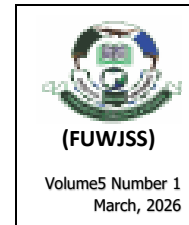


**YOUTH UNDERREPRESENTATION IN
ELECTIVE POSITIONS AND NIGERIA'S 2023
GENERAL ELECTIONS IN EKITI STATE,
NIGERIA**



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Abstract

Given the importance of young people in the electoral process, political scientists and election stakeholders have made youth involvement in politics, particularly in Africa, a top priority. In this sense, running for electoral office is one of the main ways that young people are expected to actively participate in politics. It is however ironic that the low number of young people running for public office is still low and consistent with low representation as found in previous general elections since 1999. The overarching objective of this study is to determine the level of youth representation in elective positions in the 2023 General Elections in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The study adopted the mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) to gather data. Primary data were collected through survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews, while secondary data were gathered from relevant journals, newspapers, and internet sources. Quantitative data were analysed utilising tables and simple percentages, while the qualitative data were content-analysed using discourse analysis. The main finding of the study revealed that the level of youth representation in elective positions in the General Elections in Ekiti State was very low. It was further revealed that several factors were responsible for youth underrepresentation in elective positions, with high cost of nomination forms and highly monetized party primaries as the main factors. Consequently, the study among others, recommends curbing of charging of excessive fees for consideration as a youth candidate in party primary elections.

Keywords: Election, Nigeria, youth, youth political participation, youth underrepresentation

Introduction

In addition to being crucial for stable democratization particularly for solidifying democracies, which are frequently reinforced by youth inclusivity, youth participation in politics also aids in the development of more functional and productive communities. However, being fairly represented in political institutions, procedures, and decision-making especially during elections is another aspect of young political involvement that extends beyond basic democratic and political rights (United Nations Development Programme, 2017). Since young people have historically shown dynamism, the capacity to lead societies, and the potential to bring about changes that benefit everyone, it is impossible to overstate the importance of integrating them into mainstream politics (International IDEA, 2016). An example of this was the decentralized social movement known as “End SARS” in Nigeria, where young people protested against police brutality in 2020 by taking to the streets and connecting with one another using internet social networks. During the demonstrations, the young people called for freedom, justice, and a brighter future for their nation (Amnesty International, 2021).

All facets of society, especially young people, must be represented in political systems. Therefore, it is undeniable that a sizable section of the population has little to no voice or influence in decisions that impact the lives of group members when young people are disenfranchised or disengaged from political processes (United Nations Development Programme, 2017). Young people are involved in socio-political movements and are change agents, as was previously highlighted. Nonetheless, data indicates that formal politics is still primarily a field for adults over 35, with young people continuing to be glaringly under-represented (International IDEA, 2016). Stockemer and Sundstrom’s (2022) submission, which draws on events related to youth participation in running for public political office in Europe and America, is comparable to that of Africa. They argued by asserting that:

Although over half of the world’s population is under 35, young people make up a glaring minority in elected and appointed political positions. For instance, our own estimates of a global sample of national parliaments reveal that, when comparing their representation in parliament to their percentage of the general population, young people between the ages of 18 and 35 are not -even represented at a ratio of one to three.

Olukoshi (as cited in Stockemer and Sundström, 2022) had made the astute observation that while young inclusion and involvement is a worldwide issue, Africa has particular characteristics that call for increased urgency and responsiveness (International IDEA, 2016). In light of this, it should be mentioned that since the restoration of civil rule in the fourth republic, Nigeria has held five general elections in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015 – ironically, the five elections were characterized by low rates of young people running for office. Nigeria's general elections in 2023, the most recently held, have reinforced the crucial lesson that young people have not yet had a substantial influence on the country's electoral process, particularly when it comes to running for office. The results of the 2023 elections in Ekiti State actually showed no discernible improvement over the 1999 results. Undoubtedly, one could argue that many young people are clearly actively involved in a variety of other activities, such as sports, music, and other entertainment. However, young people are disinterested in running for public political office when it comes to political representation. What, then, might be the cause of this undesirable occurrence? The 2023 general election's planning, execution, and post-election transition into public office suggested that the idea of young people's active political involvement in Nigerian elections needed to be re-examined.

