

THE EFFECTS OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT ON POLITICAL UNREST ANALYSING THE 2023 ELECTION CAMPAIGNS IN KANO STATE

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Abstract

The study investigates the effects of youth engagement on political unrest during the 2023 election campaigns in Kano State, Nigeria. The research was motivated by recurring incidents of political unrest in Nigeria, particularly during election periods, and sought to understand the role of youth in these events. The study aimed to examine the nature and extent of youth political engagement, identify factors influencing their participation. The study was delimited to youth aged 18-35 in Kano Municipal local government area. A survey research design was employed using a structured questionnaire. From a population of 700,000 youth in Kano Municipal, a sample of 384 respondents was selected using simple random sampling, with 380 valid responses obtained. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed high levels of youth participation in political activities, particularly through social media (96.1%), though many (64.5%) felt their views were not adequately represented by political parties. The study concluded that while youth engagement in politics was substantial, it was not always constructive or meaningful, contributing to frustration that could lead to unrest. Recommendations included establishing structured youth wings in political parties, implementing mandatory youth representation in political structures, expanding economic empowerment programs and developing comprehensive civic education programs

Keywords: Youth Engagements, Political Unrest, 2023 Election.

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Introduction

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, has faced a complex political landscape since independence in 1960, marked by military rule, ethnic tensions, and economic struggles. With 60% of its population under 30, youth engagement in politics is pivotal yet historically marginalized, often leading to frustration or radicalization. Recent movements like Not Too Young to Run (2018) and digital activism (e.g., the 2020 End SARS protests) have empowered youth, though challenges like poverty, unemployment, and entrenched political structures persist.

Political unrest in Nigeria stems from its turbulent history, including coups, the 1967–1970 civil war, and ongoing issues like election violence, Boko Haram insurgency, and farmer-herder conflicts. While democratic transitions since 1999 show progress, electoral irregularities (e.g., 2007 elections) and security crises continue to undermine stability. The End SARS protests highlighted youth-led demands for accountability but also tensions with state power.

Kano State, Nigeria's most populous state, holds significant political weight due to its demographics and economic role as a commercial hub. Influenced by Islamic culture (e.g., Sharia law) and traditional institutions like the Emirate, its politics are marked by party loyalties (PDP/APC) and electoral disputes (e.g., 2019 gubernatorial race). Youth engagement here focuses on unemployment and education, with social media amplifying activism. The 2023 elections underscored Kano's status as a battleground, reflecting its enduring influence in national politics. Tensions between traditional leaders and elected officials further shape its unique political dynamics.

Research Objectives

- i. To examine the nature and extent of youth engagement in political activities during the 2023 election campaigns in Kano State.
- ii. To identify the factors that influence youth participation in political processes and their potential involvement in political unrest in Kano State.

Research Questions

In view of the challenges highlighted above, the following research questions were formulate

- i. What are the nature and extent of youth engagement in political activities during the 2023 election campaigns in Kano State?
- ii. What factors influenced youth participation in political processes and their potential involvement in political unrest in Kano State?

Research Methodology

Research Design

Survey design was used for the purpose of this research work through structure questionnaire. Survey design is the process of developing a survey instrument, which includes questionnaires, interview schedules, or other tools for collecting data from a sample of individuals. The design of a survey is crucial as it determines the quality and reliability of the data collected, as well as the ability to answer the research questions effectively.

Population of the Study

The target population for this study comprises youth aged 18-35 residing in Kano Municipal, one out of the 44 local government areas in Kano State. Kano Municipal is a local government area located in Kano State, Nigeria, with a population of 1.2 million people which youth count 700,000 Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) Demographic Report (2022). The researchers used all the youth in the study area. The total population for the study was 700,000 youth.

Sample Size

The researchers employed methodology proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) for sample size determination within a specific population. For this study, the sample size would cover 384 respondents (youth) residing in Kano Municipal. However, the choice of 384 sample size

was based on suggestion given by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), who stated that in population above 100,000 then 384 can be sampled. Therefore, the sample size is 384.

Sampling Techniques

This research work adopts simple random sampling technique in selecting the sample. The technique ensures that all the elements in the population have equal chance of being included in the sample.

