

**YOUTH MOVEMENT AND POLITICAL CHANGE IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY
OF OBEDIENT MOVEMENT IN BUILD UP TO 2023 GENERAL ELECTION**

Folorunso, Christianah Omowamide (Ph.D) & Ogunbayo, Oluwasegun

Department of Social Science Education, College of Education,
Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti
folorunsochristy@gmail.com

Abstract

Because of their propensity for thuggery, forcefulness, and similar behaviours apparently due to poverty, unemployment, and the self-centered motivations of those who take advantage of them. Young people have been substantially and destructively mobilized by the political elite. Only the youths in Nigeria today possess the capacity to recognize and refocus their strength in order to effect the significant reorientation and turnaround required to attain a stable polity free from the acrimonious, tumultuous, and uncertain elements that currently characterize the political scene. This study examined the effects of Obedient Movement in the build up to 2023 general election in Nigeria. The obedient movement in the build up to 2023 general election gathered lots of forces within the country, ranging from celebrities to ordinary individual. This movement almost change the political landscape of the nation most especially in Lagos State, South East and South-South States. However, on this note, it can be concluded that Youth movement has the power and credibility to change the political structure of the country. Also, the movement was able to bring to light how effective the youth are in political process of Nigeria.

Keywords: Election, Obedient Movement, Politics, Youth.

Introduction

Political movements have always been a minor aspect of Nigeria's political development history. Without a doubt, before the general election of 2023, Nigerians' interest in the electoral process has decreased, particularly among the youth. These reasons include electoral violence, irregularities, manipulations, the repurposing of candidates, and a general mistrust of the government due to poor leadership.

The elections of 2023 demonstrated how important youth movement is to any election's outcome. Nigeria's youth population is predicted to be over 60%, hence it is critical that young people actively participate in the political process in addition to being registered to vote. Numerous young individuals cast ballots at polling places, and their votes had a big influence on the outcome. This demonstrates the necessity of stepping up measures to boost young involvement in Nigerian election processes.

Youth mobilization and movement was forcefully waged during the events leading up to the 2023 general election in Nigeria. Some youth are being mobilized with an intention to

promoting candidates, criticizing opponents, and undermining INEC are anticipated to be intensified in social media in the lead-up to, during, and even after voting. It is projected that the Nigerian election of 2023 would have a substantial impact on the political climate of the nation. In this setting, a grassroots organization known as the "Obidient Movement" drawn attention as it works to promote political accountability, openness, and citizen engagement.

The Obedient movement is a social media campaign awareness on various media platforms for the political aspiration of Peter Obi, the Labour Party Presidential candidate in the 2023 Nigeria election. Young individuals who are seen to be particularly independent-minded, strong-willed, and disdainful of elder politicians who they claim to have done nothing for them are the originators of the "Obidient" movement, as it has been dubbed by many. Although, the movement lacks a clear leader and is decentralised with community funding. It is organised by several tiny organisations (mostly youth) with the aim of overthrowing the status quo.

The Obedient movement has, through its campaign for a better Nigeria, revived the interest of Nigeria's youth in political participation. Nigeria's youth had previously lost trust in an electoral system they perceive to be tainted with corruption. These youths have shaken off their complacency and are demonstrating their unwillingness to accept another round of political failings. According to Jesse (2019), the movement's political mantra, "a new Nigeria is possible", has been a rallying call for Nigeria's newly politically conscious youth. It is not surprising that the youth who are primarily driven by their admiration and fealty to Obi are also united by their disgust with the country's failing leadership and the hope that their votes can contribute to the process of birthing a new Nigeria.

Youth movement as a concept

Since the early decades of the twentieth century, youths have been the most prominent subcategory of growth in the Nigerian population. They have continuously made up more than 60% of the total population (Afolayan, 2018). A proverb predicts that young people will be the "leaders of tomorrow." When seeing reality as guided by the natural rules of succession wherein one generation fulfils its job and makes way for another in order to advance the course of human experience this normally ought to be without exception.

The term "youth movement" describes a social and political phenomena in which young people band together to confront problems, call for change, and influence the course of events. Youth movements have their roots in particular socio-historical contexts and arise

from tensions and relationships between generations. Student uprisings, cultural innovations (literary, artistic, musical), scientific revolutions, religious reforms, ethnic uprisings, nationalist and political generations, environmental, peace, and antiwar movements are only a few examples of the diverse shapes that youth movements have taken. Two types of generational conflict have been the focus of studies on the beginnings and patterns of modern youth movements: (a) intergenerational conflict, which involves young people's dissatisfaction with the status quo and their peers' approval to work for social and political change, and (b) intra-generational conflict, which involves competing generation units or mobilized youth (revolutionary, progressive, moderate, conservative, and reactionary). Historically, most youth movements have formed over issues of citizenship, social discontinuities, and cultural expressiveness (Braungart & Braungart, 2001).

