

**YOUTH AND DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN NIGERIA: A CASE
STUDY OF 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN EDO STATE**

BY

**OSAGIE OSARUESE DIVINE
MAT. NO.: SSC1909607**

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
BENIN CITY**

APRIL, 2024

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**BEING A PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED TO THE
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF
BENIN, BENIN CITY, IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD BACHELOR DEGREE
(B.Sc.) IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

APRIL, 2024

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project is based on a study undertaken by me in the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, under the thorough supervision of Mr. Andrew Amadasu. This work has not been previously submitted for the award of degree elsewhere. All ideas and views are products of my personal research and where the views of others have been expressed, they have been duly acknowledged.

Osagie Osaruese Divine

CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned, certify that this research work was conducted by **OSAGIE OSARUESE DIVINE** and it is adequate in scope and quality in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) Degree in Political Science of university of Benin, Benin City.

MR. ANDREW AMADASU
Project Supervisor

DR. C.O. EGHWEREE
Head of Department

Date: _____

Date: _____

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Almighty God, my source of strength, grace and wisdom throughout my course.

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First and foremost, I want to give glory and honour to God Almighty for His grace and strength that has enabled me to start and finish this research project. I am deeply grateful to my project supervisor, Mr. Andrew Amadasu for his guidance and support, also his insights and directions that were very vital in shaping this research work.

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ABSTRACT

Youth participation in politics remains pivotal in the sustenance of a nation's democracy. Participation does not only ensure that government performs its duties, but also guarantees the rights of ordinary people to participate in their community development. Activities such as voting in an election, sponsoring a candidate, petitioning or participating in a protest are forms of political participation that influence public policy directly or indirectly through affecting the selection process of those who govern the people. The study attempted to examine the impacts of the youths on democratic process in Edo State: A case study of 2023 general elections. The study interrogated the following research questions: What was the level of the youths' turnout during the 2023 general election in Edo State? What were the different ways the youths participated in the 2023 general election in Edo State? What were the youths' patterns of voting in 2023 general elections in Edo State? Did the youths indulge in electoral violence in the 2023 general election in Edo State? In what ways can youth political participation and democratic process in Edo State and Nigeria be improved? Theoretically, the study utilized the system theory to explain youth political participation and democratic process in Edo State during the 2023 general election. Methodologically, the study surveyed 392 respondents in Oredo Local Government Area through a structured questionnaire. The study made the following key findings. The first finding was that there was massive youths' turnout during the general election in Edo State. The second finding was that the youths participated in the elections by joining the INEC team as ad hoc staff, sensitizing the people on how to locate their voting centers and ways to vote in the election and campaigning for their preferred candidates. The third finding shows the patterns for which the youths voted during the 2023 general elections in Edo State. In that order, the pattern were voting to safeguard the future of Edo State and Nigeria's democracy as well as foster national development, voting based on religion, personality of the candidates, ethnicity and political party. The last finding shows that the youths were also involved in various forms of electoral violence such as voter inducement, ballot box snatching and thuggery. The study therefore recommends that the government should create an enabling environment that can stimulate youths' participation in the Nigeria's democratic process, implement the various policies such as 'Not Too Yong to Run' should be speedily implemented, need for proper sensitization of the Nigerian youths on the need to participate in politics and criminal elements are not good for the growth and development of any country.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Democracy is fast becoming an integral process in human endeavours. This is because democracy is believed to be in tune with human rights, ensuring that every form of human degradation, inequality and marginalization is eliminated while ensuring that freedom of expression, movement and human dignity are protected at all times (Wallace, Kundnani, and Donnelly, 2021). By this, it may not be argued that democracy is a ‘culture’ that determines what type of life people should live and what kinds of attitude is best suited for human community (Belfiore, Hadley, Heidelberg and Rosenstein, 2023). If it can be likened to culture, it means that democracy can successively be handed down from one generation to another and such process of intergenerational transfer can only be sustained by the youths of the society.

The importance of the youth participation in active politics globally cannot be overstated. It is believed that the more the youths participate in building democracy of their countries, the more they internalize the values and norms needed to sustain the intergenerational transfer of democratic values. It is within this context that there has been a ranging scholarly debates in both developed and developing nations regarding youth participation in politics, nation building and democratic consolidation. In Nigeria, the idea of involving the youths more in every aspect of

democracy building, including through involvement in active governance has been increasing and showing no sign of subsiding as more people continue to enter the youth age in Nigeria (Akinyetun, 2021).

The Nigerian government as well as policymakers have made frantic efforts at ensuring that the youths are encouraged in participating in democratic process through legislation. For instance, apart from countless laws made to ensure inclusion of youths in Nigeria, the Nigerian government sought greater youth inclusiveness in the political domain in Nigeria by reducing the age limit of running for elective posts in Nigeria through the “Not Too Young To Run” legislation (Mohammad, 2022). It was in the contemplation of the government that this rule would remove all age-related barriers limiting youths’ inclusion in the governance system of their country. However, the systemic corruption that perpetuates the penchant for sit-tightism, narrative of ‘divine rights of kings’ and ‘wait for your turn’ aphorism among the governing elites who are mostly gerontocrats handicaps the realization of this objective (Abiodun et al. 2018).

Instead, youths are used as instruments for carrying out illegal electoral activities such as kidnapping, ballot box snatching, thuggery, killing, cultism, election result falsification, bribery and other forms of criminal activities. Most of them have been victims of their criminal activities such as death, incarceration, lasting injuries and others (Gadai and Malami, 2022). In fact, the youths were often neglected by the politicians who used them to perpetrate such criminal electoral activities.

The 2023 general election presented yet another litmus test to the extent to which the youths have resolved to shoulder the responsibility of driving the democratic process in Nigeria. With recurring political corruption, marginalization, insecurity, economic crisis and neglect, the youths were expected to write the wrongs and reposition the Nigerian system in a path that would reflect the global expectation from the most populous nation in Africa and one of the countries with burgeoning youth age in the world. As a result, a study of this nature would help uncover how the youths deepened the democratic process during the 2023 general elections in Nigeria.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The question of youth participation in electoral process in Nigeria has continued to gain traction over the years, following the recurring wave of electoral violence since independence of 1960. Regardless, it is widely believed that youths represent a significant portion of the population for election mobilization in Nigeria (Azuka and Preye, 2019). This is due to their numerical strength and capacity to utilize the social media platforms effectively. Unfortunately, the political elites take advantage of their numerical strength and disadvantaged positions to project and safeguard their political interests, while abandoning them after they have achieved their political interests (Ojok and Acol, 2017). However, there are still a few of youthful men and women who have remained resolute in their quest to contribute to the democratic

process of their country, surmounting every hurdle on the way that are created by the system and the political elites (Mugisha et al, 2016; Honwana, 2012).

As Africa continues to experience youth bulge, the need for increased political participation becomes more important than before. It has been observed over the years that the youths tend to participate less in elections than the older ones (Ngwang, 2023). This reality has often been attributed to so many factors including political exclusion, socio-economic challenges and bad governance (UNECA, 2017). In spite of the uncondusive nature of the environment, there are some of them who have been vocal about the way and manner the Nigerian state is governed (Enueme and Onyene, 2010). Pitifully, lack of coordination and concerted efforts have often rendered their vocalization ineffective as political elites continue to tighten their grips to power. Worse still, these political elites are gerontocrats whose governance tactics are antediluvian and therefore cannot address the growing contemporary issues begging for immediate and urgent attention (Van Gyampo & Anyidoho, 2019). Furthermore, these political elites appear to have successfully created a sub-system that guarantees their perpetuation in power and relegation of youth active participation in politics. This sub-system enables them to massively perpetrate all forms of electoral violence including rigging. The implication for this is that the youths have come to believe that they do not have a stake in the politics of their country and that elections do not count (Assamah & Yuan, 2020).

The 2023 general elections presented an ample opportunity for the Nigerian youths to exert their influence in the electoral process of their country, taking advantage of their numerical strength as well as their technological savvy. In fact, the youth showed this readiness following a large turnout of youths during the registration of voters. Out of the 93,469,008 people that registered for the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, the youths constituted the highest demography as youths between the ages of 18 and 34 constituted the majority with 37, 060, 399 representing 39.65% of registered voters (Suleiman, 2023). Also, youths between the ages of 35 and 49 (middle age) that registered for the election was 33,413,591 representing 35.75%. When the middle age is added to the youth age, we have 75.40% of the youths that registered for the election (Ngwang, 2023). However, it is important to note that registering to vote in an election and showing willingness to engage in legitimate electoral activities is one thing, participating during the election is yet another thing. Therefore, examining the youth participation in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria using Edo State as a case study is a worthwhile endeavor.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to examine the youth and democratic process in the 2023 general election in Nigeria. The specific objectives are as follow:

1. To examine youths' turnout during the 2023 general election in Edo State
2. To examine different ways the youths participated in the 2023 general election in Edo State

3. To investigate youths' patterns of voting in 2023 general elections in Edo State
4. To investigate whether the youths indulged in electoral violence in the 2023 general election in Edo State
5. To recommend ways to improve youth political participation and democratic process in Edo State and Nigeria.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following are the research questions that will guide the study:

1. What was the level of the youths' turnout during the 2023 general election in Edo State?
2. What were the different ways the youths participated in the 2023 general election in Edo State?
3. What were the youths' patterns of voting in 2023 general elections in Edo State?
4. Did the youths indulge in electoral violence in the 2023 general election in Edo State?
5. In what ways can youth political participation and democratic process in Edo State and Nigeria be improved?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will contribute to the relatively growing interest in the area youth political participation in Nigeria. It is believed that the findings of the study will expand the frontiers of knowledge and create the needed motivation for further research in the area.

Second, the study will provide policy makers, civil society groups, scholars and other relevant stakeholders with the needed information necessary to improve youth political participation in Edo State and Nigeria as well as address the recurring challenges of that deter youths' political participation in Edo State and Nigeria.

Last, the study will serve as a springboard for further research in the area. This will ensure a comprehensive diagnosis of youth political participation and democratic process with a view to understanding its ramifications, dynamics, trends and practices in Edo State and Nigeria.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to investigate the impact of youth political participation in the 2023 general election on democratic process in Edo State. It specifically seeks to examine issues of voter apathy or voter turnout, voting behavior, patterns of political engagement or involvement and electoral violence in the 2023 general election results in Edo State. Furthermore, the study selected Oredo Local Government Area (LGA) as a case study. The LGA was selected based on the preponderance of youths in the various communities that made up the LGA.

