

# Limiting Factors for Youth Political Participation and the Challenges of Leadership and Governance in Nigeria: An Appraisal

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*Abstract- Any society's success and sustainability depend on the involvement of youth in governance and policymaking. Nigerian youth have historically been marginalized and exploited in the political system since the country's independence. To investigate youth political engagement and the possibility of a leadership gap in Nigeria, this paper used a content analysis methodology. By applying a methodical approach to the interpretation of textual material, content analysis enables a thorough investigation of the themes and patterns present in the content. Various sources, including scholarly articles, government studies, policy documents, and media articles, provided the data for this investigation. The materials that covered youth leadership, political engagement, and related policies in Nigeria were the main focus. These resources offered a wide-ranging viewpoint on the condition of young people's participation in politics and government today. Also, the dynamics of youth participation and leadership gap in Nigeria was theoretically viewed from the point of view of Political Participation Theory. The paper observed that, in the past, elderly members with deep political clout have often ignored Nigerian youth, relegating them to supporting positions and using them as props for activism. It found that due to economic obstacles like high unemployment and the high expense of running for office, young people have become widely disillusioned and disengaged as a result. Youth engagement is further limited by cultural norms that support elder authority and a lack of political education. Although age limits for political office have decreased due to initiatives like the #NotTooYoungToRun campaign, there is still very little youth representation. Youth lacking in leadership experience stagnation and ineffectual policies that do not meet the requirements of the younger generation as a result of their exclusion from significant political responsibilities. Including*

*young people in governance opens up new ideas and is likely to lead to policies that prioritize social justice, education reform, and job creation. Moreover, youth involvement combats political indifference and institutional mistrust by fostering civic engagement, accountability, and the growth of democratic values. However, this paper recommended that to minimize the danger of a leadership deficit and to fully utilize the potential of Nigerian youth to propel sustainable development and efficient government, it is imperative to address the obstacles preventing young people from participating in politics.*

*Indexed Terms- Civic Engagement, Economic Barriers, Governance, Leadership Deficit, Marginalization, Political Participation, Unemployment, Youth Representation*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The term "political participation" describes the range of actions people take to have an impact on the policies or candidates for office. These covers casting a ballot, running for office, going to political gatherings, joining political parties or interest groups, and having political conversations. Ensuring that the government represents the wants and needs of the people is a crucial component of democracy. In a democratic environment, political involvement gives people the chance to notify elected officials about their preferences and concerns and to exert pressure on them to act (Eremenko 2014). Not everyone who has the right to participate does so, despite its significance to democracy. The number of nonparticipants fluctuates depending on the sort of involvement as well as the time, location, and circumstances. Political discourse surpasses voting, and a large number of voters outnumber party memberships and campaign staff (Deary, Batty, and Gale 2008). To put it simply,

inclusive political involvement is necessary to guarantee that every group in the community has a say in the political process. Exclusion of specific groups can result in policies that serve the interests of a select few rather than the interests of the whole, compromising democratic principles (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995).

Different groups in Nigeria have diverse levels of political participation, including women, men, and young. In Nigerian politics historically, men have dominated the field, occupying most elective and appointed posts. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has released statistics reflecting this dominance, revealing that over 85% of candidates in major elections are men (INEC, 2019). Despite making up almost half of the population, women have historically received relatively little attention. Women made up only 10% of candidates in the general elections of 2019, according to INEC. As Alabi (2023) pointed out, identical figures were seen in the general elections of 2023, and their actual presence in elected office was considerably lower. Although women have made significant progress, their involvement is still quite low. For instance, according to INEC data from 2019, women made up just 6.4% of the National Assembly's elected members.