Factors influencing youth participation in political process

The social environment can be considered to have influence on youth participation in politics. Young people are influenced by their social environment, which includes peers and parents, social relationships, counsellors or role models, etc., all of which can have a long-term influence on their behaviour, such as leadership involvement (Koe & Majid, 2014; Tata & Prasad, 2008). Studies suggest that having appropriate social relationships with family members at home and peers at school might promote excellence and better behaviour among youth (Asikhia, 2009; Blair et al., 2008). The family can have a strong influence on a young person's political participation due to the frequency of communication. Attitudes of family members influence the behaviour, attitudes, and activities of young people (Samsi et al., 2013). Many studies also suggest that peers play an influential role as well. Young people are easily influenced by their peers and can easily be persuaded to join political activities (Samsi et al., 2013).

The media significantly affects the political engagement of young people. Traditional (mainstream) and social media (alternative) media can have an impact on young people's political engagement. According to Friedman and Friedman (2008), social networking sites and other new media have a greater influence than traditional media. Political parties have been known to make the most of and utilize new media as a primary tactic during elections in order to guarantee that their agenda, propaganda, and political plans are widely disseminated and influence public opinion. In fact, the government has an advantage when it comes to using the media to maintain social control over the public, particularly on targeted voters during election campaigns. Two methods are used to maintain social control: coercion or

violence, and leadership based on moral or intellectual beliefs by social groups or those in positions of authority.

Youth, Political Participation, Education and Democracy

Political participation, according to Apam (2010), is a process by which individuals acting by themselves or through organized groups attempt to influence decision-making and influence the process of power sharing and its distribution. Over the years, youth in Nigeria has played an active role in the political process some of which are negative while many others are positive. For example, Apam (2010), claimed that the agitation by youth in 1962 against the Anglo-Nigeria Defense Pact, which tied Nigeria to the British military era after independence led to its arrogation. Similarly, there were agitations by youth in the early 1980s at the onset of the 1980s economic crises. Student movements launched and sustained campaigns for educational reforms. The youth also forged alliances with pro-democracy groups, trade unions and professional bodies to challenge unpopular states (Apam, 2010). These agitations were largely led by educated and enlightened youth in Nigeria.

Youth participation in democracy and governance is influenced by the quality of young people. According to UNESCO (2010), very often the formative years of African youth are characterized by exposure to deep-seated poverty, deficiencies in basic services, limited access to education, health care, opportunities for decent employment and poor governance and ongoing conflict and war, the consequence of which is that many youths have limited skills, knowledge and are poorly educated. Over the years, studies have linked education and support for participation in democracy. Accordingly, Van Morgan (2010) has argued that the more educated people are the more they value democracy and participate in the democratic process. This is because education broadens the outlook and enables people to understand the need for the norms of tolerance and increases man's capacity to make rational electoral choices. In support of this, Van Morgan and Morgan (2010) confirmed a simple correlation between education and democracy, as well as the more complex causal assertion that education advances democratic governance.

The precise effect of education on democracy is difficult to ascertain. However, there is a link between schooling and political participation. This is particularly so because democracy is sustained by civil culture or pattern of attitude, which is often reinforced by education through civic engagement and thus support for a broad-based democratic regime (Glaeser et al 2007). Thus, according to Van Morgan and Morgan (2010), the educational level of a

person is a moderately stronger predictor of the abstract support of democracy. For instance, 64.3% of people with no education support democracy while 68.6%, 72.5% and 76.7% with primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education support democracy, respectively. It is evident that with increasing levels of education, there is increasing support for democracy and encouragement for youth political participation.

Impact of youth movement in political change

Global youth movements have become powerful forces in recent years, reshaping political environments and affecting policy results. Young activists are at the vanguard of social and political change, using creative tactics and social media to organize and voice their demands on everything from climate change efforts to democratic changes. This article explores how youth movements have shaped international political environments, emphasizing their contribution to the cause of social justice, environmental sustainability, and political reform (Inijah, 2024).

Youth movements have played a crucial role in igniting social and political transformations. Their innovative approach to activism has reinterpreted conventional means of protest and lobbying. It is distinguished by digital savvy and a strong dedication to diverse causes. Youth movements are fighting for change on important topics, upending the status quo, and changing the political landscape globally. A new era of activism is highlighted by its capacity for rapid mobilization, cross-border solidarity, and utilization of modern tools. Youth movements have had an indisputable impact on policy discussions and social reforms, despite ongoing problems. As they continue to grow, their role in shaping the future of global politics and policy-making will likely expand, underscoring the importance of listening to and engaging with the voices of the younger generation. The influence of youth movements on elections underscores the importance of political parties and candidates engaging with young voters' concerns and priorities. By addressing the issues that matter to the younger generation, politicians can not only garner support but also empower a demographic that is crucial for the sustainability of democratic institutions (Inijah, 2024).

Impact of obedient movement in 2023 general election

The Nigerian people have been more mindful of their critical role in the decision-making process of governance and the maintenance of democratic rule since the start of the previous 10 years. This statement gained support when long-standing authoritarian and dictatorial

regimes fell in several African countries. Hence, endorsing the widely held belief that the people have the final say in the State (Onwunyi, Nwokoye & Udegbumam, 2021).