1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Democracy: it is a popular form of government by which the majority of people decides how their country is governed through their representatives elected on a periodic elections.

Elections: This is a process of periodically choosing those that will represent the people in every political position. It is usually a practice in a democracy

Democratic Process: This can be defined as things that are generally connected with the conduct of elections such as voter registration, collection of voters' cards, registration of candidates, purchase of party forms, conduct of primaries, debates, voting, counting of votes, announcement of results, announcement of winners and post-election dispute resolution. It can also be defined as the extent to which an election is transparent, credible free and fair.

General Election: As pertains to this study, general election is defined as that type of election that is meant to elect executive, usually the presidential and governorship candidates and legislative members.

Political Participation: This can be defined as a range of political-related activities undertaken by the people which are geared towards influencing government's policies as well as determine how their country is governed.

Voter Apathy: This is can also be called voter turnout. It is level of lack of people's interest participating or engaging in the political process of their state or country. It is mainly evidenced by low voter turnout in every election cycle in a state or country.

Voters' turnout: This can be defined as the participation rate of eligible voters in an election.

Voting Behaviour: This pertains to how voters decide to vote in an election. It is determined by the interplay of individual attitudes and social factors.

Youth: This is a period between childhood and maturity. In the context of this study, a youth is taken to mean a person who has attained the age of 18 and above and therefore qualified to vote and be voted for in an election.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews literature on the concept of democracy, political participation, an overview of electoral process, an overview of elections in Nigeria, link between political participation and electoral process in Nigeria and the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. This chapter also examines system theory as a theoretical framework to explain the effect of political participation on electoral process in 2023 general election in Edo State.

2.2 THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY

Democracy is a controversial concept as scholars have attempted to describe it based on their own perspectives, value system, prejudices and judgments Erunke (2012). However, it is widely believed that democracy is not the same as autocracy, fascism, totalitarianism, absolute monarchy and oligarchy. These political practices are regarded as individual-based rather than people-based; hence, they are antithesis to the concept of democracy Ekiert (2023). It is on this basis that that the Greek origin of democracy can be captured. Democracy comes from two Greek words, *demos* and *Kratos* which found their ways in English to mean *people* and *rule* respectively Becker and Raveloson (2008).

A popular definition of democracy accredited to Abraham Lincoln is that it is government of the people, by the people and for the people. In another way, it can be

said is the government the people, exercised by the people for the interest of the people Becker and Raveloson (2008:4). A foremost scholar of democracy Karl Dahl defined democracy as a system in which the people are represented by the people they choose to represent them in decision-making of allocation of scarce resources Dahl (1982:11). For Almond, Powell, Strom and Dalton (2004), democracy is a political system in which citizens who enjoy both political and civil rights elect their representatives through free and fair elections conducted within the confines of the law (Almond, Powell, Strom and Dalton, 2004). Richard Haas, a former U.S Department official opined that democracy is beyond periodical conduct of elections but entailed strict observance of the rule of law and creating conducive environment for popular participation without intimidation, harassment or marginalization (Haas, 2004).

Some other scholars have equated democracy with freedom Becker and Raveloson (2008:4). This assertion of freedom is the bedrock of democracy. It captures the common principles of human existence which connote values, norms and justice (Holcombe, 2021). It is on this note that democracy differs remarkably from some other forms of political practices as earlier stated due to their dictatorial formations and capacity to erode peoples' freedom. History can still remember the likes of Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Sani Abacha, Muammar Gaddafi and host of others that undermined democratic ideals and confiscated people's freedom and values. To be sure, it is on the basis of this cherished freedom that the international community

champions for peoples' government by vehemently frowning at individualistic form of government and unconstitutional takeover of government by a person or group through coup or sabotage Thérien, and Dumontier (2009) and Robert (2004). It seeks for free, fair and competitive elections as a conduit for consolidating democracy.

Elections are part and parcel of any democratic process. In fact, it is the core component of assessing the degree of democratization (Kuhne, 2010). Arab Spring uprisings that swept authoritarian regimes in Arab countries of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and now in Syria since 2011 took place due to dictatorial practices and the unwillingness of the various leaders of these states at the time to conduct elections Affaya (2011). However, to conduct elections is one thing and to conduct free and fair elections is another thing. It is the latter that epitomizes democracy and ensures democratic consolidation. Developing countries such as we have in Africa are always being implicated in democratic subjugation through sharp unconstitutional practices such as maiming, killing, injuring of voters, vote buying, voters' inducement, harassment of voters and opposition, ballot box snatching, heavy securitization of election, manipulation of results, intimidation of election observers, kidnapping of election officials and sensitive materials, manipulation of courts' judgement and imposition of candidates (Long, 2023). As a result, the general impact electoral malpractices can have on legitimacy of government cannot be quantified.

Legitimacy is an important measurement of democracy. The degree to which the people accept a political government is key to determining the democratic viability of the country. John Locke, in support of this, argued that any political arrangement is not meaningful unless the people are factored in it (Thomassen, 2015). In fact, Thomassen summarized the reason legitimacy is important for democracy in two understandable ways: because it is the government of the people and it ensures stability, legitimacy and efficiency (Thomassen, 2015:35).

Landman (2007) succinctly pigeonholes the whole idea of democracy when he divided the democracy into three — procedural, liberal and social democracy. Procedural democracy is espoused by Dahl (1971) to include contestation and participation. Liberal democracy supports contestation and participation aspects of procedural democracy but adds some institutional and fundamental rights which include citizens' rights, the rights of minorities, accountability, popular participation and rule of law (Landman, 2007:20). Social democracy upholds the tenets of liberal democracy except that it adds some other rights which included economic and social rights (Landman, 2007). In all these strands of democracy as identified by Landman, the common feature they have together is that though democracy could be contested, it ensures peace ultimately and embodies some cardinal rights which must be respected and protected.

2.3 ELECTION-DEMOCRACY NEXUS

Election appears to have become a household name as long democracy and its consolidation is concerned. It is widely believed to be a process whereby the populace, having satisfied the requirements mapped out by the electoral act, exercise their right of voting by choosing or selecting an individual or individuals of their choice to represent them in political matters of the state. As conceptualized by Afolabi (2011), election can be seen as a decision making process whereby the citizens, choose or select their candidates to hold formal post. It is also a procedure that enables group of members in a community choose their representatives (Ujo, 2001).

Elections are not all about the scheduled days for elections even though it is a major component. It is also inclusive of other activities prior, during and post elections. For example, the registration of political parties, candidates selection, party campaigns, acquisition of voters cards as well the preparations of the election bodies and security agents are also part of the election process and definition(Okoye, 2017). It is in this light that Okoye (2017) defined election as a complex set of activities, bearing different variables that act and feed on each other. He went further to assert that election involves the people participating in the act of selecting their leaders. Thus, election is inextricably linked to democratization process and should be preserved by the elites of the society (Araba and Braimah, 2015).

Additionally, the modern form of democracy is representative which is made manifestly possible by elections. Thus, once those representatives fail to adequately represent the people, the people shall, through same process of election recall them. It is on this note that Obakhedo (2011) expatiated on the concept of election when he stated that election is a veritable tool for recruitment into the political governance system of any nation. It also affords legitimacy to a given society. Thus, it is equally a good measurement tool for the degree of people's acceptance of a given government (Dye, 2001; Obakhedo, 2011; Bamgbose, 2012).

It therefore implies that election and democracy are Siamese twins. Though, some autocratic governments conduct elections. However, the extent and true nature of such elections cannot be completely ascertained. This is because autocratic governments are most likely to influence election outcomes in order to perpetuate themselves in office. Thus, election should not be just election, its credibility is what deepens democracy and reinforces democratic principles. Since the birth of modern democracy, scholars are keen on understanding electoral process in democracies. Elekwa (2008) contends that electoral process relates to entire election cycle ranging from provision of voter education to the dissolution of the National Assembly. The electoral process is therefore a complex process that encompasses the good intentions and undesirable outcomes of election administration, particularly in emerging democracies where general elections are often marred by culturally hued electoral malpractices (Muhammad, Agye and Etim, 2023). Consequently, electoral

process requires that election must be free and fair, devoid of intimidation and harassment. It is in this context that popular participation in election and governance system can be guaranteed.

2.4 THE CONCEPT OF YOUTH AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The term ‘youth’ is an amorphous word, eluding precise definition. This is because the definition of a youth depends on the socio-cultural dynamics of people. It is based on this socio-cultural differences that the age differentiation of youth differs from region to region and country to country (see table 2.1 below).

Table 2.1: Youth Age across the Globe

Thailand	Thailand Youth Development Act (2007) and the Youth Development Plan (2012)	18-25
Malaysia	National Youth Development Policy (1997)	15-40
Africa	African Youth Charter	15-35
Uganda	National Youth Council Statue (1993)	18-30
Tanzania		
South Africa	National Youth Policy of South Africa (2009 – 2014)	14-35
Nigeria	Nigerian National Youth Policy	18-35

Source: Abdulyakeen (2021)

However, there seems to be a common consensus that youth is a process between childhood and adulthood. According to the United Nations (2010), youth can be

defined as “youth are people between the age bracket of 13 and 30 years. They are in the center between the dependency of childhood and that of adulthood. Thus, the youth are neither as children nor adults” (in Ukhami et al. 2022). However, this definition failed to specifically state the age bracket of youth. It appeared that the United Nations in 2011 corrected this anomaly when it defined youth as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions from Member States (United Nations, 2011). The World Bank described a youth as someone between the ages of 15 and 35 (cited in Abdulyakeen, 2021). Further, scholars such as Altschuler, Strangler, Berkley, and Burton (2009) conceptualized youth as individuals between the ages of 16 and 24. The Nigerian National Youth policy conceptualized youth as those between 18 and 35 years (Abdulyakeen, 2021).

It is apparent from these definitions that the debate is on the age differences and this is determined by the socio-cultural factor of countries and regions. However, it is also not in doubt that the range of ages shows that youthful age is very important and represents the most productive age for individuals. It is a period that concerned agents of socialization in the state will ensure that youths are trained in such a way as to be able to carry on with the task of nation building.

