth participation in the election process in Osun state?

Objectives Of The Study

The aim of this research is to examine the nexus among youth participation, youth electoral violence,

and electioneering processes in Osun state. Other objectives of the study are to:

1. investigate the extent of youth participation in 2015 general election in Osun State
2. investigate factors that motivate youth participation in Osun State.

Literature Review

Conceptual Issues

Election and Electoral Processes

The concepts of an election, political participation and voting behaviour are closely interrelated as they are mutually reinforcing because they all revolve around the concept of democracy which upholds citizens' engagement in public affairs. Elections are the major component of political participation. Elections and voting are indispensable aspects of political engagement. The most common form of political participation is exercising the right to vote in elections (Flanigan and Zingale, 1998). The election is a basic component of a liberal democratic political system. This assertion is underscored by the fact that democratic representation is built on elections.

Gwinn and Norton (2007), described the election as the formal process of selection of persons for public office or accepting or registering a political proposition by voting. He states that election serves as a means by which a society may organize itself and make specified formal decisions, adding that where voting is free, it acts simultaneously as a system for making certain decisions regarding the power relation in a society, and as a method for seeking political obedience with a minimum sacrifice of the individual freedoms. An election is a mean through which the citizens of a country elect their leaders by consideration of the programme statement each of the contestants proposed to implement if elected.

Okpaga, (2007) sees electoral process as all the practices that are embedded in the general electoral process. He added that electoral process is a more comprehensive form of a democratic system that entails the selection or election of people into positions of leadership. Okpaga's view provided for the steps involved in election conduct, but it never provided for security measure for a likelihood of when a group is subjugated from any aspect of participation. Heywood (2007), sees electoral process as nothing less than democracy in practice and that elections are the nerve centre of the political process.

Youths

The concept of youth has been subjected to diverse interpretations and flexible usage. Nigeria has a



population of about one Hundred and Forty people (NPC, 2006) which makes her the most populated Nation in Africa. The Nigerian National Youth Policy (2001), defines youth as comprising all young persons between the ages of 18 and 35 years old who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria ([http://nigeria.unfpa.org/young people.html](http://nigeria.unfpa.org/young%20people.html)). Increasingly, youth identified in contemporary Africa has become synonymous with unemployment and poverty in which young people continue to depend on their parent or relatives, making them in many respects 'adult youths' (Obi, 2006). It also explains why such youths are available to be exploited by older people to act as perpetrator or victims of political subjugation. People under the age of 35 are rarely found in formal political leadership positions in the third world countries, and it is common practice to refer to politicians as 'young' if they are below 35-40 years of age.

Youths and Elections in Nigeria

Since Nigeria's independent in 1960, various elections have been conducted amongst are 1959, 1979, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 elections. These elections were held under various rules. Moreso, since the return of Nigeria to democratic rule on May 29, 1999, youth participation in Nigerian politics as elector have been minimal as they are often marginalized in key elective positions even though they are more active in other aspects of electoral process than the adults that dominate the political positions, for example, youths are mostly active in political campaigns, vote casting even among the officials like election monitors, observers and INEC polling officers (Durotoye, 2014).

The 2015 General Elections in Nigeria, which was held on March 28th (for Presidential and National Assembly) and on April 14th (for the governorship and State Houses of Assembly) represents a renaissance in the democratic and electoral travelogue of the country. In sharp contrast to the electoral practice of machine politics (Ibeanu, 2007) experienced in previous elections in which the ruling party had always won landslide victories under perfidious and obnoxious circumstances to perpetuate itself in the corridors of power, this time around, there was a radical departure. In the new experience, the electoral firmament underwent a profound metamorphosis as the nation witnessed the occurrence of something unusual in the political playing realm with the minority party gallantly clinching a decisive victory, or to put it bluntly, resoundingly defeated the ruling party to formally bring to an end its sixteen years of stay in power.

Indeed, for the first time, transition elections made it possible for power to change hands at the Federal level from the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) to the All Progressive Congress (APC), with the defeat of the incumbent Goodluck Jonathan by Gen. Muhammadu Buhari (rtd). The APC presidential candidate scored a total of 15,424,921 votes to beat the PDP presidential candidate who scored 12,853,162 votes (inec.gov.ng, 2015).

Involvement of young people in the 2015 electoral process has been relatively reduced compare to the run-up of the 2011 general election. This is clear as it has been made manifest in the low turnout of electorates which constitutes mainly of youths in recent general elections compared to the turn-out in the Nation's 2011 general elections (Abubakar and Mukhtar, 2016). Amongst the reasons which were identified as instigating voter apathy, particularly amongst youths in Nigeria are, firstly, youths view electoral issues as a highly complex subject to their current lives and problems. Secondly, the negative branding of politicians (too many cartoons on the social and traditional media that brand politics negatively) and thirdly, too many old bandwagon politicians (recycled politicians) in the political arena (Abubakar and Mukhtar, 2016). The vane promises made by older politicians and lack of political will which manifested in most of their policies have rendered the youths helpless. Moreso, the neglect of the youth from their involvement in the cabinet and other elective positions have equally made the youths to be resilient in a bit towards electoral participation in the state.