When Peter Obi decided to test his popularity by joining and becoming the presidential candidate of a little known political party, LP, hardly would he have known that he will enjoy the massive support that greeted his declaration for the 2023 elections. Both analysts and political actors are still surprised how a movement with only 8 months of existence could create the kind of political upsets witnessed in the 2023 general elections. Those that claimed that Obi was just an entertainer and a nonentity in the presidential contest (Soludo, 2022) were forced to commend Peter Obi for the change he brought to the general elections.

In its formative stage, the Movement was regarded as a social media frenzy with no physical presence. Many old time politicians mocked Obi and wondered how he would win election in Nigeria with a social media group. They were terrified when the “social media mob” (Soludo, 2022) began to mobilize and organize awareness marches and rallies across the Country with mammoth crowd in attendance. Obaseki (2022) and Fani-Kayode (2022) were the first set of politicians that had a glimpse of the growing influence and popularity of the Movement and its capacity to sweep the old brigade away from politics. While still sustaining their online activities, local chapters of the group were established across the Country and even in the Diaspora. They embarked on well-planned mobilization of members and encouraged Nigerians who have not registered for or collected their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) before the continuous Voter Registration (CVR) ended to do so with the extension of the registration exercise following agitation and pressure from Nigerians who would have been disenfranchised, to enable them install their candidate, Mr. Obi during the presidential election.

In an effort to spread awareness and improve political education, the Obidient movement planned large-scale national demonstrations before the start of the electoral campaign. By pushing for democratic reform, the movement transformed into a potent political force that significantly elevated the stakes. In addition to reawakening public awareness of governance shortcomings, the Obidient movement has given Nigerians especially the youth newfound optimism about the prospect of political reform. One of the Obidient movement's legacies is that it sparked a new consciousness in Nigeria that has encouraged young people to get involved in politics. The younger generation in Nigeria had previously lost faith in an electoral process they believed was tainted by corruption. Through its advocacy for a better

Nigeria, the Obidient movement has reignited their enthusiasm in being involved in politics. The Obidient movement has, through its campaign for a better Nigeria, revived their interest in political participation (Augustine & Obasesam, 2023).

Conclusion

Young people have been substantially and destructively mobilized by the political elite. Only the youths in Nigeria today possess the capacity to recognize and refocus their strength in order to effect the significant reorientation and turnaround required to attain a stable polity free from the acrimonious, tumultuous, and uncertain elements that currently characterize the political scene. Obedient movement has change the political landscape of the nation after the 2023 general election. However, on this note, youth movement has the power and credibility to change the political structure of the country. Also, the movement was able to bring to light how effective the youth are in political process of Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. The Obidient movement is more motivated to participate and change the political landscape of Nigeria in the 2023 election, therefore Nigeria's electoral authorities need to make sure everything are put in place, because more people will vote in the country's subsequent elections.
2. Social media has been recognized as a true instrument for informing the public about political movements; therefore, more messages and campaigns for awareness should be directed toward social media in particular facebook, twitter, instagram and tiktok.
3. The obedient movement should firmly develop a presence throughout Nigeria in order to facilitate a comprehensive reorganization of the nation and the rise of a new generation of leaders dedicated to delivering the benefits of sound governance.

References

- Apam, J. (2010). "Nigerian Youth, Political Participation and Patron- Client Relationships, 1999-2007" in Wakili, H, Mohammed, H, Aluaigba, M T and Ahmad, M (eds). *The Nigerian Youth: Political Participation and National Development*, Kano: Mambayya House. 28-45.
- Augustine B. A. & Obasesam O. (2023). The "Obidient Movement" will shape Nigerian politics beyond the 2023 presidential election. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse>.
- Braungart, R.G. & Braungart, M.M. (2001). Youth movement in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/youth-movements>

- Fani-Kayode, F. (2022), “Who are these obedient?” <https://www.premiumtimesnigeria.com/opinion/550098>.
- Glaser, E. Ponzetto, G. and Shleifer, A. (2007). Why Does Democracy Need Education? *Journal of Economic Growth*. 12, 77-99.
- Inijah, Q. (2024). Youth Movements and Their Impact on The Political Landscape. <https://www.usrenewnews.org>.
- Obaseki, G. (2022). Obidient Nigerians don't want PDP, APC”, Says Obaseki. <https://punchng.com/obidient-nigerians-dont-want-pdp-apc-says-obaseki/?amp>.
- Onwunyi, U.M; Nwokoye, A.N & Udegbonam, V.E (2021). Paradigm of ICT and service delivery in ABS Awka, *Asian Journal of Social Science and Management Technology*.
- Soludo, C.C (2022). “History Beckons and I Will Not Be Silent” (1). <https://www.thecable.ng/history-beckons-and-i-will-not-be-silent-part-1/amp>.
- UNESCO (2010) UNESCO SHS Strategy on African Youth: Towards an Enabling Policy Environment for Youth Development and Civic Engagement in Africa (2009).
- Van-Morgan, S & Morgan, S. (2010). Education, Youth Development and Support for Democracy Results from the Afro barometer 2001, 2003 and 2005 Surveys, Wakili, H, Mohammed, H, Aluaigba, Participation and National Development, Kano: Mambayya House. 249-267.