On the other hand, the term ‘political participation’ has always elicited scholarly attention because it is a core ingredient to democracy as well as empirically verifiable. Consequently, different definitions of the concept can be found in the

literature, displaying different perspectives within the contexts scholars were speaking from. Adetoro and Omiyefa (2017) defined the concept as the involvement of citizens in political system. It is a form of political behaviour which focuses on how citizens participate in politics (Falade, 2014). Basically, political participation is a voluntary exercise and does not require any form of force. It is in this sense that George-Genyi (2016) sees political participation as involving voluntary or non-coercive involvement of citizens in politics. Also, it is a discretionary exercise in which citizens can choose to participate directly or indirectly. It is a form of political engagement, a set of duties and rights that involve civic responsibilities and political activities (Uhlener, 2001),

Verba et al (1995) maintain that political participation is not just an aggregate participation of free people, but it is an activity that has some definite goals. It is an activity that has the intention of influencing an action of government — either directly or indirectly influencing the making or implementation of government policies, or indirectly influencing the selection of those that will make the policies (Verba et al. 1995). In addition to the intention of political participation expressed by Verba et al, it is also a means of seeking to control power, acquire power or influence decision making (Falade, 2014). Viewed against these revealing and insightful definitions, political participation is part and parcel of democratic process where citizens contribute their own quota to their political system, decision making process and national development (Arowolo and Aluko, 2010). In a democracy,

individual participation is sine quo non to the survival of the nation and the people. Political participation in any democratic setting determines citizens' life and development within a given society (Adetoro and Omiyefa, 2017). To that extent, individuals need to be involved in the selection process of their leaders or those in whose hands policy making is entrusted. This selection process, which is mostly voting, must be competitive, open and transparent to allow people's free choice and participation and enjoyment of their civic and political liberties (Arowolo and Aluko (2010).

Barrett and Brunton-Smith (2014) argue that political participation can take different forms, including conventional forms such as voting process, election campaigning etc and non-conventional forms that can occur outside electoral processes such as signing petitions, participating in protests and demonstrations. To Gorsuch (2000), political participation can come with costs in the form of monetary costs, time, energy and resources which can differ within groups and individuals based on capacity and willingness to shoulder these costs. Moreover, people's involvement in politics can be more or less. It is in this sense that political participation, according to Ogu and Inyang (2015), can assume three categories according to participants.

Parochial participants are primarily involved in activities such as voting, influencing others to vote in a certain way, wearing party's customized shirts and badges or displaying party's stickers. These activities involve little costs in finance, time, energy and resources, hence, most people are able to participate in this level of

politics. In Nigeria, it appears that these type of participants are popular even though some of them could still be apathetic and therefore do not have anything to do with politics (Emma and Sunday, 2010; Ugwueze, 2010).

Subject participants often engage in such activities as making monetary contributions, participating in political meetings, rallies, campaigns and sourcing for quality leaders from ward level to the national level. They are active members of the political process. Unlike in parochial participants, activities involved by subject participants require much financial, time and energy costs. Also, at this stage, subject participants can transit to higher (gladiator level) or descend to parochial (spectator) level (Ogu and Inyang, 2015).

The participant or gladiator participants are involved in such activities including holding public or party offices or positions, being a party's candidate, contributing to campaigns and others. This has been termed as the most effective form of political participation Ogu and Inyang (2015) because participation at this level involves huge financial, energy and time costs that only few, determined and privileged individuals can afford to shoulder.

In Nigeria, level of political participation has been dropping since the return to democratic regime in 1999. In a society like Nigeria where voter apathy is a recurring decimal in any election cycle cannot be said to be getting it right with democratic consolidation. Electoral process must restore people's confidence and trust in the system so that the people can participate without doubts over the

credibility of the process. The process must start with political party formations and party politics which are prelude to popular participation in a democratic setting.

2.5 YOUTH, POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRACY BUILDING IN NIGERIA

Since independence of 1960, even though it was manageable in the first, second and third republics, the Nigerian youths have been facing various systemic and structural challenges that have continued to limit their participation in politics. In the Fourth Republic, the government of Olusegun Obasanjo relegated the active participation of the youths through various undemocratic means. The youths became excluded from the economic and political decision making process of their country (Akinrolabu and Imoukhuede, 2023). In this republic, an average Nigerian youth became a political vandal, often used as a tool to perpetrate political violence when it was time of elections. The government of Musa Yar'Adua saw the level of relegation of the youths as an aberration to the future development of the country. He therefore set up a Nigerian Youth Parliament in 2008 with the aim to encourage the youth to participate in the Nigerian politics.

The government of Muhammadu Buhari failed to prioritize youth participation in his administration. Instead, he chose to surround himself with individuals of the same clan, ethnic group and religious group with him. However, it was not until 2018 when he signed the Age Reduction Bill into law in order to pave the way for greater youth participation in politics. With this innovative idea, youth candidacy moved

from 21 percent in 2015 to 34.2 percent in 2019 general elections and sharply dropped to 28.6 percent in the lead up to 2023 general election (Akinrolabu and Imoukhuede, 2023). It was therefore glaring to see that the major challenge limiting youth participation in politics in Nigeria is not just weak laws, but the corrupt attitudes of old politicians who wanted to remain in the government till death. Factors such as high cost of nomination forms, parties' choice of rich individuals that could sponsor and win elections and commercialized primary elections became complex challenges that youths cannot easily surmount without getting hurt in the process.

Over the years, it appears that NGOs have taken the initiative to engage the Nigerian youths through various programmes. However, these programmes have not been able to achieve the desired effects owing to their mode of implementation that rendered them easily hijacked by the elites. It is believed that the greater the level of youth participation, the greater the level of development of the country's democracy (Badmus, 2018). However, a number of factors have continued to hinder the youths from fully participating in politics. They include: poverty, unemployment and bad governance that has continued to throw up socio-economic changes such as educational, health and housing failures. These factors cause distractions to the youths who are battling for survival rather than being focused on politics (Olufowobi, 2018).

The implication for youths' incapacity to participate in politics can be very grave. As it is already known across the country, the perpetrators of political violence are the youth. When the youths are not engaged, in their quest to expend their energy which ought to be utilized in productivity, they stray into committing different forms of crime such as cultism, armed robbery, banditry, kidnapping, killing, ritual killings and electoral violence such as ballot box snatching, thuggery, arson, vote buying, falsification of election results and other related crimes (Akinyetun, 2021). At a larger scale, the misplacement of productive energy that should translate to economic development will have socio-economic implication on the development of Nigeria (Chikwe & Augustus-Daddiie, 2018).

2.6 AN OVERVIEW OF 2023 GENERAL ELECTION IN NIGERIA

The 2023 general elections took place in both national and state levels. It was the seventh since the return to civilian regime in 1999. The national (federal) polls were conducted for the presidency and National Assembly that comprised 109 senatorial and 360 House of Representatives seats. At the state levels, elections were held in 28 states out of the 36 states while elections for the State Houses of Assembly seats were held throughout the 36 states that comprised 993 seats (EU-EOM, 2023).

The various political, security and economic crises at the period raised the consciousness of the people to remedy situations through voting. The lingering terrorist activities in the North East, banditry and kidnapping in the North West, the scourge of farmer-herder crisis in the North Central, secessionist agitations in the

South East and kidnapping in the South West and South were some of the security issues prevailing at the period. Economically, the rising unemployment, poverty, fuel scarcity and deepening high inflation raised many concerns (EU-EOM, 2023). The youths in particular saw the elections as an opportunity to root out corrupt and inefficient leaders. More so, their experiences during the ENDSARS protest where most of them were massacred by the military also influenced their quest to actively participate in the elections. To that extent, a record-breaking 93.4 million voters registered for the elections of which two-thirds of the 9.5 million new registrants were youths (EU-EOM, 2023). The crisis was aggravated by the naira redesign policy introduced by the government that was meant to address issues of money laundering, kidnapping, vote buying and money stockpiling. The Naira swap orchestrated money scarcity and economic hardship for the people, leading to protests, disgruntlement, and general unrest throughout the country (National Democratic Institute [NDI]/International Republican Institute [IRI], 2023).

Beyond the existential political, economic and security issues as stimulants, the passage of the Electoral Act 2022 played a critical role in stimulating the zeal to vote. The Act introduced some innovative measures of which chiefly among them were the support for the use of Bimodal Voters Accreditation System (BVAS) and real-time transmission of election results from polling units to the INEC Viewing Portal (IREV) (Oduola , 2023). In addition, the promises made by the INEC to strictly ensure the adherence to these novel provisions strengthened public enthusiasm.

The federal elections were slated for and held on the 25th of February 2023 while the State elections took place on the 18th day of March 2023. The presidential elections appeared to be the one that mostly aroused public interest as four (4) political parties battled it out on the 25th February 2023 out of the 18 registered political parties that also fielded presidential candidates. The four major parties were the All Progressive Congress (APC) that had Bola Ahmed Tinubu as its presidential candidate, the People Democratic Party (PDP) that had Atiku Abubakar as its presidential candidate, the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) that fielded Rabiu Kwakwanso as its presidential candidate and the Labour Party (LP) that fielded Peter Obi as its presidential candidate (EU-EOM, 2023). However, the appearance of the LP largely regarded as ‘third force’ aroused public interest and provided a wider space for the masses to make their choice against the dominant APC and PDP (Oduola, 2023). Moreover, the nature of the campaign by the LP presidential candidate that was based on prevailing political and economic situations in the state endeared him to the masses, particularly the youths (US Department of State, 2023). However, despite the technological innovations introduced by the Electoral Act and INEC Electoral Guidelines, the conduct of the elections and the results therefrom have been subject of controversy by contenders, the voters and observers (Yiaga Africa, 2023; EU-EOM 2023; Centre for Democracy [CDD], 2023).

According to EU-EOM (2023), there were recorded 101 election related violence that led to 74 fatalities and majority of these incidents occurred during state-level

elections. Most of these incidents were perpetrated by the politically sponsored thugs that intimidated and harassed voters and created tense environment to deter voters. There were also reports of assassination attempts and actual killings of supporters and candidates particularly in Osun, Imo, Enugu, Rivers, Cross River and Ebonyi. States. For instance, there were coordinated attacks on all the three leading candidates in Enugu-East senatorial district on 23 February that resulted in the deaths of seven persons, six of them LP members including the LP senatorial candidate (CDD, 2023). Later, INEC postponed an election in the district. In some parts of the North, particularly in Kano State, thugs unleashed mayhem on campaigners including presidential elections (EU-EOM, 2023). In the highly contested states such as Lagos, Kano and Rivers, the environment became charged up following the outcome of the presidential election. Abductions and killings were also recorded in Zamfara, Lagos, Oyo, Rivers and Delta States. There were also threats against certain ethnic groups particularly in Lagos State (Yiaga Africa, 2023).