Moreover, like the case of Osun state, due to the judiciary judgment delay between Olagunsoye Oyinlola, the then incumbent governor of Osun state and Rauf Aregbesola, who was the Action Congress of Nigeria gubernatorial candidate in the state, on who won the election and subsequent handling over of power to the new governor did not take place until November 27, 2010. This situation led to why gubernatorial elections in Osun state could not hold in 2011, but in 2014.

According to the 2006 National Population Census, the population of Osun State is put at 3.4 million (NPC, 2006). Even though 20 political parties presented candidates for the August 2014 governorship election, it was apparent that the Osun governorship election was a straight fight between the APC and the PDP. The All Progressives Congress (APC) was formed on 6 February 2013 as a result of an alliance by Nigeria's four biggest opposition parties – the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC),



the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), and a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) – which merged to become a progressive party to take on the conservative People's Democratic Party. The party received approval from the nation's electoral umpire Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on 31 July 2013 to become a political party and subsequently withdrew the operating licenses of the three previous merging parties (the ACN, CPC and ANPP).

On 25 November 2013, five governors in the existing ruling party, PDP, decided to join APC, as well as 49 federal legislators giving APC a slim majority of 186 legislators in the federal House of Representatives and 58 Senators. (Durotoye, 2014). The turn-out of voters on August 9, 2014 recorded 54.17% of eligible voters majorly youths. There was no single case of ballot snatching or ballot stuffing. This was due to many reasons, among other are; INEC customized all ballot papers according to local governments such that ballots papers assigned to a particular local government were peculiar to it and cannot be used in another. Also, The Commission customized all result sheets such that they were unique to each Polling Unit (PU) and they could not be used in any other. Moreso, The Commission serially numbered all ballot boxes such that they could not be transferred to other PUs and so that if a ballot box is snatched and stuffed it cannot be brought back to the PU (Durotoye, 2014). According to the election results released by INEC on the morning of August 10, 2014, the APC candidate won the majority vote and was declared the winner of the election. Rauf Aregbesola won in twenty-three (23) local government areas polling a total vote of 394,684 while the PDP candidate, Iyiola Omisore won in seven (7) local government areas with a total vote of 292,747. Most observers praised INEC for performing above average in the Osun election. The election built a growing confidence and positive disposition among Nigerians about INEC's ability. Youth's vigorous participation in this election cannot be under mentioned. Youths massively participated at all level of electoral process cut across the thirty (30) local government areas of the state, like, voters registration, massive vote casting, election monitoring, observation of result sorting and counting, all to ensure performance of civic responsibilities, smooth and fair conduct of the election.

Methodology

The study explored mixed research design such that both quantitative and qualitative data were used in

the study. The design was adopted because it allows for the objective description of existing phenomenon and detailed information on youth electoral participation (Agba, 2010). The study elicited data from the respondents using questionnaires and in-depth interview. Purposive sampling technique was used to select two hundred and twenty (220) respondents across the state, but only 200 questionnaires were able to be retrieved from the respondents. The rationale behind the use of in-depth interview technique was that few of the respondents were not literate and secondly, it was due to the need to seek the electorate's detailed view of their participation in that election. Therefore, some selected youths across the state were interviewed. The descriptive statistics of tables, frequency distribution and percentages were used to analyse the two principal section of the questionnaire while content analysis technique was used to analyse the qualitative data derived from the in-depth interview as well as other secondary data.

Presentation of Data and Discussion of Findings

Table 1. Socio-demographic Data of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age	(18-23)	43
	(24-29)	94
	(30-35)	60
	No Response	3
	Total	200
Gender	Male	147
	Female	53
	Total	200
Marital Status	Married	36
	Single	136
	Separated	28
	Total	200
Educational Qualification	No formal education	19
	Primary	26
	School/equivalent	34
	SSCE/equivalent	76
	ND/NCE/equivalent	38
	HND/BSC/equivalent	7
	Postgraduate/equivalent	200
Employment status	Employed	51
	Unemployed	149
	Total	200

Source: Author's Field work (2016)