Youths, who are defined as people in the age range of 18 to 35, make for an especially compelling case. Even while young people make up a significant section of Nigerian society—more than 60%, according to the FMYS and NBS (2021)—they have been mainly absent from the political sphere. It is important to note that they have recently been increasingly involved in political processes, in part because of campaigns like "Not Too Young To Run," which promotes decreasing the age limit for public office. Despite this, young people are still underrepresented in elective positions. A review of the 2023 election candidate list reveals a decrease in the number of young candidates, from 34% in the general election of 2019 to 28.6% in 2023 (Yiaga Africa, 2023). Young people continued to dominate the national voter registration, making up 37.7% of the population, although they were underrepresented among the candidates on the ballot (Yiaga, Africa). Youths are a powerful demographic, yet they are frequently excluded from political decision-making processes and rarely assume

prominent leadership positions. A serious problem that jeopardizes Nigeria's political environment going forward is the marginalization of young people in leadership roles.

This research paper examines the involvement of young people in leadership roles that go beyond election-based ones, including roles in governance and policies. The main focus of the research challenge is the discrepancy between Nigerian youth's high political awareness and participation and their poor representation in leadership positions. As the older generation leaves the political arena, this disparity prompts worries about a possible leadership shortfall. Nigeria has a serious risk of experiencing a leadership deficit as a result of the underrepresentation of young people in political leadership roles, which leaves a large segment of the population's voices and concerns unrepresented in the decision-making processes.

The main goals of the paper are to determine and examine the obstacles that prevent young people from taking on leadership roles, assess the effects of youth leadership on development and governance, and suggest workable solutions to get more young people involved in leadership roles. By addressing these goals, the paper hopes to present a thorough analysis of Nigeria's youth leadership situation today and propose suggestions for promoting a more vibrant and inclusive political environment.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term "youth political participation" describes how young people get involved in different political processes and decision-making. The creation of inclusive policies and the sustainability of democratic governance depends on this idea (Weiss, 2020). Engaging in politics as a young person involves more than just casting a ballot. It entails taking on leadership roles in political and civic organizations, actively participating in government, formulating policies, and advocating (UNDP, 2012; Akinyetan, 2021).

Engaging in politics requires varying degrees of commitment. It essentially entails expressing ideas and keeping up with political matters. This might happen at community gatherings, on social media, or in conversations. Joining political parties, going to

demonstrations, or becoming a member of advocacy groups are examples of more active engagement (Longley, 2023). Running for office or being a leader in a political or civic organization is the highest form of political involvement.

Given the size of the youth population in Nigeria, youth political participation is essential. Young voters, who are classified as those in the age range of 18 to 35, account for a sizable share of the electorate. Nigerian youth are underrepresented in leadership roles, despite their large numbers and high level of political awareness. As the elder generation exits the political scene, this disparity raises the possibility of a leadership shortage (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2019; Bello, Ogunbode, and Bankole, 2019). Young people's involvement in governance is a significant component of their political participation. The term "governance" describes the procedures and frameworks that governments and other institutions use to make decisions. When young people are involved in governance, they get to influence the creation and application of policies. This is essential to guarantee that national and local policies take into account the needs and concerns of young people (Adeline and Eme, 2015).

Another important way to get involved in politics is through activism. The goal of activism is to influence, direct, or obstruct changes in the social, political, economic, or environmental spheres. Youth in Nigeria are becoming more and more vocal through activism. Social movements such as #EndSARS have demonstrated the efficacy of youth-led activism in shaping public policy and bringing attention to matters like governance reforms and police brutality (Abimbade., Olayoku, and Herro, 2022; Herro, 2023). However, in Nigeria, several obstacles prevent young people from effectively participating in politics. Social issues like unemployment and poverty restrict the time and resources that young people can devote to political engagement. Differences in education have an impact on their political activity and awareness. Cultural conventions frequently marginalize youth, preventing them from taking on leadership positions customarily held by older people (Vaughan-Johnston et al, 2021).

Another relevant issue to this paper is leadership deficit. Leadership deficit occurs when there are

comparatively few skilled and prepared people available to fill leadership positions. This idea is especially pertinent in organizational and political settings where good leadership is essential to governance and the execution of policies. In Nigeria, the phrase "leadership deficit" frequently draws attention to the discrepancy between young people's high levels of political awareness and engagement and their underrepresentation in positions of leadership (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2019).