2.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study utilizes system theory to explain the impact of the youth on the democratic process in Nigeria. In his well-known work "political system," which was published in 1953, David Easton is credited for trying to understand politics from a systems approach and giving rise to the political science field's systems theory. Eight key traits were defined in his study, which was considered the cornerstone of the behaviorist revolution in political science. He characterized the traits—regularities,

verification, procedures, quantification, values, systemization, pure science, and integrated Varma—as the conceptual cornerstone of behaviorism in (Obi et al. 2008).

Anyebe (2018) claims that Easton was able to extract these traits from a variety of behavioral literature, and even though they are not specific to systems theory, they do serve as the cornerstone for the obvious connection that exists between behaviorism and systems thinking. Put another way, a political system can be defined as the interactions within a community that determine who has authority and how decisions and policies are carried out. According to Easton, the political system is made up of all recognizable and connected entities and activities (what we typically think of as government institutions and political processes) within a society that have the authority to assign values and make decisions that have socially binding consequences (Anderson, 1997). All phenomena that exist outside of the political system's borders, such as the social structure, the economic system, and the biological environment, make up this environment. Therefore, the political system can be logically distinguished from all other elements of a society (Easton, 1965).

Demands and supports are two examples of environmental inputs into the political system. Typically, demands are the requests for action made by people or organizations to further their goals and ideals. Support is given when people and organizations follow the outcomes of elections, pay their taxes, follow the law, and comply with other decisions and acts made by the political system in response to

requests. A political system's level of support reveals how much people believe it to be valid, authoritative, and obligatory for all of its citizens.

However, the political system produces things like laws, regulations, court rulings, and the like. They are recognized as the supreme distribution of values and make up public policy. The idea of feedback suggests that decisions made about public policies (or outputs) at one point in time may have an impact on the environment, the demands that result from it, and the nature of the political system itself later on. Public policy is a never-ending cycle in which the results of policy may generate new demands, which in turn generate more outputs, and so on.

Overall, this model integrates systems theory into the process of formulating policy. In other words, this model states that the political system takes in inputs from its surroundings and transforms them into outputs. Demands for particular policy outcomes from individuals or organizations are the inputs. Determining societal values and allocating resources are examples of policy outcomes. There is a feedback loop where the outputs change what comes in next. Thus, information theory ideas are used in this model. To put it another way, systems theory views public policy as the political system's reaction to external demands.

The political environment is made up of institutions from the economic, social, cultural, and international domains that influence political processes and are shaped by the political system. Using a systems approach, it is assumed that environmental variables and public policy are mutually causally related (Abdulsalami, 1987). The

political system is made up of those institutions that impose authoritative values on society as a whole.

The extremely wide and abstract nature of systems theory limits its applicability to the study of political system functioning. Furthermore, it says very little about the methods and procedures used inside the "black box" known as the political system to make choices and produce policies. In fact, systems theory findings are occasionally classified as input-output research. However, this method highlights some significant aspects of the political process and might be useful in structuring research into policy formulation (Anderson, 1997).

Regardless, system theory is relevant in this study in explaining the nature of democratic process and youth political participation in Nigeria. Elections take place in Nigeria within the socio-political environment. The processes involved in the conduct of elections in Nigeria usually begins from registration of voters to the resolution of conflicts arising from the elections. As a result, political participation (input) is a way people respond to the growing stable changes within the environment in order to birth peaceful change of government and engender development (output). However, when the electoral system is fraught with irregularities, both the output and feedback will be lack of participation, low voter turnout or change of voting behaviour that can worsen the credibility of the election. This theory therefore can account for the processes that characterized 2023 general elections in Edo State including level of youth political participation.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter dealt mainly with research design, population of the study, sample size and sampling technique, instrumentation, validity of the instrument, reliability of the instrument, method of data collection, and techniques of data analysis.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study adopts a survey research design. By this, it utilizes designed questionnaire. The design is considered appropriate for this study as the researcher sets out to determine the relationships that exist between variables.

3.3 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population is the entire subset from which the representative sample is drawn. This study was conducted in Oredo Local government Area with a population of 374,515 (National Population Commission (2006) (see table 3.1 below). Oredo LGA was purposively selected on the basis of its location as the central LGA in Edo State. It was believed that its central nature would allow for varied opinions from respondents in Edo State. More so, it was selected because of the place it occupies in the political system of Edo State. It witnessed varied competition from political bigwigs who battled for supremacy and dominance during the 2023 Local Government election in Edo State.

Table 3.1: The Population of LGAs in Edo State

Senatorial District	LGA	Population
Edo Central	Esan Central	105,242
	Esan North East	121,989
	Esan South East	166,309
	Esan West	127,718
	Igueben	70,276
Edo North	Akoko-Edo	261,567
	Etsako-East	147,335
	Etsako-Central	94,228
	Etsako-West	198,975
	Owan East	154,630
	Owan West	99,056
Edo South	Oredo	374,515
	Orhionwon	183,994
	Ovia North East	155,344
	Ovia South West	138,072
	Egor	340,287
	Uhunmwode	121,749
	Ikpoba-Okha	372,080
Total		3,233,366

Source: NPC (2006)

3.4 SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

A sample size of four hundred (400) respondents were purposively selected from a population of 374,515. The choice of the sample was drawn from Slovin's formula for sample size determination as defined:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + (N \times e^2)}$$

Where; n= Sample size; N = Population, 1= Constant value and e =Margin of error given as (0.05). Hence, given that the population (N) = (42,500), e = 0.05

$$n = \frac{374,515}{1 + (374,515 \times 0.05^2)} = \frac{374,515}{936.29} = 399.99 = \text{aprox. } 400.$$

3.5 INSTRUMENTATION

The main instrument for data collection in this research was the structured questionnaire. Oral questions was also asked some of the respondents in order to clarify their responses in the questionnaire. Part A of the questionnaires sought to know the bio-data of the respondents. Part B contained questions bordering on youth and democratic process in the 2023 general election in Edo State. The questions were mainly closed ended.

The closed ended questions were designed to elicit direct responses from the respondents as well as for easy analysis. It involved Likert format of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD) and Undecided (U).

The researcher distributed and collected the questionnaire with the help of a research assistant who was a classmate. Out of the total number of four hundred (400) questionnaires distributed, only three hundred and ninety-two (392) questionnaires were returned. Thus, eight (8) questionnaires were lost in the process.

3.6 VALIDITY OF THE INSTRUMENT

In determining the validity of the instruments, the copies of the instruments were validated face to face by the supervisor who made needed corrections. The corrections were effected before the proper administrations of the questionnaires were made.

3.7 RELIABILITY OF THE INSTRUMENT

To determine the reliability of the instrument, it was trial tested on 20 Uniben students who were also conversant with the 2023 general elections in Edo State. The Cronbach Alpha method was adopted to measure the internal consistency coefficient of the questionnaire.

3.8 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Data for this study were generated from two sources: primary and secondary sources. The primary source consisted of the major source of data used in this study and it was obtained through the administration of structured questionnaire in line with statement of the objectives in order to elicit information from the respondents. The secondary source involved the use of archival materials such as journals/articles, publications, conferences, newspapers and internet materials.

3.9 TECHNIQUES OF DATA ANALYSIS

The data generated were analyzed using simple percentages for the analysis of the respondents' bio-data. Also, charts and graphs were used to represent the data generated in the field. The data were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 20.0).

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is concerned with the presentation and analyses of data collected. The data were analyzed using simple percentages and charts. The occurrence or non-occurrence of an event as contained in the questionnaire was determined by the item that received the highest percentage. Like it was stated in the chapter three of this study, the research distributed and collected a total of 392 questionnaires and lost 8 in the process.

4.2 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

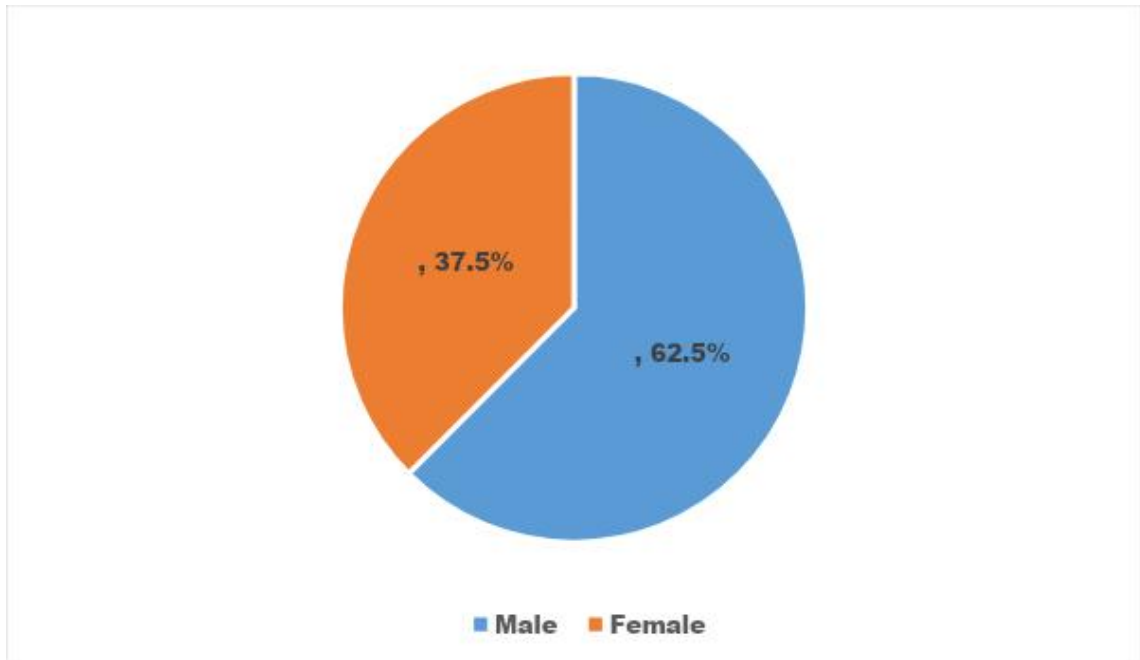
Table 4.1: Sex of the Respondents

SEX

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	245	62.5	62.5	62.5
Female	147	37.5	37.5	100.0
Total	392	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Chart 4.1: Sex of the Respondents



Source: Field Work (2024)