Based on the fact that young people comprise 60% of Africa's population (International IDEA, 2016), this research is extremely important and comes at a time when urgent action is needed to guarantee that they participate in and maintain their confidence in electoral processes. Low youth involvement in running for office and frequently failing to capture the interest of the younger generation have been major challenges for Nigeria's electoral process since the country's restoration to democracy in 1999. Therefore, any study on youth political participation, like this, will undoubtedly have important policy impact on increasing youth participation (formally participating in electoral politics) and possibly assisting young people in boosting their confidence in formal democratic electoral systems as a means of reviving their political lives. Finally, it is expected that the salient issues raised and addressed in the course of the study will help provoke further studies and academic discourse on relevant aspects of the subject matter towards cumulative advancement of knowledge.

Consequent on the low level and even serious decline of youth electoral participation in elective positions in Nigeria, this study explores the levels of representation of Ekiti State youths in elective positions in the 2023 General Elections and the different obstacles hindering young people from contesting for public political positions. Evidence from the

literature suggests that there has been a lengthy scholarship on youth political participation in areas such as democratic governance processes, voters' participation, social media, political apathy, and challenges of political participation (Ekot and Momoh, 2024). However, political participation of youths in the aspect of electoral process (youth candidacy in general elections) remains under-researched. To this end, the broad objective of the study is to investigate the level of youth underrepresentation in elective positions in 2023 General Elections in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to determine the level of youth representation in elective positions in 2023 General Elections in Ekiti State; investigate the factors responsible for youth underrepresentation in elective positions in 2023 General Elections in Ekiti State, and recommend strategies for enhancing youth representation in elective positions in Ekiti State.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows: the first section is the introduction. Section two presents the literature review and theoretical framework. Section three presents the analysis of level of representation of Ekiti State youths in elective positions in the General Elections while the fourth is concerned with the research method. The fifth section presents the results and discussion of findings. Finally, the study concludes with the conclusion and recommendations.

Political Participation and Youth Representation in Nigeria

In as much as political participation encompasses a wide range of definitions from various academics, it is vital to define it precisely in this context. A broad definition of political participation is any activity taken by regular people to support or influence the government and its policies. Political participation, according to Akamare (2003, as cited in Falade, 2014), is a component of political activity that centres on how people engage in politics. It includes voluntary endeavours in which one may take part directly or indirectly. Consequently, there are numerous methods for citizens to participate in the political system, such as through the election or selection of political leaders, the creation of policies, community service projects, and other civic engagements. In this regard, it is suggested that young growth is significantly impacted by political participation. The essence of political participation is therefore summarized as ably noted by Kura, Shehu, and Ladan (2023) "Youth participation shapes civic, political concerns, identity, purpose, academic engagement, achievement, health, and well-being,".

Literature has provided numerous perspectives of youth. Regarding age groupings, for instance, the World Bank utilises the 12–24 age range, but the United Nations views everyone between 15 and 24 as a youth

(Zoaka and Ushie, 2022). Contrary to popular assumption, youth is a transition between childhood and adulthood rather than a fixed idea based on chronological age (Stockemer and Sundström, 2022). Accordingly, the European Parliament defines today's youth as being in a "transition from dependency to independence" (2023). Nigeria's youth, according to the 2012 National Baseline Youth Survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics is defined as those between the ages of 15 and 35. In order to emphasise that "this category represents the most active, the most volatile, and yet the most vulnerable segment of the population, socio-economically and in other respects," this paper adopts the 18–35 age group as its defining characteristic (National Youth Policy, 2001, as cited in Olanrewaju, 2022).

The debate on the dimension of relationship between political participation and youth representation has been ongoing. In both developed and developing democracies, issues related to youth representation and participation are becoming more and more of a concern, making the study of youth political involvement especially in terms of youth representation a global challenge (European Parliament, 2023). Obisesan (2020) looked at how social media affected young people's political engagement in Nigeria's 2019 general elections. It also examined the roles that these communication tools play in youth agency and liberation, exposing the potential effects that the devices may have on democratic processes and ambitions. Through discussions and narratives that were crucial in establishing the agenda for the governing class and the democratic aspirations of the populace, the study concluded that social media enhanced citizens' agency and power. However, rather than focusing on youth representation, the study appears to be more interested in how social media affects young people's political participation.