A lack of leadership ability can result from several things. The underrepresentation of youth in leadership positions is one of the main causes (Lam, 2014). Many young Nigerians are politically conscious and active, yet they do not occupy important positions of authority. As the elder generation leaves the political arena, this gap leaves a void that raises questions about the efficacy and continuity of government. Decision-making procedures do not sufficiently represent the interests and viewpoints of a significant portion of the population due to the lack of youthful leaders (WEF, 2024).

There is a leadership gap outside of political office as well. It also covers positions in policymaking and governance. Leaders who can create and carry out policies that cater to the many requirements of the populace are necessary for effective administration. Policies may neglect to address issues that are important to young people, such as health, work, and education if they exclude them from these positions (Edoh and Eme, 2014). For young people, this isolation feeds a vicious cycle of disengagement and disillusionment.

A lack of leadership has extensive repercussions. According to Ejimabo (2013), it may result in inefficient government since the current leaders do not have the creative ideas and methods that younger people can offer. Furthermore, because they feel excluded and underrepresented, young people may come to distrust political institutions as a result. The overall standard of leadership and administration in the nation may suffer as a result of this separation (Anazodo, Igbokwe-Ibeto, and Nkah, 2015). The empowerment of youth and giving them chances to hone their leadership abilities must be the main goals of initiatives to reduce the leadership deficit.

According to Karagianni and Montgomery (2017), this entails improving educational and training initiatives, setting up venues for young people to participate in governance, and advocating for inclusive laws that support youth involvement. A multimodal strategy that takes into account the social, educational, and cultural obstacles that young people encounter is necessary to address the leadership deficit.

### III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Political Participation Theory, which contends that institutional, societal, and individual elements all affect political activity, serves as the theoretical foundation for this paper. Scholars like Verba and Nie (1972) developed this theory, which offers a thorough knowledge of the different factors that encourage or impede political engagement. According to the theory, a person's political efficacy, income, and level of education are all important determinants of their political engagement. For example, there is generally a positive correlation between increased political knowledge and participation and higher income and education levels. This is especially important in Nigeria, where economic stability and educational attainment pose major obstacles to youth engagement. Due to high unemployment rates and restricted access to high-quality education, many young Nigerians might not have the tools or information needed to participate in politics successfully (Verba & Nie, 1972).

Social elements that have a substantial impact on political participation include community involvement, social influence, and family history. The approach emphasizes how crucial civic associations and social networks are to getting people involved in politics. Social movements and youth-led organizations in Nigeria have developed into essential venues for political participation, offering young people chances to engage in politics and access to resources and training. Nevertheless, these groups frequently face financial difficulties and opposition from powerful political figures, which reduces their efficacy (Adeyemi, 2019).

The legal system, government policies, and political system are examples of institutional variables that determine the opportunities and limitations for

political engagement. The Political Participation Theory emphasizes how institutional arrangements can either support or impede participation. Institutional impediments that severely limit youth involvement in Nigeria include corrupt practices, politically charged content, and restrictive electoral rules. Apathy and disenchantment with the political process are common among young people who believe that the political system is dishonest and unresponsive. The theory of political participation offers a thorough framework for analyzing the complex aspects of young people's political involvement in Nigeria. It draws attention to the interactions between social, institutional, and human issues and emphasizes the necessity of tackling adolescent participation hurdles from all angles. Using this theory as a guide, the study seeks to mitigate the possibility of a leadership deficit in Nigeria by identifying practical ways to increase youth political engagement.