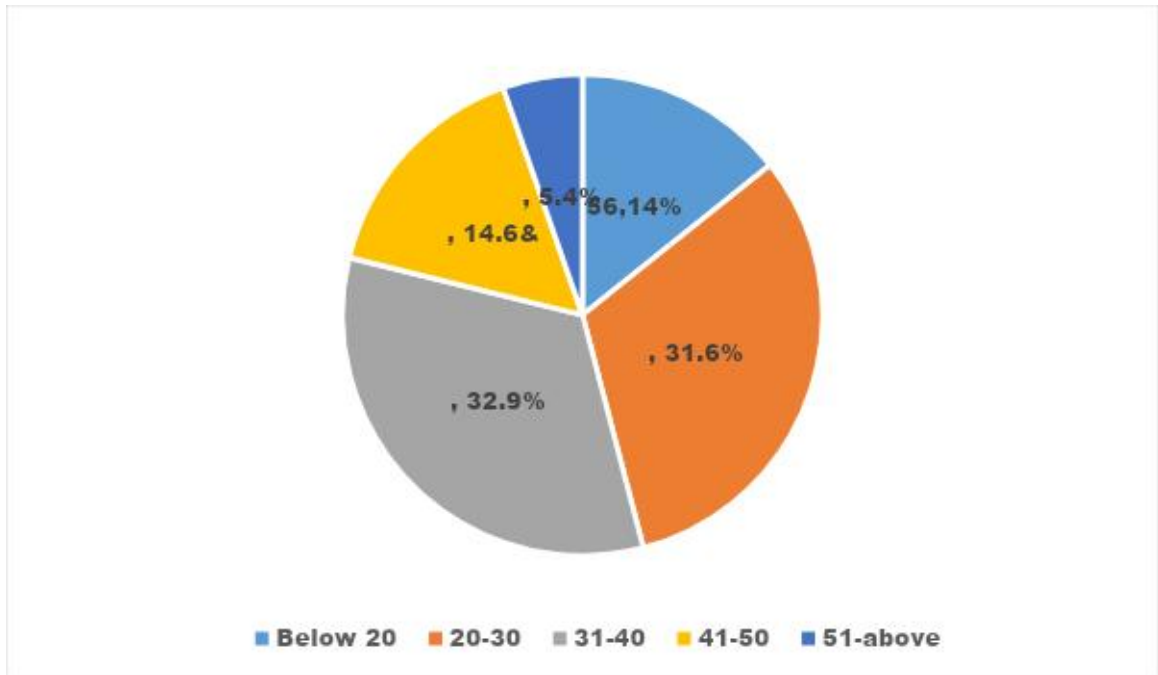
From table 4.1 and chart 4.1 above, the results of the survey according to sex distribution of the respondents presented show that out of the 392 respondents surveyed, 245 representing 62.5% of respondents are males while 147 representing 37.5% of the respondents are females. Thus, more males participated in the study than the females.

Table 4.2: Age of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Below 20	56	14.3	14.3	14.3
20-30	124	31.6	31.6	45.9
31-40	129	32.9	32.9	78.8
41-50	62	15.8	15.8	94.6
51-above	21	5.4	5.4	100.0
Total	392	100.0	100.0	

Source: survey data (2024)

Chart 4.2: Age Distribution of the Respondents



Source: survey data (2024)

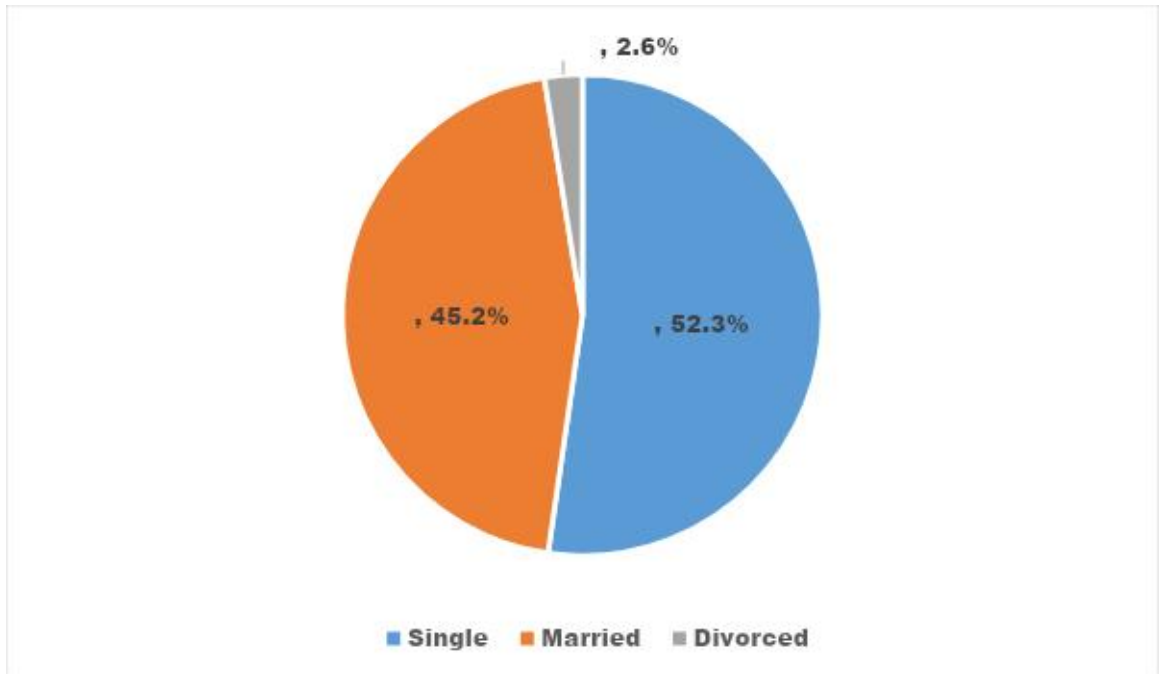
The results of the survey according to age distribution of the respondents presented in Table 4.2 and chart 4.2 show that 56 respondents representing 14.3 percent are between the ages of 18 and 27. 124 respondents representing 31.6% are between the ages of 28 and 37. 129 respondents representing 32.9% are between the ages of 38 and 47. 62 respondents representing 15.8 percent fall within the ages of 48 and 57 while 21 respondents representing 5.4 percent fall between 58 and above. Thus, respondents between the age of 38 and 47 participated the most in the study.

Table 4.3: Marital Status of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Single	205	52.3	52.3	52.3
Married	177	45.2	45.2	97.4
Divorced	10	2.6	2.6	100.0
Total	392	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Chart 4.3: Marital Status Distribution of the Respondents



Source: Survey Data (2024)

The results of the survey according to the marital distribution of the respondents presented in Table 4.3 and chart 4.3 show that 205 respondents representing 52.3 percent are single, 177 respondents representing 45.2 percent are married and 10 respondents representing 2.6 percent are divorced. Thus, respondents who are married participated the most in the survey.

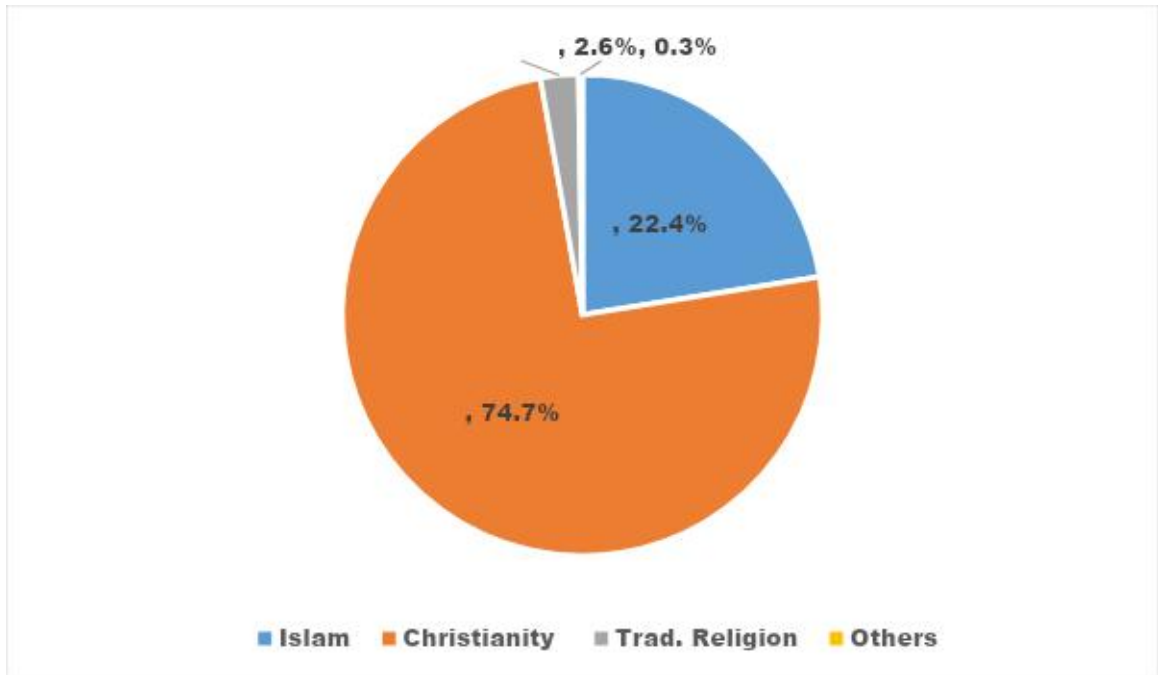
Table 4.4: Religious Background of the Respondents

Religion

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Islam	88	22.4	22.4	22.4
Christianity	293	74.7	74.7	97.2
traditional religion	10	2.6	2.6	99.7
Others	1	.3	.3	100.0
Total	392	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Chart 4.4: Religious Background of the Respondents



Source: Survey Data (2024)

From the table and chart above, 88 respondents representing 22.4% practice Islam; 293 respondents representing 74.7% practice Christianity, 10 respondents representing 2.6% practice traditional religion and 1 respondent representing 0.3 percent practice other religion aside the three above. Thus, respondents who practice Christianity participated the most in the survey.