A study by Akele, Ariyo and Ajayi (2025) examined the factors responsible for the unprecedented massive turnout of youths for the 2022 continuous voters' registration and further explored the implications of the massive turnout for governance and political participation. The paper noted that the widespread violation of human rights by the disbanded Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) officials was considered to be the primary factor for the upsurge in the 2022 continuous voters' registration, while the unification of Nigerian youths from various ethno-religious groups to speak with one voice against bad governance placed top among the implications of the upsurge. The paper concluded on the significance of effective continuous voters' registration as it would be needed in future to ensure higher rates of youth voters' registration. However, although the study focused on youth political participation, it is naturally limited by

limiting its scope to matters of voters' registration rather than on youth representation.

A study titled "Youth Political Participation in Sokoto: Breaking the Stronghold and Creating Pathways" was carried out by Kura, Shehu, and Ladan (2023). The researchers examined how political parties and social media can boost young people's political engagement in Sokoto, how much faith in political parties and electoral bodies like the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) and State Independent Electoral Commission (SIEC) affects young people's political engagement, and how important godfathers are as political players in young people's political engagement. The study's conclusions showed that political parties serve as platforms for young people to get involved in politics because they are significant pillars of political activity. In order to facilitate young engagement in all facets of party engagements, such as primaries, congresses, membership, party funding, campaigns, etc., the paper recommended reforming party constitutions and strengthening INEC's regulatory powers. Without reference to young representation in elected office, the study only examined youth involvement in relation to political parties and the media.

In particular, Zoaka and Ushie's (2022) study examined the likelihood of youth participation in Nigeria's general elections in 2023 in light of their historical antecedents to political engagement in Nigeria's democratic process, as well as the difficulties that the youths and Nigeria's democratic process have encountered. According to the findings of the paper, Nigerian youngsters have actively participated in the nation's political process ever since independence, regardless of the type of government in place civilian or military. However, the study noted that issues including age restrictions, godfatherism, and poverty were barriers to young people's involvement in Nigeria's election process. This paper, like others, neglected to take into account the representation of young people in elective office under Nigeria's electoral system.

In Nigeria, Akinyetun (2021) investigated the connection between socioeconomic inclusion, effective governance, and youth political participation. According to the study's findings, young political participation and social inclusion are significantly positively correlated, same for youth political participation and good governance. In order to use different social networking sites to offer free leadership courses, webinars, and orientation on the art of governance and the promotion of social inclusion among youth, the study suggested that the government set up Leadership and Democratic Institutes (LDI) throughout the Federation's states and create an Online Leadership Orientation Agency (OLOA). Once

more, political participation by the youths in electoral office was not covered in this study.

The challenges and opportunities of youth involvement in the processes of democracy and governance were studied by Abdulyakeen (2021). The study found that Nigeria continues to rank among the nations with low youth participation due to corruption, the monetization of Nigerian politics, and the elders' constant discrediting of the younger generation, even in the face of numerous international communiqués urging greater participation from the most vulnerable segments of society in their national political process. The results also show that the political establishment has consistently utilized young people as political thugs during the election process rather than involving them in meaningful ways. The study's conclusion contended that while youth participation in democracy and governance is important, it primarily depends on the caliber of the youth population. However, this work ignores youth representation in elective roles, which is the focus of this study, and instead appears to be more focused on the challenges that young people have when trying to participate in governance processes and the remedies that have been proposed.

Nigeria's democratisation, youth engagement, and exclusion from politics were investigated by Sule, Sambo, and Saragih (2021) in *the 2019 General Elections and the Transparency Question in Nigeria: Political Party financing as the Bane of Youth engagement*. Due to the extensive use of funds for party finance and campaign expenditures, the study found that young people were prevented from running for or gaining elective seats in Nigeria's 2019 general election. By creating political parties and reducing the expense of receiving party nominations and running for office, the study therefore suggested a workable way for young people to actively engage in Nigerian politics. However, the study focused solely on party financing as a barrier to running for office limits its applicability.

The Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) official list of candidates for the 2023 elections was analyzed in a report by YIAGA Africa (2023) on *Youth Candidacy in Nigeria's 2023 Elections*. The study attempted a critical analysis of patterns regarding youth candidature in the general elections. While this study focuses on the sub-national level (states within a country), the report only looked at young political engagement in national elections, ignoring youth representation in elections.