- Youth Participation in Leadership Position and Inclusion in Governance in Nigeria: An appraisal  
Youth have had a complicated and paradoxical role in politics and government since Nigeria obtained its independence, containing both positive and negative features. As youthful politicians began to establish themselves in office during the First Republic, the visible roles of youth started to decline in 1979 under the Second Republic. According to Amzat and Abdullahi (2016), these leaders often ignored the youth and relegated them to the "youth wings" of political parties. As a result, political elites frequently use young people in Nigeria as enforcers and thugs during contentious election campaigns, which fuels political unrest and violence. Youth dissatisfaction is especially apparent in areas where state shortcomings have caused major instability, such as the Niger Delta, the North-East, and the South-East. According to Amzat and Abdullahi (2016), one of the reasons behind the fall of the First and Second Republics was the use of young people for violent ends. While the larger political and cultural context affects adolescent political involvement prospects, democratic environments typically provide more conducive settings for youth political participation. Aiming for participation levels similar to those of other demographic groups should be the goal of initiatives to encourage young involvement (Tonge & Mycock, 2009; Amzat & Abdullahi, 2016).

Despite the difficulties, Nigerian youth have proven resilient and dedicated to opposing persecution, according to Akinrolabu and Imoukhuede (2023). They make up a sizable voting bloc, but because they are frequently qualified to vote but not to run for office, they have major obstacles to political participation. Political power has mainly stayed in the hands of elder politicians with prior experience serving in government since the start of the Fourth Republic. Akinrolabu and Imoukhuede (2023) report that some young people work as political thugs or campaign agents during election seasons, organizing crowds at demonstrations and screaming political slogans. But these young people are often forgotten about after elections. Young Nigerians' low participation rates in electoral contests are a result of their disillusionment with institutions that do not represent their preferences or serve their interests. This disillusionment highlights the necessity of increasing youth participation in decision-making processes, particularly on matters that directly impact them, to allow them to make meaningful contributions to the development of their country (Dike & Dike, 2017).

Young people are more likely to support policies that directly impact their generation when they are in political power. Social justice, school reform, and job development could be the main objectives of these initiatives. Nigeria has a high rate of youth unemployment. Young leaders are more driven to come up with workable answers because they have firsthand experience with this issue. Youth leadership can also contribute to better educational policy since they can advocate for changes that make education more affordable and relevant to the labor market today (Mamuwa, 2023).

The involvement of youth can also improve governance accountability. Social media allows young politicians to engage with their peers more easily. Through this relationship, leaders may communicate with the public in real-time and remain aware of the demands and worries of their constituency. A government that wants to effectively serve its people must be responsive (Egbunike, 2020). Engaging youth in politics can assist in ending the pattern of disengagement and apathy. Adolescents are more inclined to think they can change the world if they see their peers in leadership roles. This idea has the

potential to boost young people's civic engagement and voter turnout. A younger generation that is more engaged in politics upholds democracy and makes sure that all opinions are heard (Anyanwu & Onuoha, 2022).

Additionally, young people's involvement in politics helps advance social justice. It is more probable that young leaders from a variety of backgrounds will recognize and respond to the needs of underserved areas. They can advocate for laws that guarantee an equitable allocation of opportunities and resources. According to Akinyetan (2019), inclusion has the potential to promote social cohesion and peace by bridging economic and social divides.

The #EndSARS demonstrations and other recent events demonstrate how young people in Nigeria are becoming more conscious of their political influence. These demonstrations highlighted the possible influence of a committed, fervent, and organized young group. Due to the large-scale involvement in the #EndSARS movement, many Nigerians have come to see that unaddressed youth issues could be a serious threat to the stability of the country. It is imperative to tackle these issues to fully utilize the promising potential of Nigerian youth and avert further instability.

Factors limiting Youth Political Participation and Challenges of Leadership and Governance in Nigeria  
Any society's success and sustainability depend on the involvement of youth in politics and policymaking. The significance of incorporating youth in political processes has been recognized in recent years. There have been varied levels of engagement on a global scale. Young people have historically been underrepresented in political processes in many nations, including Nigeria. Numerous factors, such as cultural standards, a lack of political knowledge, and economic difficulties are to blame for this. Many young people in Nigeria are disenchanted with the political system, claims Chinnah (2019). They consider it to be unapproachable and corrupt, which causes them to become significantly disengaged from official political processes. Voting, seeking public office, and participating actively in political parties are some of these procedures.