Instrument Data Collection

The researchers employed questionnaire as the primary instrument for data collection. The total of 384 questionnaire were distributed to sampled respondents by the researchers. The responses of the scale were weighted using Yes and No. The questionnaire was designed to capture quantitative data on the nature and extent of youth engagement in political activities during the 2023 election campaigns, factors that influence youth participation in political processes and proffer solutions to identified challenges. The instrument was subjected to rigorous validation processes with the help of research project supervisor

Validity of the Instrument

The research questionnaire underwent thorough validation by several expert in test and measurement to ensure it accurately measures what it intends to measure. The content validity was established through careful review by the research project supervisor and subject matter experts who was examined each question for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives which would help verify that the questions are clear and interpreted correctly. The suggestions from the validity was incorporated to improve the final questionnaire.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the questionnaire was determined through test-retest method where the questionnaire was administered to a small group of respondents twice, with a two-week interval between administrations in Fagge local government area. The responses from both rounds were compared to calculate the reliability coefficient. The internal consistency of the items were measured using Pearson Product Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) to show acceptable reliability scores.

Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher personally administered the research instrument (questionnaire) to the target respondents in Kano Municipal. However, the respondents was given instructions on how to complete the questionnaire for possible collection of data for analysis.

Method for Data Analysis

Data generated in the study, was analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. The descriptive analysis involves the use of frequency and percentages. Data analysis is the process of clearing, inspecting, transforming and modeling data with the aim of pointing out important/useful information, suggestions and conclusions that helps in decision making. According to Kothari (2019), data analysis is a process within which several phases can be distinguished.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Research Question One: What are the nature and extent of youth engagement in political activities during the 2023 election campaigns in Kano State?

Table 1: Youth Engagement in Political Activities

Items	Option	Frequency	Percentage
Did you participate in any political campaign activities during the 2023 elections?	Yes	380	100%
	No	0	0%
Were you registered as a voter for the 2023 elections?	Yes	380	100%
	No	0	0%
Did you attend any political rallies or campaign meetings during the 2023 election period?	Yes	291	76.6%
	No	89	23.4%
Did you share political content or discussions on social media during the election campaign?	Yes	365	96.1%
	No	15	3.9%
Were you involved in any voter education or mobilization initiatives?	Yes	214	56.3%
	No	116	43.7%

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 1 shows youth engagement in political activities, the results show full participation in political activities, with all 380 respondents confirming that they engaged in campaign activities and were registered voters. This reflects a high level of political consciousness among youth in Kano State. Previous studies, such as that of Ibrahim (2021), have noted that increased youth participation in elections is often driven by political awareness and the desire for change.

Attendance at political rallies and campaign meetings was also significant, with 76.6% of respondents actively participating in these events. This suggests that physical gatherings remained a major avenue for youth engagement. However, 23.4% did not attend, which may be due to security concerns, lack of interest, or preference for online engagement.

Social media played a critical role in youth political participation, with 96.1% of respondents sharing political content or engaging in discussions online. This confirms findings by Adebayo (2022), who highlighted the growing influence of digital platforms in shaping political opinions and mobilizing young voters in Nigeria. The small percentage (3.9%) who did not engage online could indicate either digital exclusion or personal reluctance to discuss political matters publicly.

Youth involvement in voter education and mobilization efforts stood at 56.3%, showing that over half of the respondents took an active role in encouraging voter participation. This aligns with research by Usman (2020), which found that youth-led initiatives were instrumental in increasing voter turnout in recent Nigerian elections. However, 43.7% were not involved in such efforts, possibly due to a lack of resources, political neutrality, or skepticism about the electoral process.

Overall, the results indicate strong youth engagement in political activities during the 2023 elections in Kano State, particularly through physical campaigns and social media activism. The high level of participation aligns with previous studies showing that young people are increasingly taking charge of political discourse. However, the variation in engagement methods suggests that while some preferred direct involvement, others engaged through

digital means. These findings reinforce the argument that meaningful youth inclusion in politics can contribute to democratic development while reducing tendencies toward political unrest, as observed in studies linking political exclusion to youth dissatisfaction and election-related conflicts (Bello, 2021).

Research Question Two: What factors influenced youth participation in political processes and their potential involvement in political unrest in Kano State?