The degree of young engagement at the party level during Nigeria's general elections in 2023 was examined by Ekot and Momoh (2024). While the three major political parties in the 2023 general elections the Labor Party (LP), the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), and the All Progressive Congress (APC) were not among the top political parties that

promoted youth participation at the party level during the general elections, the study argued that the African Democratic Congress (ADC) had the highest number of youth participation at the party level. The study suggests, among other things, that the Interparty Advisory Council (IPAC), which serves as the umbrella organization for Nigerian political parties, collaborate closely with the leadership of each party to find ways to boost youth involvement at the party level, such as lowering the party nomination/interest form.

Overall, the study by Ekot and Momoh seems to be the only available research work that directly relates to the topic under investigation. Nevertheless, the study's main focus was on youth participation at the party level rather than as candidates in general elections.

Theoretical Framework: Theory of Liberal Democracy

The liberal democracy theory, which was primarily advanced by John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, James Madison, Montesquieu, and John Stuart Mill, was used to investigate the connection between youth under-representation and political participation. Elections between several political parties, the rule of law, a market economy, equal protection of human rights, civil liberties, and political freedoms for all are characteristics of the ideology (Muddle and Kaltwasser, 2012, as cited in Ekot and Momoh, 2024). It examines the number of young people that are represented in elected office and investigates the reasons behind their low representation in political office. The independent variable of political participation has an impact on the dependent variable of young under-representation.

This theory is relevant to the study because the core aspect of the theory emphasizes its ability to guarantee both public contestation and political participation. However, it is evident that since Nigeria regained its democracy in 1999, there have been seven general elections: 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019, and 2023. In each of these elections, there were few young people running for office, and the reasons for this decline were numerous. The fact that many states are not culturally and racially homogeneous is a first significant drawback of this theory. Based on this, it may be deduced that there might be significant linguistic, ethnic, religious, and cultural differences, which could lead to some groups actively opposing one another. Therefore, the theory has been criticized on the grounds that democracy may permit the use of the political process against adversary organizations since it permits widespread participation in decision-making.

Research Methodology

This study took place in Ekiti State, one of the 36 states in Nigeria. Ekiti State is located in the South Western part of Nigeria. General Sani Abacha split off what was then Ondo State to form Ekiti State on October 1, 1996. Sixteen Local Government Areas, three senatorial districts, six federal constituencies, and twenty-six state assembly constituencies make up the state.

Descriptive survey research was adopted for this study. This design involves the use of quantitative methods of data gathering for the study.

The study population includes the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) officials, University Academics, Political Party officials, Civil Society Organizations, National Orientation Agency (NOA), Public Servants, Farmers, Traders, Students, and Business Owners.

Multistage sampling technique was adopted in the selection of respondents for the study. The first stage was devoted to the purposive selection of two local governments from each of the three Senatorial Districts. The local governments include: Ado-Ekiti and Irepodun/Ifelodun from Ekiti Central; Ido/Osi and Oye-Ekiti from Ekiti North; and Ikere-Ekiti and Ekiti South West from Ekiti South Senatorial districts, were selected on ground of proximity. A purposive selection of one town from each local government was done in the second stage. Consequently, Ado-Ekiti and Iyin-Ekiti; Ifaki-Ekiti and Oye-Ekiti; and Ikere-Ekiti and Ilawe-Ekiti were selected from Ado-Ekiti, Irepodun/Ifelodun, Ido/Osi, Oye, Ikere and Ekiti South West local governments respectively. Ado-Ekiti, a city and five other towns were selected because of their strategic positions as either the State or local government headquarters.

The final stage was devoted to the selection of respondents from such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) officials, University Academics, Political Party officials, Civil Society Organizations, Public Servants, Farmers, Traders, Artisans, Students, and Business Owners. Under this stage, respondents from Politicians (Local Governments' and Ward Executives were purposively selected from two Wards in the six selected towns. The politicians were thus selected from the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) as the two most popular parties in the State. In this wise, two wards were selected based on the nearness of the geographical location of each of the wards in the towns in the study areas. In Ado-Ekiti, Ado 'D' Ijigbo and Ado 'I' Dallimore were selected; in Iyin-Ekiti, Iyin I and Iyin II were selected; in Ifaki-Ekiti, Ifaki I and Ifaki II were selected; in Oye-Ekiti, Oye

I and Oye II were selected; in Ikere-Ekiti, Oke Osun and Afao/Kajola were selected, while in Ilawe-Ekiti, Ilawe I and Ilawe II were selected.