Table 1 above represents the socio-demographic information on Age, gender, marital status, educational qualification and employment status of the respondents. The study shows that youths within the age bracket(18-23) formed 43(21.5%), age bracket (24-29) formed 94(47%), and age bracket (30-35) formed 60 (30%), while those who did not respond to age formed 3 (1.5%). This data shows that the youths from age 24 and 35 are more politically active as the two categories formed 77%

of the total participation. The table also shows that 147(73.5%) of the respondents are males while 53 (26.5%) of the respondents were females. This implies that majority of the respondents are males. This may be as result of the fact that male constitutes the larger population of Nigerian youths that participate in political activities especially in Osun state. On marital status, the study reveals that 36(18%) of the respondents are married, 136(68%) of the respondents are single while 28(14%) of the respondents are separated. This implies that majority of the respondents are singles. In terms of educational background, 19(9.5%) of the respondents have no formal education, 26(13%) of the respondents have primary school certificates and equivalent, 34(17%) of the respondents are SSCE holders and equivalent, 76(38%) of the respondents are OND/NCE holders and equivalent, 38(19%) of the respondents are HND/B.Sc holders and equivalent while 7(3.5%) of the respondents are postgraduate degree holders. This implies that majority of the respondents are OND/NCE holders. This research outcome is a pointer to the fact that youths in Osun state are well educated. Lastly in this segment, 51(25.5%) of the respondents are employed while 149(74.5%) of the respondents are unemployed. Thus, majority of the respondents are unemployed. This equally justifies the prevailing high rate of unemployment in the country.

Table 2- Distribution of Respondent Based on Electoral

Electoral Participation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	157	78.5
No	40	20.0
I don't know	3	1.5
TOTAL	200	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork (2016)

In table 2 above, the outcome shows that 157(78.5%) of the respondents participated in the last general election, 40(20%) of the respondents did not participate while 3(1.5%) of the respondents do not know. Thus, the majority of the respondents participated in the last general election conducted in Osun state. This outcome is a depiction that political participation was handsome to a good extent among youths in Osun state because majority participated in the election process.

Table 3- Distribution of Respondents by Voting Right

Voting Right	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	69	34.5
No	127	63.5
I don't know	4	2
TOTAL	200	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork (2016)

From the above table, 69(34.5%) of the respondents agreed that they voted in the last general election because they wanted to exercise their voting rights, 127(63.5%) of the respondents disagreed that they voted in the last general election because they want to exercise their voting rights while 4(2%) of the respondents don't know. Thus, the majority of the respondents disagreed that they voted in the last general election because they want to exercise their voting rights. This outcome is further corroborated by the data gotten from the in-depth interview conducted:

Some of us came out to vote not because we want to vote but because of the, we want to get some benefits. I personally came out because I know something must be available to share (Interview: Oni, 2016)

Research Question Three: What are the factors that motivate youth participation in Olorunda Local Government?

Table 4- Distribution of Respondents by Financial Gratification, Employment Slot and Promise of Provision of Infrastructural Facilities

Financial Gratification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	123	68
No	74	23
I don't know	3	9
TOTAL	200	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork (2016)

Furthermore, from the table 4 above, 123(68%) of the respondents see financial gratification as the main reason why they participate in electoral process in the last general election, 74(23%) of the respondents did not see financial gratification as the main reason why they participate in electoral process in the last general election while 3(9%) of the respondents don't know. This implies that

majority of the respondents see financial gratification as the main reason why they participated in the electoral process in the last general election. This outcome is further corroborated by the data gotten from the in-depth interview:

I came out to vote because we were promised that we will be given money and they gave us N5,000 each that day. In other places, they were given N2,000. Moreso, we came out en-masse during the election campaign because they gave us N5,000 (Interview: Olawale, 2016).

Table 5- Distribution of Respondents Based on Employment Slot

Employment Slot	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	132	66.0
No	63	31.5
I don't know	5	2.5
Total	200	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork (2016)

The above table shows that 132(66%) of the respondents see employment slot as the main reason why they participated in electoral process in the last general election, 63(31.5%) of the respondents do not see employment slot as the main reason why they participated in electoral process in the last general election while 4(6%) of the respondents don't know. Thus, the majority of the respondents see employment slot as the main reason why they participated in the electoral process in the last general election. This outcome is further supported by one of the respondents in an in-depth interview:

I came out to vote not because I felt like voting but because they promised us they would give us employment slots at both federal and state level because I don't have a job but unfortunately, till now, we are yet to see any trace of employment. In fact, they are owing to their staff salary till now" (Interview: Surajudeen, 2016).

Table 6- Distribution of Respondents by Infrastructural Facilities

Infrastructural Facilities	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	143	71.5
No	54	27.0
I don't know	3	1.5
TOTAL	200	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork (2016)

The table above depicts that 143(71.5%) of the respondents see provision of infrastructural facilities as the main reason why they participated in electoral process in the last general election, 54(27%) of the respondents did not see provision of infrastructural facilities as the main reason why they participated in electoral process in the last general election while 10(10%) of the respondents don't know. Therefore, the majority of the respondents see the provision of infrastructural facilities as the main reason why they participated in the electoral process in the last general election.

Research Question Four: How can youth participation be enhanced in Osun State?