There have been initiatives to raise young people's political participation despite these obstacles. One such example is the #NotTooYoungToRun campaign in Nigeria. This movement was successful in lowering the age restrictions for political office, which encouraged more young people to enter the political arena (Eberechukwu, 2023). Still, there aren't many young individuals holding elected office. They likewise have little effect on policy. This suggests that youth participation in government needs more organized paths. They are possible because of social ties, psychological, economic, and other manipulations. These are covered in the section that follows.

**Youths' Economic disadvantage:** Among the biggest obstacles to youth political participation is limited economic opportunities. Since politics frequently demands significant financial resources, it is difficult for young people to engage in it because many of them struggle with unemployment and underemployment (Amrit, et al, 2024). The majority of Nigerian youths lack money to participate in politics and compete with elder politicians in the country, in a country where by nomination fee for the ruling party All Progressives Congress (APC) fixed the cost of nomination forms for president at a hundred-million-naira, governorship at fifty-million-naira, senate at twenty-million-naira, house of representatives at ten million naira, and state assembly at two million naira which average Nigerian youths cannot afford. When money shapes politics, it assaults the democratic rights of citizens to contest for public office, especially where it determines who qualifies to participate in politics. As the Chairman of Nigeria's ruling party noted; "if you don't have N100 million, you have no business with becoming president". The implication is the evolution of a state that is governed and exists to serve wealthy elites at the detriment of popular participation (Amrit, et al, 2024).

Poverty on the other hand is the unfortunate situation of youth unemployment, seeing many lacking accesses to the opportunities for providing meaningfully for themselves, and those who depend on them. A minority of youths are not trained enough to have skills that make them employable, others are yet offloaded from tertiary institutions into non-existent labour markets, which were destroyed by the poor

economic policies of the government. This has served as the basis for many in the political elite to consider youths as only being suitable for roles as political enforcers, purveyors of violence, and other nefarious purposes.

For Youths reluctance, distraction, ineptitude, and misplacement of priorities which manifested in Yahoo Yahoo, Yahoo Plus, money rituals, uncut exuberance, and attachment to frivolous activities such as entertainment including TV series like Big Brother Naija, etc. Why Unemployment is one of the major reasons that pushed a lot of youths into many negative activities like yahoo-yahoo, and ritual killings, based on the Nigerian government's response to this problem, it is safe to say that they have belittled the negative impact of unemployment on the youths with over 30million people (majority youths) walking around jobless. Nigeria is sadly becoming a country filled with unemployed graduates and when these youths discover that their peers are doing extremely well in the cyber-crime industry driving in flashy cars, living flamboyant lives, they are forced to rethink and be influenced.

The underlying consequences of unemployment are devastating, among which are hostility, poverty, insecurity, etc. and Nigerian youths are too idealistic and adventurous to sit and watch these consequences eat them up, they would rather give attention to the cybercrime business such as Yahoo yahoo, ritual killing. The majority of these youths had higher aspirations and goals during their formative years, goals that could increase the resourcefulness and productivity of the nation. The youth stage is a point where many psychological and sociological behavioral instinct traits are manifested, so when these youths view their goals being tainted as a result of unemployment, these youthful instincts push them to find ways of erasing these taints, unfortunately, yahoo, ritual killing is an option some fall into. Over the years Nigerian government has come up with different strategies that are supposed to end youth unemployment such programs include: the Nigeria Youth Empowerment Program, Government Enterprise Empowerment Program (GEEP), National Social Investment Program (NSIP), and Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme Fund (ACGSF) Npower initiative program etc to tackle youth unemployment

but majority of the strategies have fallen short of expectations.