Stratified sampling was however used to select respondents from Public Servants (Senior and Junior), while simple random sampling was used to select respondents from each of the identified strata. Finally, simple random sampling was also used to select respondents such as: Private Sector, Farmers, Traders, Artisans, Students, Business Owners and others in the selected towns.

The sample size for the study is in two strands: in-depth interview size and questionnaire sample size. Primary data was collected through in-depth interview of selected key respondents based on purposive sampling technique, with the selection of twelve (12) respondents for in-depth interview. The selected sample was based on their expertise on the subject matter. A combination of purposive stratified and sample random techniques were used in drawing samples for the administration of questionnaires to the respondent. In all a total of nine hundred and twelve (912) respondents were selected; twelve (12) from in-depth interview and nine hundred (900) from questionnaire.

Sources of data collection were both primary and secondary. Primary data was collected through structured questionnaire and in-depth interview. In-depth interviews were conducted with the following categories: the Residential Electoral Commissioner of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Ekiti State, University Academics, Political Party officials, Director, National Orientation Agency (NOA), and Civil Society Organizations. The secondary data was gathered through a documentary review, which covers publications from INEC, Newspaper reports, and relevant journal articles.

The method of data analysis was both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Data gathered from questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively using tables and simple percentages, while content analysis was used to analyze information generated during the in-depth structured interview sessions and secondary data.

Results/Findings and Discussions**Table 1: Interview Respondents**

State	INEC REC.	Party Officials	CSO.	Academics	NOA	TOTAL
Ekiti	1	4	2	4	1	12

Note: REC = Residential Electoral Commissioner; C.S.O. = Civil Society Organization; NOA = National Orientation Agency

Source: Field Survey Data, 2025

Table 2: Questionnaire Respondents

S/N	Respondent	Town						Total
		Ado- Ekiti	Iyin- Ekiti	Ifaki- Ekiti	Oye- Ekiti	Ikere- Ekiti	Ilawe- Ekiti	
1.	INEC Officials (Senior Officers) (Junior Officers)	04 06	04 06	04 06	04 06	04 06	04 06	60
2.	Public Servants (Senior Officers) (Junior Officers)	12 30	09 18	10 22	08 14	10 27	08 12	180
3.	Farmers	18	10	12	11	13	08	72
4.	Traders	25	10	15	15	20	10	95
5.	Artisans	30	14	15	22	26	11	118
6.	Students	55	30	37	44	53	21	240
7.	Business Owners	18	08	10	11	14	07	68
8.	Others	17	08	09	10	15	08	67
TOTAL		215	117	140	145	188	95	900

Source: Field Survey Data, 2025

Table 3: Distribution and retrieval of questionnaires

Senatorial Districts	LGAs	Towns	Wards	No. Administered	No. Retrieved	Rate of Return
Ekiti Central	Ado-Ekiti	Ado-Ekiti	Ado 'D'	225	215	95.55
			Ijigbo			
			Ado 'I'			
Ekiti North	Irepodun/I felodun	Iyin	Dallimore	125	117	93.6%
			Iyin I			
			Iyin II			
			Ifaki I		140	93.33%
			Ifaki II			
Ekiti South	Oye	Oye	Oye I	150	145	96.66%
			Oye II			
			Oke Osun	200	188	94%
			Afao/Kajola			
			Ilawe I	100	95	95%
Total	Ekiti South West	Ilawe	Ilawe II			
				950	900	94.73%

Source: Field Survey Data, 2025

Among 950 copies of questionnaires administered, only 900 copies were returned completely and accurately filled, while 50 copies though returned were not accurately filled. It was the 900 copies of questionnaire that were used in data analysis.

Table 4: Socio-demographic Distribution of the Respondents

Variables	Grouping	N	(%)
Gender	Male	520	57.8
	Female	380	42.2
	TOTAL	900	100.0
Age	18 – 30	211	23.4
	31 – 40	197	21.9
	41-50yrs	227	25.2
	51-60yrs	153	17.0
	≥61yrs	112	12.5
	TOTAL	900	100.0
Educational Qualification	None Formal Education	267	29.7
	Primary School Leaving Certificate	190	21.1
	O'level Certificate	156	17.3
	ND/NCE	97	10.8
	B.Sc/HND	70	7.8
	Postgraduate	65	7.2
	Others	55	6.1
	TOTAL	900	100.0
Occupation Status	INEC Officials	60	6.7
	Public & Civil Servants	180	20.0
	Farmers	72	8.0
	Traders	95	10.6