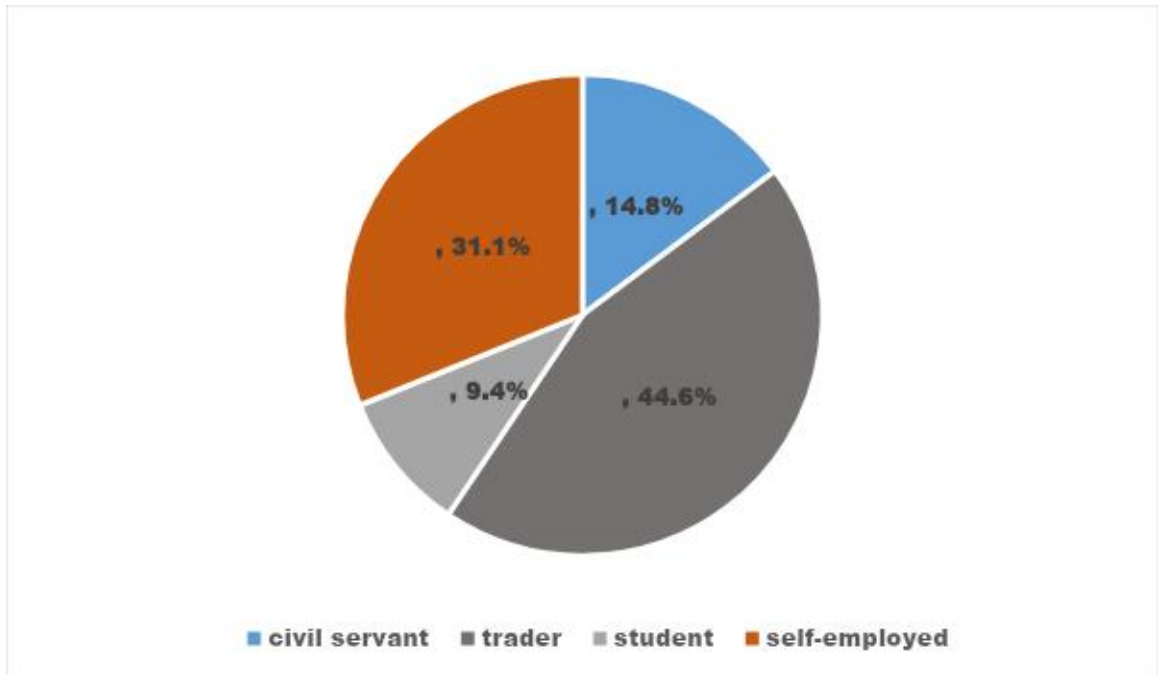
Table 4.5: Occupational Distribution of the Respondents

Occupation

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid civil servant	58	14.8	14.8	14.8
Trader	175	44.6	44.6	59.4
Student	37	9.4	9.4	68.9
self employed	122	31.1	31.1	100.0
Total	392	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Chart 4.5: Occupation of the Respondents



Source: Survey Data (2024)

The results of the survey according to the occupation of the respondents presented in Table 4.5 and chart 4.5 show that 58 respondents representing 14.8 percent are civil servants, 175 respondents representing 44.6 percent are traders, 37 respondents representing 9.4 percent are students while 122 respondents representing 31.1 percent are self-employed. Thus, respondents who are traders participated the most in the survey.

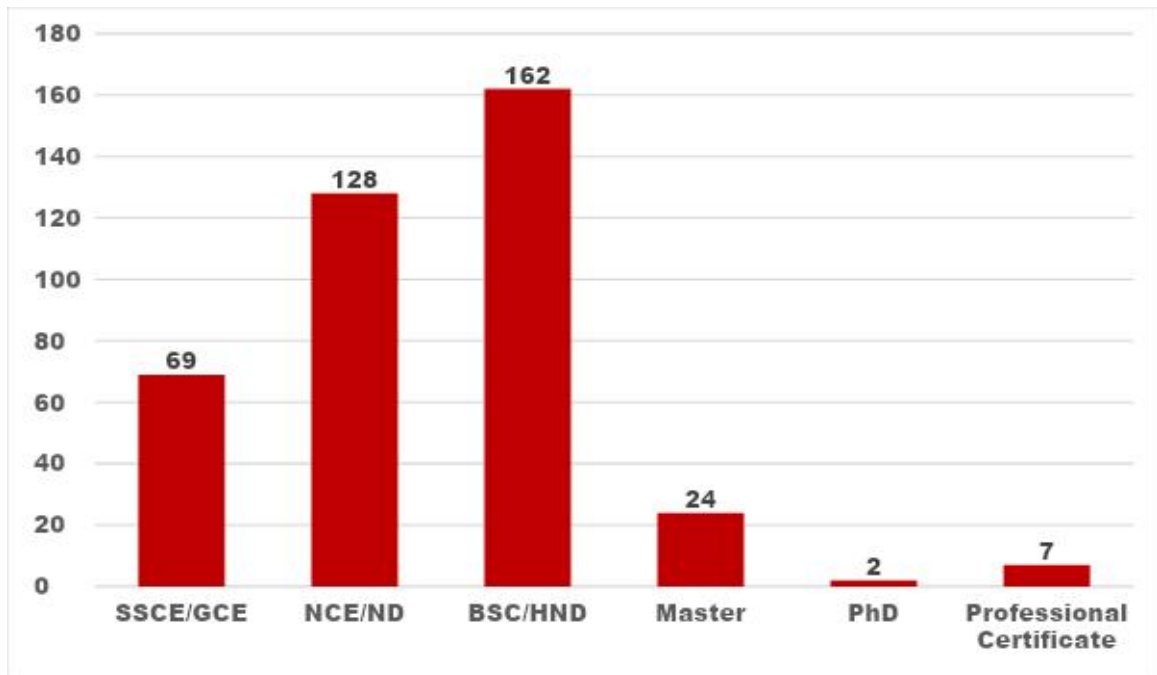
Table 4.6: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Educational Qualification

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid SSCE/GCE	69	17.6	17.6	17.6
NCE/ND	128	32.7	32.7	50.3
BSC/HND	162	41.3	41.3	91.6
Master	24	6.1	6.1	97.7
PhD	2	.5	.5	98.2
professional certificate	7	1.8	1.8	100.0
Total	392	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Chart 4.6: Educational Qualification of Respondents



Source: Survey Data (2024)

The results of the survey according to the educational qualification of the respondents presented in Table 4.6 and chart 4.6 show that 69 respondents representing 17.6 percent possess SSCE/GCE certificates, 128 respondents representing 32.7 percent hold NCE/ND certificates, 162 respondents representing 41.3 percent possess BSc/HND certificates, 24 respondents representing 6.1 percent hold MSc certificates, 2 respondents representing 0.5 percent possess PhD certificates while 7 respondents representing 1.8 percent hold professional certificates. . Thus, respondents with BSc/HND certificates participated the most in the survey.

4.3 ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This section attempted to answer the research questions of the study by factoring the responses of the respondents. These research questions were: What was the level of the youths' turnout during the 2023 general election in Edo State? What were the different ways the youths participated in the 2023 general election in Edo State? What were the youths' patterns of voting in 2023 general elections in Edo State? Did the youths indulge in electoral violence in the 2023 general election in Edo State? In what ways can youth political participation and democratic process in Edo State and Nigeria be improved?

The first four research questions were addressed in this section while the last research question was addressed in chapter five under recommendations. All the research questions were analyzed using simple percentages.

4.3.1: RQ1: What was the level of the youths' turnout during the 2023 general election in Edo State?

	Cluster A: Youths' turnout in the 2023 gener	A			D	
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	al electi on in Edo State					
	The youth s turno ut in the last 2023 gener al electi on in Edo State was impre ssive	40 5.7%	03 6.3%	4 8.9%	5 4.0%	0 .1%
	Yout hs did not come out to	7 7.1%	5 1.5%	45 7.0%	24 1.6%	1 .8%

	vote during the 2023 general elections in Edo State					
	Youths not coming out to vote affected the way the election was conducted in Edo	9 0.1%	8 7.3%	35 4.5%	10 8.1%	

	State					
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Source: Field Study (2024)

From table 4.3.1 above, the respondents' distribution based on their knowledge on youths' turnout in the 2023 general election in Edo State shows that a majority of 140 and 103 (243) respondents constituting 35.7% and 26.3% (62.0%) respectively strongly agreed and agreed respectively that the turnout of youths in the last 2023 general election in Edo State was impressive. On the other hand, 74 and 55 (129) respondents constituting 18.9% and 14.0% (32.9%) respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively while 20 respondents representing 5.1% were undecided. Thus, a majority of 243 respondents representing 62.0% agreed that the turnout of youths in the last 2023 general election in Edo State was impressive while 129 respondents representing 32.9% disagreed.

When asked whether youths did not come out to vote during the 2023 general elections in Edo State, 67 and 45 (112) respondents constituting 17.1% and 11.5% (28.6%) respectively strongly agreed and agreed respectively that youths did not come out to vote during the 2023 general elections in Edo State. On the other hand, 145 and 124 (269) respondents constituting 37.0% and 31.6% (68.6%) respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively while 11 respondents representing 2.8% were undecided. Thus, a majority of 269 respondents representing 68.6% disagreed that youths did not come out to vote during the 2023 general elections in Edo State while 112 respondents representing 28.6% agreed.

When asked whether youths not coming out to vote affected the way the election was conducted in Edo State, 79 and 68 (147) respondents constituting 20.1% and 17.3% (37.4%) respectively strongly agreed and agreed respectively that youths not coming out to vote affected the way the election was conducted in Edo State. On the other hand, 135 and 110 (245) respondents constituting 34.5% and 28.1% (62.6%) respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Thus, a majority of 245 respondents representing 62.6% disagreed that youths not coming out to vote affected the way the election was conducted in Edo State while 147 respondents representing 37.4% agreed.

4.3.2: RQ2: What were the different ways the youths participated in the 2023 general election in Edo State?

	Cluster B: Different ways the youths participated in the 2023 general election in Edo State	A			D	
	Youths participated in the 2023 general election in	30 3.2%	08 7.6%	9 2.7%	5 6.6%	

	Edo State by campaigning for their preferred candidates					
	Youths participated in the 2023 general election in Edo State by joining the INEC team as ad hoc	48 7.8%	05 6.8%	8 9.9%	1 5.6%	

	staff					
	<p>Youths participated in the 2023 general election in Edo State by sensitizing the people on how to locate their voting centres and ways to vote in the election</p>	<p>44 6.7%</p>	<p>23 1.4%</p>	<p>0 7.9%</p>	<p>5 4.0%</p>	

Youths did not participate in the 2023 general election in Edo State	8	7	36	01	
	7.3%	2.2%	4.7%	5.8%	

Source: Field Study (2024)

From table 4.3.2 above, the respondents' distribution based on their knowledge of different ways the youths participated in the 2023 general election in Edo State shows that a majority of 130 and 108 (238) respondents constituting 33.2% and 27.6% (60.8%) respectively strongly agreed and agreed respectively that youths participated in the 2023 general election in Edo State by campaigning for their preferred candidates. On the other hand, 89 and 65 (154) respondents constituting 22.7% and 16.6% (39.3%) respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Thus, a majority of 238 respondents representing 60.8% agreed that youths participated in the 2023 general election in Edo State by campaigning for their preferred candidates while 154 respondents representing 39.3% disagreed.