Narrowing it to the reality television shows like Big Brother Nigeria (BBN) hereafter referred to as BB Naija. Proved to be a favorite among the youth particularly those who fail within the range of 18-25 years (Chikafe and Mateveke 2012) Big Brother Nigeria is a Nigerian reality competition television series, based on the Big Brother television franchise in which 12-20 contestants live in an isolated house and compete for a large cash prize of hundred million nairas (100,000,000). Nigerian Naira at the end of the show by avoiding being evicted from the house by viewers. According to (Chikafa and Mateveke, 2012) the concept of Big Brother was borrowed from George Orwell's novel 1984 titled "Fictional Dystopia of Oceania" in which he described a world of never-ending surveillance.

For example, over the years Big Brother reality show has been criticized for its display of obscene and vulgar scenes. The level of immorality being celebrated by the Big Brother reality show is adjudged short programs intended for education (Laotto, 2015). Yet many African youths have continued to imbibe the damaging style of the program and the actors involved have turned to celebrities, number of viewers that voted on the final week of Big Brother Nigeria season 7, 2022 "level up" was estimated over one billion votes most of which were youths and this shows that there is a large followership amongst the Nigeria youths as the reality show seems to have a lasting impact on the youths. BB Naija displays uninhibited sexual frolics on open cameras, the accusation being passed around shameless smooching by hormonally charged housemate and vulgar words and the majority of Nigerian youths enjoy such acts because of idleness, it is quite depressing to know that since the inception of Big Brother Naija show, there have been increase incidents of immoral behavior among the Nigerian youths. Big Brother Nigeria and other silly or amusing activities like Yahoo yahoo (cyber fraud) killing for quick money or money rituals have made the majority of Nigerian youths feel reluctant to engage themselves in other vocational skills like mechanical engineering, tailoring, smiting, welding, shoemaking. The number of youths has faded away as the majority of

apprentices have drastically reduced Nigerian youths are preoccupied with money heists (Laotto, 2015).

**Lack of Political Awareness:** The absence of political education is another significant obstacle. Many young people lack sufficient understanding of the political system and their possible positions within it. Their lack of understanding lowers their confidence and hinders their ability to participate well. Furthermore, the political climate is frequently antagonistic and violent in many nations, including Nigeria. For fear of their safety, this discourages a lot of young people from taking part (Abdulyakeen, 2021). Because of psychological and sociological manipulation, young people in Nigeria now think that adults are more suited for positions of leadership. This case concerns how young people are perceived and addressed as "leaders of tomorrow." The youth's complete disengagement from active participation in gladiatorial politics is a result of this. As stated by Kukah (1999), "Youth all over the world are sometimes lulled into higher dreams and idealism by such concepts as leaders of tomorrow, reassures/owners of the future, but here in Nigeria, cynicism has become so deep that they seem to have also disengaged from the nation-state."

**Cultural Hindrances:** An important contributing factor to youth participation barriers is culture. Elder domination in politics is a common result of the customary reverence that many communities have for their elders. To allow themselves to keep taking turns holding elected and nonelected political positions in the nation, the elders constantly disparage the younger generation and call them "incapable of ruling" (Fasua, 2018). This cultural norm may deter young people from pursuing leadership positions, perpetuating the trend of marginalization of young people in politics. The low rate of youth involvement in Nigerian politics has significant effects on governance. It has an impact on the standard of leadership, how well policies respond to public needs, and how the country develops as a whole. We look closely at these implications.

The lack of youth participation in political processes is one factor contributing to Nigeria's leadership shortage. As older politicians continue to rule the political scene, new ideas and methods of governing are frequently lacking. Young people are vital for tackling today's issues because they provide new

perspectives and enthusiasm (Onesmus, 2023; Aina, 2024). Exclusion of the youth causes the political system to stall and prevents leadership from changing to suit contemporary needs. The lack of representation of a substantial section of the population's experiences and views in decision-making processes is another consequence of this leadership gap. Older politicians might not prioritize the special issues that young people experience, like high unemployment rates and restricted access to high-quality education (Okolie, U. and Igbini, 2020; Akpokighe and Ejovi, 2020). Consequently, insufficient attention to the requirements and goals of the younger generation may result in policies that are not effective in governing.