	Artisans	118	13.1
	Students	240	26.7
	Business Owners	68	7.6
	Others	67	7.4
	TOTAL	900	100.1
Religious Status	Christianity	497	55.2
	Islam	393	43.7
	Others	10	1.1
	TOTAL	900	100.0

Source: Field Survey Data, 2025

A total of 900 questionnaires representing 94.73% were correctly filled and returned (Table 4). This further shows that the majority of the respondents are male 520 (57.8%); most of the respondents are between 41-50 years old 227 (25.2%); Postgraduate respondents, 65 (7.2%) are the most educated; the largest respondents in terms of occupational status are the students 240 (26.7%); while 497 of the respondents, representing (55.2%) were affiliated to the Christian religion as the most populous religion in the State.

Analysis of Level of Representation of Ekiti State Youths in Elective Positions in the 2023 General Elections

Table 1: Youth Representation in Elective Positions: The Senate

S/N	Constituency	Age ≤35	Percentage (%)	Age ≥36	Percentage (%)	No. of Candidates
1.	Ekiti Central	00	0.0	06	100.0	06
2.	Ekiti North	00	0.0	08	100.0	08
3.	Ekiti South	01	14.3	06	85.7	07
	Total	01	4.8	20	95.2	21

Source: INEC (2023) retrieved from www.inecnigeria.org. Computed by the Authors

In the 2023 general elections, 21 candidates contested for the available 3 senatorial seats (Table 1). Out of the total number of contestants, only one candidate as a youth contested for the election, with age 35, representing 4.76%, while the other contestants are between 44 - 65 years, with 95.24%. Consequently, it can be gathered that the level of youth representation in the Senate election is very low.

Table 2: Youth Representation in Elective Positions: House of Representatives

S/N	Constituency	Age 25 - 35	Percentage (%)	Age ≥36	Percentage (%)	No. of Candidates
1.	Ado-Ekiti/IrepodunIfelodun	02	28.6	05	71.4	07
2.	Ekiti South West/Ikere/Orun/Ise	01	16.7	05	83.3	06
3.	Emure/Gbonyin/Ekiti East	00	00.0	06	100.0	06

4.	Ido/Osi, Moba/Ilejemeje	01	16.7	05	83.3	06
5.	Ijero/Ekiti West/Efon	03	42.9	04	57.1	07
6.	Ikole/Oye	01	20.0	04	80.0	05
	Total (%)	08	21.6	29	78.4	37

Source: INEC (2023) retrieved from www.inecnigeria.org. Computed by the Authors

Out of a total of 37 contestants, only 8 (21.62%) youths who were not more than 35 years and 29 (78.38%), with age 36 and above contested the election (Table 2). The level of representation shows that youth in Ekiti State were poorly represented in the election.

Table 3: Youth Representation in Elective Positions: Ekiti State House of Assembly

S/N	Constituency	Age 25 - 35	Percentage (%)	Age ≥36	Percentage (%)	No. of Candidates
1.	Ado I	04	36.4	07	63.6	11
2.	Ado II	02	28.6	05	71.4	07
3.	Aiyekire/Gboyin	02	33.3	04	66.7	06
4.	Efon	03	42.9	04	57.1	07
5.	Ekiti East I	00	00	07	100	07
6.	Ekiti East II	01	12.5	07	87.5	08
7.	Ekiti West I	02	28.6	05	71.4	07
8.	Ekiti West II	01	14.3	06	85.7	07
9.	Ekiti South West I	02	28.6	05	71.4	07
10.	Ekiti South West II	01	14.3	06	85.7	07
11.	Emure	01	12.5	07	87.5	08
12.	Ido/Osi I	01	14.3	06	85.7	07
13.	Ido/Osi II	01	16.7	05	83.3	06
14.	Ijero	03	27.3	08	72.7	11
15.	Ikere I	03	42.9	04	57.1	07
16.	Ikere II	02	28.6	05	71.4	07
17.	Ikole I	02	28.6	05	71.4	07
18.	Ikole II	01	16.7	05	83.3	06
19.	Ilejemeje	01	14.3	06	85.7	07
20.	Irepodun/Ifelodun I	02	22.2	07	77.8	09
21.	Irepodun/Ifelodun II	00	00	06	100	06
22.	Ise/Orun	01	16.7	05	83.4	06
23.	Moba I	01	14.3	06	85.7	07
24.	Moba II	02	25	06	75	08
25.	Oye I	02	25	06	75	08
26.	Oye II	05	71.4	02	28.6	07
	Total	46	24.1	145	75.9	191