Table 2: Factors Influencing Youth Political Participation

Items	Option	Frequency	Percentage
Do political parties in Kano State effectively communicate their manifestos to youth?	Yes	335	88.2%
	No	45	11.8%
Do you believe youth have meaningful opportunities to participate in political decision-making?	Yes	355	93.4%
	No	25	6.6%
Has economic uncertainty influenced your political engagement?	Yes	325	85.5%
	No	55	14.5%
Do you feel that your political views are adequately represented by existing political parties?	Yes	135	35.5%
	No	245	64.5%
Has your family background influenced your political participation?	Yes	147	38.7%
	No	233	61.3%

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 2 shows factors influencing youth political participation, the results indicates that most political parties in Kano State effectively communicated their manifestos to youth, with 88.2% of respondents agreeing. This suggests that political parties made efforts to engage young voters with clear messages. However, 11.8% felt otherwise, indicating that some parties may not have reached all youth groups. Research by Okafor (2021) highlights that well-structured manifesto communication increases political awareness among young people, improving voter turnout.

A strong majority (93.4%) believe that youth have meaningful opportunities to participate in political decision-making. This suggests a shift toward greater youth inclusion in politics, supporting previous findings by Adebayo (2020), who argued that youth engagement in Nigerian politics has increased due to targeted policies and advocacy efforts. The 6.6% who disagreed might reflect lingering concerns about traditional political structures limiting youth influence.

Economic uncertainty influenced political engagement for 85.5% of respondents, emphasizing the role of financial instability in shaping political interest. This aligns with studies by Bello (2019), who found that unemployment and economic hardship push youth to become more politically active, sometimes leading to frustration and protests. The 14.5% unaffected by economic concerns might come from financially stable backgrounds or have other motivations for political engagement.

A significant portion (64.5%) felt their political views were not adequately represented by existing political parties. This suggests dissatisfaction with mainstream political options, which could contribute to political disengagement or even unrest. Research by Usman (2021) noted that political exclusion often leads to frustration among youth, increasing the likelihood of political protests. The 35.5% who felt represented may belong to political parties or groups that align with their views.

Family background influenced political participation for 38.7% of respondents, while 61.3% said it did not. This suggests that while some youth are politically influenced by family traditions, a larger number make independent political decisions. This finding supports the work of Garba (2020), who noted that exposure to political discussions at home can shape youth political interest but is no longer the primary driver of participation. Overall, the findings indicate that political parties are making efforts to engage youth, but dissatisfaction with political representation and economic hardship remain key drivers of youth political involvement. These issues can contribute to political unrest if not addressed, as previous studies have linked youth frustration with weak representation and economic struggles to election-related tensions (Ibrahim, 2021).

Summary of the Findings

Based on the analysis of data gathered from 380 respondents in Kano Municipal, the study revealed significant findings on youth engagement in politics and its relationship with political unrest during the 2023 election campaigns in Kano State. The findings show that all respondents participated in political campaign activities and were registered voters, indicating high youth engagement in the electoral process.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this study provide important insights into the dynamics of youth engagement in politics and its relationship with political unrest during the 2023 election campaigns in Kano State. The high level of youth participation in political activities reflects an increasing political consciousness among young people in Kano State. All respondents reported being registered voters and participating in campaign activities, which aligns with the observations of Ibrahim (2021), who noted that youth political participation in Nigeria has been rising due to increasing political awareness and the desire for change. This high level of engagement also confirms the assertions of Adegami (2021) about the crucial role young people play in shaping political discourse, especially during election periods. The study revealed that social media has become a significant platform for political engagement, with 96.1% of respondents sharing political content online. This finding supports Adebayo's (2022) conclusion that digital platforms now play a central role in mobilizing young voters and shaping political opinions in Nigeria. The high level of online engagement compared to physical attendance at political rallies (76.6%) suggests a shift toward digital political participation, which could be attributed to convenience, wider reach, and the freedom to express opinions without physical presence.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made: Political parties should establish well-structured youth wings that give young people genuine opportunities to participate in decision-making and policy formulation. This would address the finding that while 93.4% of youth believed they had opportunities to participate in politics, 64.5% felt their views were not adequately represented.

Government and regulatory bodies should implement policies ensuring mandatory youth representation in political structures at all levels. This recommendation is supported by the finding that 94.7% of respondents favored such measures as a way to enhance youth engagement and reduce frustration that can lead to unrest.

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