There is a gap between government policies and the requirements of the younger population as a result of young people's limited political involvement. Despite making up a sizable portion of Nigeria's population, policymakers frequently ignore the interests and concerns of young people. Because of this gap, policies may become less effective and exacerbate social problems like unemployment and poverty by being out of touch with the realities of young people (Oseni, 2021). For example, policies concerning work and education are essential to the development of youth. But when young people aren't part of the policy-making process, the policies might not accurately represent their wants and situations. A vicious cycle of exclusion and inefficient governance can result from this lack of representation, which can also cause disappointment and further disengagement from political processes (Eme-Uche & Eme, 2023).

Young people need to be involved in governance to promote civic engagement and democratic values. The act of excluding youth from political processes erodes their sense of accountability and ownership towards the government. Civic participation contributes to the development of democratic principles including accountability, openness, and the rule of law. Young people are more likely to become invested in the prosperity of their communities and the country as a whole when they participate actively in decision-making (UN, 2018). Youth exclusion from politics can result in apathy towards politics and a decline in confidence in democratic institutions. Young people are less likely to get involved in politics in the future if they believe that their opinions are not heard and that

their efforts are not recognized. Nigeria's democracy is vulnerable to serious threats to its health and stability due to the decline in trust and engagement (Akinyemi, 2019; Ojo, 2022).

The low rate of youth political participation has an impact on socioeconomic advancement as well. Young people are a key driver of economic expansion and innovation. Their lack of participation in governance prevents them from realizing all of their potential to contribute to economic growth. Policies that fail to take into account the needs of youth can impede attempts to address problems including inequality, poverty, and unemployment (Adamaagashi et al., 2023). Development strategies that are more inclusive and equitable can result from involving youth in government. Engaging young people in policy talks, for instance, can guarantee that programs about healthcare, education, and employment creation are more in line with the demands of the younger generation. Development outcomes that are more durable and effective may result from this alignment (Ariyo, 2023).

## CONCLUSION

Youth engagement in governance has been complicated in Nigeria since the country's independence since young people are frequently the targets of marginalization and exploitation by political leaders. Nigerian youth have demonstrated resiliency and dedication to resisting injustice in the face of numerous obstacles, including cultural norms, political education gaps, and economic impediments. Though there have been recent efforts such as #NotTooYoungToRun, significant obstacles still exist. It is essential to address these problems to promote creative leadership, pertinent legislation, and socioeconomic advancement. In the end, more young involvement can contribute to a more inclusive and dynamic political environment in Nigeria by strengthening democratic ideals, promoting social fairness, and increasing accountability in governance. It will take a combination of approaches to increase youth involvement in Nigerian governance. Reducing the cost of entering politics is crucial since many young candidates find it difficult to afford the high expenses of campaigning for office. Reducing nomination fees and offering financial assistance to



younger candidates are two ways to do this. Improving political education will also provide youth with the information and self-assurance they need to participate in politics successfully. By addressing worries of violence and antagonism, it is imperative to create a safe and inclusive political atmosphere to promote greater young involvement.

It is possible to close the generational divide and guarantee that policies take into account the interests and ambitions of Nigeria's younger population by promoting a culture of youth leadership through mentorship programs and forums where young leaders may express their issues. Encouraging youth to assume leadership positions can result in policies that prioritize social justice, school reform, and job creation—areas in which young leaders have a firsthand interest and a better grasp of the difficulties. Increasing the involvement of young people can also improve governance accountability. Social media gives young politicians instant access to their peers and facilitates real-time connection with the public, enabling them to stay abreast of the demands and concerns of their voters. A government that wants to properly serve its people must be responsive.

Lastly, it is imperative to address economic concerns. It is difficult for many young people to get involved in politics since they are either unemployed or underemployed. More young people can engage in governance by removing this obstacle and offering economic possibilities and support through focused programs. Through the implementation of these measures, Nigeria would be able to fully use its youth for the advancement of the country and guarantee a more dynamic, just, and democratic society.

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