Source: INEC (2023) retrieved from www.inecnigeria.org. Computed by the Authors

At the level of State House of Assembly, 46 (24.08%) out of a total number of 191 contestants contested as candidates, with a sizeable number of these youths within the age range of 26-35 (Table 3). This clearly shows that youth representation in elective positions at the state level is relatively high compared to the national levels.

In essence, the low level of youth underrepresentation in all elective positions, namely: the Senate, House of Representatives, and the State House of Assembly during the 2023 general elections cuts across. However, the overall results indicate that State Assembly elections and House of Representatives elections recorded high level of youth candidacy.

The quantitative data obtained in the study were analyzed on the basis of the research questions generated.

Research Question 1: What is the level of Youth Representation in Elective Positions in 2023 General Elections in Ekiti State?

Table 5: Level of Youth Representation in Elective Positions in 2023 General Elections Ekiti State

S/N	Statement	VL (%)	L (%)	UD (%)	VH (%)	H (%)
1.	Level of youth participation as candidates in the Senate Election	485 (53.88)	224 (24.88)	05 (0.55)	105 (11.66)	81 (9)
2.	Level of youth participation as candidates in the House of Representatives Election	480 (53.33)	204 (22.6)	07 (0.77)	117 (13)	92 (10.22)
3.	Level of youth participation as candidates in the House of Assembly Election	455 (50.55)	200 (22.22)	02 (0.22)	130 (14.44)	113 (12.55)

Source: Field Survey Data, 2025

Despite the general low number of candidates recorded in the three elections, there was a slight improvement as regards election into the State House of Assembly (Table 5).

Research Question 2: What are the factors Responsible for Youth Underrepresentation in Elective Positions in 2023 General Elections in Ekiti State?

Table 6: Factors Responsible for Youth Underrepresentation in Elective Positions in 2023 General Elections

S/N	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	UD (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1.	Cost of nomination forms	493 (54.77)	232 (25.77)	05 (0.55)	80 (8.88)	90 (10.0)
2.	Highly monetized party primaries	477 (53.0)	303 (33.66)	08 (0.88)	67 (7.44)	45 (5.0)
3.	Public perception of young people as inexperienced and ill-prepared	277 (30.77)	423 (47)	06 (0.06)	103 (11.44)	91 (10.11)
4.	Lack of general public or Godfather support	349 (38.77)	221 (24.55)	07 (0.77)	146 (16.22)	177 (19.66)
5.	Lack of motivation to contest for elective office	199 (22.11)	237 (26.33)	05 (0.55)	217 (24.11)	242 (26.88)
6.	Abuse of power and maladministration in government systems by politicians	343 (38.11)	228 (25.33)	06 (0.66)	173 (19.22)	150 (16.66)
7.	Lack of trust in the electoral process that votes will count	310 (34.44)	261 (29)	07 (0.77)	178 (19.77)	144 (16)

Source: Field Survey Data, 2025

Among all factors responsible for youth underrepresentation, only lack of motivation to contest elective offices did not achieve a strong support, with 436 (48%) agreeing and 459 (51%) disagreeing, thus indicating that it is not a strong factor in youth underrepresentation (Table 6). The report of the interview showed that all participants participated in the voting registration process and had voters' registration cards. Findings show that 90% of study participants admitted that youth representation in elective positions in 2023 General Elections in Ekiti State was very low.

Level of Ekiti State Youth Representation in Elective Positions in 2023 General Elections

According to the report of the interview, everyone who took part in the process of registering to vote also had a voter registration card. Research found out that more than 90% of people who took part in the survey submitted that youths in Ekiti State were highly underrepresented in elective positions in the 2023 general elections. For instance, level of youth participation as candidates in the Senate election ranked lowest, level of youth participation as candidates in the House of Representatives election is next, while level of youth participation as candidates in the House of Assembly Election was the highest as contestants for elective positions.