When asked whether youths participated in the 2023 general election in Edo State joining the INEC team as ad hoc staff, 148 and 105 (253) respondents constituting

37.8% and 26.8% (64.6%) respectively strongly agreed and agreed respectively that the youths participated in the 2023 general election in Edo State by joining the INEC team as ad hoc staff. On the other hand, 78 and 61 (139) respondents constituting 19.9% and 15.6% (35.5%) respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Thus, a majority of 253 respondents representing 64.6% agreed that youths participated in the 2023 general election in Edo State by joining the INEC team as ad hoc staff while 139 respondents representing 35.5% disagreed.

When asked whether the youths participated in the 2023 general election in Edo State by sensitizing the people on how to locate their voting centres and ways to vote in the election, 144 and 123 (267) respondents constituting 36.7% and 31.4% (68.1%) respectively strongly agreed and agreed respectively that youths participated in the 2023 general election in Edo State by sensitizing the people on how to locate their voting centres and ways to vote in the election. On the other hand, 70 and 55 (125) respondents constituting 17.9% and 14.0% (31.9%) respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Thus, a majority of 267 respondents representing 68.1% agreed that youths participated in the 2023 general election in Edo State by sensitizing the people on how to locate their voting centres and ways to vote in the election while 125 respondents representing 31.9% disagreed.

When asked whether youths did not participate in the 2023 general election in Edo State, 68 and 87 (155) respondents constituting 17.3% and 22.2% (39.5%) respectively agreed and strongly agreed respectively that youths did not participate in

the 2023 general election in Edo State. On the other hand, 136 and 101 (237) respondents constituting 34.7% and 25.8% (60.5%) respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Thus, a majority of 237 respondents representing 60.5% disagreed that youths did not participate in the 2023 general election in Edo State while 155 respondents representing 39.5% agreed.

4.3.3: RQ3: What were the youths’ patterns of voting in 2023 general elections in Edo State?

	Cluster C: Patterns of youths’ voting in the 2023 general elections in Edo State	A			D	
Youths voted based on ethnicity in the		28 2.7%	02 6.0%	1 3.3%	1 8.1%	

	2023 general election in Edo State					
	Youths voted based on religion in the 2023 general election in Edo State	37 4.9%	05 6.8%	5 1.7%	5 6.6%	
	Youths voted based on politica l party affiliati on in the 2023 general	38 5.2%	8 5.0%	2 0.9%	4 8.9%	

	election in Edo State					
1	Youths voted based on the personality of the candidates in the 2023 general election in Edo State	00 5.5%	38 5.2%	9 0.2%	5 9.1%	
2	Youths voted to safeguard the future of Edo State and	30 3.2%	27 2.4%	5 9.1%	0 5.3%	

	Nigeria's democracy as well as foster national development					
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Source: Field Survey (2024)

From table 4.3.3 above, the respondents' distribution based on their knowledge on patterns of youths' voting in the 2023 general elections in Edo State shows that a majority of 128 and 102 (230) respondents constituting 32.7% and 26.0% (58.7%) respectively strongly agreed and agreed respectively that youths voted based on ethnicity. On the other hand, 91 and 71 (162) respondents constituting 23.3% and 18.1% (41.4%) respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Thus, a majority of 230 respondents representing 58.7% agreed that youths voted based on ethnicity while 162 respondents representing 41.4% disagreed.

When asked whether youths voted based on religion, 137 and 105 (242) respondents constituting 34.9% and 26.8% (61.7%) respectively strongly agreed and agreed respectively that youths voted based on religion in the 2023 general election in Edo State. On the other hand, 85 and 65 (150) respondents constituting 21.7% and 16.6%

(38.3%) respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Thus, a majority of 242 respondents representing 61.7% agreed that youths voted based on religion in the 2023 general election in Edo State while 150 respondents representing 38.3% disagreed.

When asked whether youths voted based on political party affiliation, 138 and 98 (236) respondents constituting 35.2% and 25.0% (60.2%) respectively strongly agreed and agreed respectively that people voted based on political party affiliation in the 2023 general election in Edo State. On the other hand, 82 and 74 (156) respondents constituting 20.9% and 18.9% (39.8%) respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Thus, a majority of 236 respondents representing 60.2% agreed that youths voted based on political party affiliation in the 2023 general election in Edo State while 156 respondents representing 39.8% disagreed.

When asked whether people voted based on the personality of the candidates in the 2023 general election in Edo State, 100 and 138 (238) respondents constituting 37.0% and 30.2% (67.2%) respectively strongly agreed and agreed respectively that youths voted based on personality of the candidates in the 2023 general election in Edo State. On the other hand, 79 and 75 (154) respondents constituting 20.2% and 19.1% (39.3%) respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Thus, a majority of 238 respondents representing 67.2% agreed that youths voted based on the personality of the candidates in the 2023 general election in Edo State while 154 respondents representing 39.3% disagreed.

Lastly, when asked whether youths voted to safeguard the future of Edo State and Nigeria’s democracy as well as foster national development, 130 and 127 (257) respondents constituting 33.2% and 32.4% (65.6%) respectively strongly agreed and agreed respectively that youths voted based on personality of the candidates in the 2023 general election in Edo State. On the other hand, 75 and 60 (135) respondents constituting 19.1% and 15.3% (34.4%) respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Thus, a majority of 257 respondents representing 65.6% agreed that youths voted based on the personality of the candidates in the 2023 general election in Edo State while 135 respondents representing 34.4% disagreed.

4.3.4: RQ4: Did the youths indulge in electoral violence in the 2023 general election in Edo State?

Cluster	S	D	D	S
D: Yo uths and elector al violenc e in the 2023 general electio n in Edo	D		D	

State						
Youths were involved in sharing money and other gift items during the 2023 general election in Edo State	35 3 4.4%	1 03 6.3%	1 2 1.4%	8 4 1.4%	7 0 7.9%	1 1
Youths were involved in ballot box snatching during	10 2 8.1%	1 28 2.7%	1 3 0.4%	8 0 0.4%	7 4 8.9%	1 1

the 2023 general election in Edo State					
Youths were involved in thugger y during the 2023 general election in Edo State	20	14	5	3	
	1	1	8	7	
	3	2	2	1	
	0.6%	9.1%	1.7%	8.6%	

Source: Field Survey (2024)

From table 4.3.4 above, the respondents' distribution based on whether the youths were involved in electoral violence in 2023 general election in Edo State shows that a majority of 135 and 103 (238) respondents constituting 34.4% and 26.3% (60.7%) respectively strongly agreed and agreed respectively that the youths were involved in electoral violence in 2023 general election in Edo State. On the other hand, 84 and 70 (154) respondents constituting 21.4% and 17.9% (39.3%) respectively disagreed

and strongly disagreed respectively. Thus, a majority of 238 respondents representing 60.7% agreed that the youths were involved in electoral violence in 2023 general election in Edo State while 75 respondents representing 39.3% disagreed.

When asked whether the youths were involved in ballot box snatching during the 2023 general election in Edo State, 110 and 128 (238) respondents constituting 28.1% and 32.7% (60.8%) respectively strongly agreed and agreed respectively that the youths were involved in ballot box snatching during the 2023 general election in Edo State. On the other hand, 80 and 74 (154) respondents constituting 20.4% and 18.9% (39.3%) respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Thus, a majority of 238 respondents representing 60.8% agreed the youths were involved in ballot box snatching during the 2023 general election in Edo State while 154 respondents representing 39.3% disagreed.

When asked whether the youths were involved in thuggery during the 2023 general election in Edo State, 120 and 114 (234) respondents constituting 30.6% and 29.1% (59.7%) respectively strongly agreed and agreed respectively that there the youths were involved in thuggery during the 2023 general election in Edo State. On the other hand, 85 and 73 (158) respondents constituting 21.7% and 18.6% (41.3%) respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Thus, a majority of 234 respondents representing 59.7% agreed that the youths were involved in thuggery

during the 2023 general election in Edo State while 158 respondents representing 41.3% disagreed.

4.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the analyses of the research questions, the following findings were made and discussed under this section. The first finding was that there was massive youths' turnout during the general election in Edo State. This finding is in consonant with the findings made by different scholars and organizations regarding youth turnout in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria (Ayeni, 2023; Chatham House, 2023; Akinmoju, 2023). For instance, Chatham House reported that despite growing intimidation and harassment during the elections, possibly to weaken the support base of the youth-preferred candidate, Peter Obi of Labour Party, out of the total 9 (Nine) million people that turned out to vote in the election, the youth constituted more than 70 percent (Chatham House, 2023). Akinmoju (2023) noted that the large turnout of voters could be likened to the ENDSARS protest that rocked the entire Nigeria by the Nigerian youths. Much like was triggered the ENDSARS protests, the massive turnout of youths in the election could be attributed to general dissatisfaction with the status quo, incessant ASUU strikes, economic challenges and extrajudicial killings.

The second finding shows that the youths participated in the election in different ways such as joining the INEC team as ad hoc staff, sensitizing the people on how to locate their voting centers and ways to vote in the election and campaigning for their

preferred candidates. Ayeni (2023) and INEC (2024) highlighted the various ways in which the youths participated in the election. Given the prevailing economic challenges, bad governance, insecurity, police brutality, corruption and incessant truncation of academic calendar through strikes, the youth sought to write the wrongs through participation as ad hoc staff of the INEC, sensitize the public through various platforms such as social media and mainstream media on the need to vote in the election day and means to locate their various polling units, act as party agents and vote in the election day.

The third finding shows the patterns for which the youths voted during the 2023 general elections in Edo State. In that order, the pattern were voting to safeguard the future of Edo State and Nigeria's democracy as well as foster national development, voting based on religion, personality of the candidates, ethnicity and political party. Voting along primordial sentiments have become ingrained in Nigeria's electoral process (Micheal, 2018; Dauda, 2014). Prelude to the 2023 general election in Nigeria, election forecasters predicted that the election would be coloured with religion and ethnicity considering the background of the contending candidates (Ekpo, 2023; Olumide, 2022). Zambuk (2023) found that religion and ethnicity tainted the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria with serious implication for national development.