A number of interview respondents gave their views on this subject matter. Few of them were randomly selected though. The first respondent was of the view that council of youth vanguards should be called for retreat and agreement should be met among the youths on singular support for the contestant youths at all levels of government provided they have a good programme for the people. "...youths in all Nigeria should come for the meeting and all youth should be informed to vote for youths like them in their various places in the country if they are serious (Interview: Ahmed, 2016)".

Another respondent suggested that the national assembly can constitute a provision providing for quota slot for the youth at least, in the parliament at all levels of government in Nigeria. "...National assembly should make a law to give youth slot in all legislative houses in the country that only youth can occupy (Interview: Olawale, 2016)".

Lastly, this respondent's view is clamoring for economic enhancement for the youths. He is of the view that lack of economic viability of the most youth in the country accounts for their fate of marginalization in elector positions. He, therefore, suggested that the adult politicians or government should keep their promises of job provision and well-enabled business environment to the youths so that they can have their standard of living enhanced and have saving to doctor their political ambition goal.

"...government should provide job and give money for business so that we youths can also become rich so that we can also come out to become political office holder in this country (Interview: Moses, 2016)".



Discussions of Findings

So far, we have been able to assess youth electoral participation in the last general election using Southwestern Nigeria as the case study and the research has deduced the following. Firstly, it was found that appreciable number of youths in Osun state in Nigeria participated in the last general election held in the state last year, though not as much as 2011 general elections. The implication of this finding is that youths in the region are generally politically active and not politically apathy.

Secondly, it was also found that majority of the youths who voted in the local Government did so not because they wanted to exercise their franchise, but because of the unholy benefits that will be derived in the course of voting. This gesture posed by the youths in this area should be taken with utmost seriousness by the government so that it won't have an adverse political effect on the state political structure and the country as a whole. This outcome also supported the view of Akinboye (1987), that youths' involvement in the election process is as a result of political benefits promised but which are not fulfilled.

Thirdly, it was found that majority of the respondents participated in the electoral process in the last general election because of financial gratification. It revealed that most of the respondents voted because they were promised a certain amount of money and during the campaign as well. Such gesture may be inevitable due to the high rate of poverty in the state. Fourthly, it was found that majority of the respondents participated in the electoral process in the last general election because of the promise of employment slot by politicians. It is not a gainsaying that unemployment is rampant in our society, thus getting such promise of employment opportunities may trigger them to vote en-mass for their chosen candidates. This outcome revalidates the view of Abubakar and Mukhtar (2016) that employment opportunity promises made youths to participate in political activities in Nigeria.

Lastly, it was found that majority of the respondents participated in the electoral process in the last general election because of promises of infrastructural facilities. This is because some areas in the local government don't have good roads, pipe-borne water supply, transformers, boreholes etc. and the politicians promised them to make all these social amenities available if they are voted for.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study has critically examined youth electoral participation, youth electoral violence and election

processing in general election using Osun state as our study area. The vain promises made by older politicians and lack of political will which manifested in most of their policies have rendered the youths helpless. Moreso, the neglect of the youth from their involvement in the cabinet and other elective positions have equally made the youths to be resilient in a bit towards electoral participation in the state. It deserves to be noted further that some positions that can be occupied by youths such as Special Advisers on youth matters or Commissioner for Youth Development are mostly being occupied by old politicians. Thus, this scenario has discouraged youths from genuinely and sincerely engaging in electoral processes in the local government area.

The youths who are often viewed as the future leaders have a right and responsibility to help shape that future and the quality of life that will be experienced therein. It is not ideal or appropriate for adults alone to decide on the balance between war and peace, the priorities and strength of the economy or the manner the environment should be preserved. Therefore, young leaders and voices are as equally as essential in the state decision making. As the biggest proportion of group in Nigeria, young people have often than not displayed a virile commitment to be more involved in policymaking. Younger generations can boost economic cum political processes of any society. To be able to make more impact in the future elections of the country, it is imperative to note here that youths are to be carried along in the processes of governance and they should be given a voice in the decision making processes of the country.

Moreso, the following recommendations should, therefore, be considered.

1. Government at all levels should endeavor to fulfill their promises made towards youths so as to encourage them to participate genuinely in the election.
2. The government should make available every necessary position meant for youths and not swap it to older people. Doing this would serve as motivation for the youths to engage in electoral processes in the state.
3. Equipping youths through education: Equipping youths by educating them is predicated on the explicit relationship between knowledge and development and in the conviction that it is the key element in the development of a nation and its people. Empowering in this context captures the true essence of development i.e. giving



people the adequate knowledge to determine and fulfill their destiny accordingly.

4. Youths should equally have a change in their political orientation. They should not see an election as an avenue for financial gratification or other benefits but rather, they should see it as a platform to exercise their voting right and platform to vote in the right candidate (s).

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