The study's results showed that the level of Ekiti State youth representation in elective positions in 2023 general elections varied. For instance, findings from one of the quantitative data showed that Political parties nominated more youth candidates for legislative elections at the state level than national assembly seats. In addition, qualitative data obtained from the in-depth interview support the quantitative data above that State Assembly elections and House of Representatives election recorded high level of youth candidacy in the 2023 general elections as far as youths from Ekiti State is concerned.

Findings from the study confirmed that several factors were responsible for Ekiti State youths' underrepresentation in elective positions in the 2023 general elections. Thus, findings from one of the quantitative data show that one of the core factors which accounted for low youth candidacy in elective positions is the charging of excessive fees for consideration as a candidate in party primary elections. These findings align with the outcome of the final report of the European Union Election Observation Mission on Nigeria's 2023 general election, which states that:

"To have any chance of contesting elected office, aspirants must participate in party primaries and buy from a party so-called 'expression-of-interest' and 'nomination' forms, often at a high cost. During the 2022 primaries, reportedly, the larger parties charged non-refundable fees ranging from 10 million Naira (approx. EUR22,000) for an opportunity to compete in HoR primaries, to as much as 100 million Naira (approx. EUR225,000) for presidential forms. Media reported that APC and PDP could amass up to 44 billion Naira (approx. EUR100 million) in 2023 form sales".

The majority of respondents indicated that high fees for consideration as a candidate for elected public offices were the most significant factor contributing to youth under-representation in the general elections of 2023, which is supported by the qualitative data gathered from the in-depth interview.

Almost all those interviewed agreed that the high cost of nomination forms and highly monetized party primaries are the main factors responsible for youth underrepresentation in elective positions in the 2023 General Elections in Ekiti State. As one of the interviewees submits: "despite the fact that the elections were competitive with many candidates for all seats, there was evidence of a lack of gender and age diversity in the nominated candidates".

Although, the high cost of nomination forms is considered the prime factor, other factors mentioned include: highly monetized party primaries; lack of general public or Godfather support; public perception of young people as inexperienced and ill-prepared for public positions; insecurity

and threat of violence; and lack of motivation to contest for elective office; abuse of power and maladministration in government systems; and lack of trust in the electoral process that votes will count.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The active participation of the youths in the political process, most especially in Africa remains a major concern of political scholars and election stakeholders because of the roles played by the youths in the electoral process. As was previously noted, a significant problem in Nigeria's general elections has been the representation of young people in democratic processes. Therefore, this study contends that there were differences in the amount of young representation in elective posts in Ekiti State during the general elections in 2023. Accordingly, the study shows that in the general elections of 2023, there were more young candidates in the State Assembly and House of Representatives elections than in the Senatorial election. According to the study's findings, the underrepresentation of young people in elected posts in the general elections of 2023 was caused by a number of noteworthy causes. There is proof that the high costs associated with running for office in party primary elections, highly monetized party primaries, and public perception of young people as inexperienced and ill-prepared constitutes causes of the low number of young people running for public electoral office. Thus, this study argues that in the elections contested in the Senate, House of Representatives, and State House of Assembly elections, young underrepresentation in all elected offices was apparent in Ekiti State.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made: Unreasonable limitations on the right to run should be eliminated by prohibiting the imposition of exorbitant costs for consideration as a young candidate in party primary elections. In this regard, specific party funds and resources ought to be set aside to aid party candidates and youth membership efforts. When nominating candidates for elective office, political parties shall guarantee that youth have at least 35% representation. Nigeria needs extensive political finance reform as well as changes to the delegate recruiting and administration procedure in order to promote political inclusiveness and accountability in elections. Youth who are party members, elected and nominated officials in office, and party member aspirants should all benefit from development and improvement of ongoing capacity-building programs, which should include leadership, coaching, and mentoring initiatives at the ward, constituency, and national levels. The public can assist young candidates by contributing money to young people running for political office who possess the necessary skills, abilities, and moral capacity. Youth party

members should be encouraged to participate in ongoing, youth-friendly civic education programs that emphasize the advantages of active and increased youth political participation. Media outlets should prioritize covering youth candidates in order to improve the public's opinion of them. In this regard, youthful candidates should be given enough airtime to increase their exposure. Strengthening of electoral institutions. Where electoral institutions functioned well, youth participation and participation are strengthened. Where they are not, election results would be treated with skepticism and suspicion. Improved confidence in governance by citizens, especially the young population.

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