The manifestation of voting along primordial lines was popular giving the differences of ethnic, past, religious and regional background of the candidates. The

four major contenders for the presidential election: Bola Ahmed Tinubu (APC), Atiku Abubakar (PDP), Rabiu Kwankwaso (NNPP) and Peter Obi (LP) had differences in some or all of the backgrounds earlier listed and these influenced the voting behavior of the youths (Egobiambu, 2022). The three first candidates have Islamic backgrounds while Peter Obi has Christian background. Given the activities of the terrorists in the North and banditry in the South which was insinuated to be perpetrated by Fulani herdsmen, both of the perpetrators have Islamic backgrounds, the youths, mostly those from the South yearned for a Christian president that would safeguard their interest particularly as Christians are being massacred in every part of Nigeria (Ayeni, 2024). Furthermore, the odds also appeared to favour Peter Obi given that his region which has been agitating for equity and fairness in governance is the only region among the three dominant regions that has not produced a president since independence. To strike a balance, some youths felt that the region should be allowed to produce a president in order to preserve the unity of Nigeria (Osaji, 2023).

The last finding shows that the youths were also involved in various forms of electoral violence such as voter inducement, ballot box snatching and thuggery. This finding was confirmed by the previous reports by ACLED (2023) concerning the widespread electoral violence including attacks on candidates and their supporters and INEC officers and facilities. Ogbonnaya (2023) hailed the massive impression created by the youths during the elections but also reported that some of them were

used as political thugs to disrupt voting activities in some parts of the country including in Lagos State where voters who were suspected to be rooting for a particular candidate were threatened to stay indoors or be killed. Tayo (2023) found that youths were both victims and perpetrators of electoral violence and used the social media to drive divisive rhetoric.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 SUMMARY

This chapter summarized the entire study. It stated the topic of the study, objectives, research questions, the theory used and various findings made. Through these findings, the chapter drew its conclusions while leaving behind useful recommendations.

The study attempted to examine the impacts of the youths on democratic process in Edo State: A case study of 2023 general elections. Youths are the determiners of the future democratic governance of any nation. To that extent, youths' participation in politics remains pivotal in the sustenance of a nation's democracy. Participation does not only ensure that government performs its duties, but also guarantees the rights of ordinary people to participate in their community development. Activities such as voting in an election, sponsoring a candidate, petitioning or participating in a protest are forms of political participation that influence public policy directly or indirectly through affecting the selection process of those who govern the people.

However, over the years, it has been discovered that youth political participation often measured as youth turnout has been declining since 1960 and reached its lowest ebb in the 2023 general elections. The decline in popular participation has been attributed to so many factors including rigging, result falsification, hugger, vote buying, kidnapping, forceful disappearances, harassment, killing, forced arrest,

voters' intimidation, deliberate militarization of elections, multiple thumb printing, candidate imposition and other forms of electoral malfeasance that subvert peoples' will and pave way for the emergence of unpopular candidates.

Edo State was one of the states in Nigeria where the general election was held. The state has become popular for its political consciousness and quest for credible election. As a result, investigating youths' political participation and democratic process in the 2023 general election as it happened in the state was deemed a crucial venture. The study interrogated the following research questions: What was the level of the youths' turnout during the 2023 general election in Edo State? What were the different ways the youths participated in the 2023 general election in Edo State? What were the youths' patterns of voting in 2023 general elections in Edo State? Did the youths indulge in electoral violence in the 2023 general election in Edo State? In what ways can youth political participation and democratic process in Edo State and Nigeria be improved?

Theoretically, the study utilized the system theory to explain youth political participation and democratic process in Edo State during the 2023 general election. The theory explains that elections take place in Nigeria within the socio-political environment. The processes involved in the conduct of elections in Nigeria usually begins from registration of voters to the resolution of conflicts arising from the elections. As a result, political participation (input) is a way people respond to the growing stable changes within the environment in order to birth peaceful change of

government and engender development (output). However, when the democratic system is fraught with irregularities, both the output and feedback will be lack of participation, low voter turnout or change of voting behaviour that can worsen the credibility of the election.

Methodologically, the study surveyed 392 respondents in Oredo Local Government Area through a structured questionnaire. The study made the following key findings. The first finding was that there was massive youths' turnout during the general election in Edo State. The second finding was that there was that the youths participated in the elections by joining the INEC team as ad hoc staff, sensitizing the people on how to locate their voting centers and ways to vote in the election and campaigning for their preferred candidates. The third finding shows the patterns for which the youths voted during the 2023 general elections in Edo State. In that order, the pattern were voting to safeguard the future of Edo State and Nigeria's democracy as well as foster national development, voting based on religion, personality of the candidates, ethnicity and political party. The last finding shows that the youths were also involved in various forms of electoral violence such as voter inducement, ballot box snatching and thuggery.

5.2 CONCLUSION

Based on the findings made in the study, the following conclusions are made according to the research questions. The first conclusion is that there was massive youths' turnout during the general election in Edo State. This finding is in consonant

with the findings made by different scholars and organizations regarding youth turnout in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria.

The second conclusion is that the youths participated in the election in different ways such as joining the INEC team as ad hoc staff, sensitizing the people on how to locate their voting centers and ways to vote in the election and campaigning for their preferred candidates. Previous studies highlighted the various ways in which the youths participated in the election such as participation as ad hoc staff of the INEC, sensitize the public through various platforms such as social media and mainstream media on the need to vote in the election day and means to locate their various polling units, elect to act as party agents and vote in the election day.

The third conclusion is that the patterns for which the youths voted during the 2023 general elections in Edo State differed. In that order, the pattern were voting to safeguard the future of Edo State and Nigeria's democracy as well as foster national development, voting based on religion, personality of the candidates, ethnicity and political party. Voting along primordial sentiments have become ingrained in Nigeria's electoral process.

The last conclusion is that the youths were also involved in various forms of electoral violence such as voter inducement, ballot box snatching and thuggery. This finding was confirmed by the previous engagement of the youths in widespread electoral violence including attacks on candidates and their supporters and INEC

officers and facilities. Some of them were used as political thugs to disrupt voting activities in some parts of the country.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the findings in the study.

First, the government should create an enabling environment that can stimulate youths' participation in the Nigeria's democratic process. The prevailing socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, poverty, incessant strikes, harassment and killings of youths and inflation should be adequately addressed by the government so that the youths can be motivated to participate in the nation building as well as contribute to national development.

Second, the various policies such as 'Not Too Yong to Run' should be speedily implemented. The youths are the future of the country and therefore should be integrated into the mainstream governance process of the country. The idea of divine rule of kings and gerontocracy should be diluted to accommodate vibrant, purposeful and energetic youths that can help drive development in Nigeria. It will not be wrong if certain positions are reserved for the youths to vie for. With this, their zeal to participate in politics will be stimulated.

Third, there is need for proper sensitization of the Nigerian youths on the need to participate in politics. Some youths are yet to understand the importance of participating in the democratic process of their country. The media, traditional rulers, civil society groups, political parties, religious bodies, school centres and other

relevant agencies of government should synergize to achieve this common objective of sensitizing the Nigerian youths on the need for involvement in politics.

Last, criminal elements are not good for the growth and development of any country. As such, there is need for the security agencies to be proactive in arresting and prosecuting any youthful offender caught indulging or engaging in any electoral offence. This would serve as a deterrence to others who will want to repeat the same.

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APPENDIX
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR RESPONDENTS

Department of Political Science,
University of Benin,
Benin City.

14th March, 2024

Dear Respondent,

**REQUEST FOR YOUR COOPERATION IN COMPLETING THIS
QUESTIONNAIRE**

I am an undergraduate student of the above mentioned Department and University, carrying out a research on Youth and Democratic Process in Nigeria: A Case Study of the 2023 General Elections in Edo State as part of the Requirements for the Completion of my Programme.

In order to gather relevant data for the study, it will be highly appreciated if you could respond to these questions as frankly and objectively as possible. All information you supply is strictly for the purpose of the study, and will be treated confidentially.

Yours faithfully,

Divine Osagie

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE RESPONDENTS

SECTION A: BIO-DATA

Please **TICK** [] the option that best suits your description.

1. **Sex:** Male [] Female []
2. **Age:** Below 20 [] 20 – 30 [] 31 – 40 [] 41- 50 [] 51- above []
3. **Religion:** Islam [] Christianity [] Traditional Religion [] Others []
4. **Marital Status:** Single [] Married [] Divorced []
5. **Occupation:** Civil Servant [] Self-employed [] Student [] Trader []
6. **Academic Qualification:** SSCE/GCE [] NCE/ND [] BSC/HND [] Masters []
PhD [] Professional certificate []

SECTION B: Please **TICK** [] the option that best suits your description.

	Cluster A:	A			D	
	Youths' turnout in the 2023 general election in Edo State					
	The youth turnout in the last 2023 general					

	election in Edo State was impressi ve					
	People did not come out to vote during the 2023 general elections in Edo State					
	Youths' not coming out to vote affected the way the election was conducte					

	d in Edo State					
	Cluster B: Different ways the youths participated in the 2023 general election in Edo State					
	Youths participated in the 2023 general election in Edo State by campaigning for their preferred					

	candidates					
	Youths participated in the 2023 general election in Edo State by joining the INEC team as ad hoc staff					
	Youths participated in the 2023 general election in Edo State by sensitizing the people					

	<p>on how to locate their voting centres and ways to vote in the election</p>					
	<p>Youths did not participate in the 2023 general election in Edo State</p>					
	<p>Cluster C: Patterns of youths' voting in the 2023</p>					

	general elections in Edo State					
	Youths voted based on ethnicity in the he 2023 general election in Edo State					
	Youths voted based on religion in the 2023 general election in Edo State					
	Youths voted based on					

	political party affiliation in the 2023 general election in Edo State					
1	Youths voted based on personality of the candidates in the 2023 general election in Edo State					
2	Youths voted to safeguard the future of Nigeria'					

	s democra cy and foster national develop ment					
	Cluster D: Yout hs and electoral violence in the 2023 general election in Edo State					
3	Youths were involved in sharing money and other gift items					

	during the 2023 general election in Edo State					
4	Youths were involved in ballot box snatching during the 2023 general election in Edo State					
5	Youths were involved in thuggery during the 2023 general election					

	in Edo State					
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Thanks for your co-operation