

Implications of Women and Youths' Participation for Political Development in Nigeria Fourth Republic

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the implications of women and youth participation for political development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Despite Nigeria's democratic progress since 1999, women and youths remain significantly underrepresented in political offices due to systemic barriers such as patriarchal norms, political party gate keeping, and limited access to resources. Using a qualitative approach that analyzes secondary data, the study applies Liberal Feminist Theory and Participatory Democracy Theory to explore how increased inclusion of these groups can enhance democratic governance. Findings reveal that while women and youths face substantial challenges, their active participation contributes to more inclusive policy-making and democratic deepening. However, political parties often marginalize these groups, and existing policies like the National Gender Policy have limited impact due to weak enforcement. To foster political development, the study recommends enforcing gender and youth quotas, implementing capacity building programs, reforming political party practices to be more inclusive, and promoting public awareness campaigns to challenge cultural stereotypes. Strengthening legal and institutional frameworks to protect political rights of women and youths is also essential. The study concludes that sustainable political development in Nigeria hinges on creating an enabling environment that empowers women and youths to participate fully and effectively in the political process.

keywords: women, Youths, Political Participation, Political Development

INTRODUCTION

The participation of women and youth in politics is a critical aspect of democratic development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, which began in 1999. Despite continuous efforts by governmental and non-governmental organizations to enhance their involvement, both groups, particularly women, remain significantly underrepresented in elective and appointive political positions. This low participation is a growing concern given that women constitute approximately half of Nigeria's population and are heavily involved in voting during elections. The disparity highlights persistent challenges within the political landscape that impede inclusive governance and equitable representation. Efforts to address this political inequality have included national and international initiatives. The National Gender Policy (NGP) in Nigeria recommends a 35% affirmative action for women in public service roles, building upon the 30% affirmative action advocated by the Beijing Declaration during the Fourth World Conference on Women. However, the national average of women's political participation in Nigeria stands at a mere 6.7% in both elective and appointive positions, falling significantly short of the global average of 22.5%, Africa's regional average of 23.4%, and West Africa's sub-regional average of 15% (Beijing Declaration and platform for Action, 1995: Okeke, 2018) This stark reality underscores the limited progress despite policy recommendations and advocacy.

Several systemic barriers contribute to the marginalization of women and youth in Nigerian politics.. (National Gender Policy, NGP. 2006) these include political acrimony, stigmatization, religious beliefs, financial constraints, political violence, discriminatory laws, institutional barriers, and disproportionate access to education and resources among others. These factors collectively create an environment where women and youth face immense challenges in accessing political leadership and decision-making roles (Aina, 2019: Inter-parliamentary Union, 2020). The impact of limited participation is profound, leading to a lack of diverse perspectives in policy-making and potentially hindering gender-sensitive legislation and overall national

development. For young women, non-participation in politics poses a threat to their gender's inclusion and favorable consideration in decision-making processes. While youth, particularly through initiatives like the "Not Too Young to Run Bill," have made some strides in reducing age limits for political office, the representation of young women within this demographic remains exceptionally low. For instance, out of 103 young people aged 18 to 35 who won seats in the 2019 general elections, only two were female.

Theoretical frameworks such as the Liberal Feminist Theory emphasize the importance of women's political participation as crucial for advocating for gender equality, challenging existing power structures, and ensuring that women's interests are represented in policy-making. This theory posits that equal access to education, employment, and economic resources are essential for effective political participation, empowering women to drive policies that advance gender equality and dismantle discriminatory laws. Therefore, increasing the political empowerment of women through education and other means is seen as a key driver for positive impact on democratic processes and decision-making. Addressing the underrepresentation of women and youth in Nigerian politics requires a multi-faceted approach involving government, civil society organizations, and international partners. This includes implementing and enforcing affirmative action policies, challenging patriarchal attitudes, providing training on political systems and women's rights, and creating opportunities for both women and youth to participate effectively in the political arena. Overcoming these entrenched challenges is essential for fostering a more inclusive, representative, and truly democratic Fourth Republic in Nigeria. In view of the above, this study aims to examine the implications of women and youth participation on political development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. And it seeks to identify the barriers to their political inclusion, assess the impact of their participation on democratic governance. Accordingly, the study is guided by the following research questions; what are the implications of women and youths participation on political development in Nigeria fourth republic? What are those barriers to women and youths political inclusion? What are the impacts of women and youths participation in democratic governance?

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a qualitative research approach, utilizing secondary data from academic literature, policy documents, and reports on political participation in Nigeria. It analyzes the socio-political context, gender and age-related challenges, and institutional factors affecting participation. Case studies and thematic analysis are employed to draw insights on the experiences of women and youths in Nigerian politics.

Conceptual Review

Women Political Participation

Women's political participation in Nigeria is a critical indicator of democracy, gender equality, and human development. Despite constituting about half of the country's population, Nigerian women remains significantly underrepresented in political decision making and leadership roles. Historically, women played complementary roles in pre-colonial governance structures, but colonialism entrenched patriarchal systems that marginalized women from formal political processes. The transition to democratic governance in 1999 and the ratification of international conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) have not fully translated into equitable political participation for women (Ediba, Zakari, & Shipurut, 2024).

Several socio-cultural factors continue to impede women's political engagement in Nigeria. Patriarchal norms, gender stereotypes, and traditional beliefs often confine women to domestic roles, limiting their access to education, economic resources, and political networks. These constraints are further exacerbated by religious injunctions and marriage institutions that discourage women's public participation. The persistence of these barriers has resulted in low self-confidence, limited aspirations, and reduced motivation among women to pursue political careers (Journal of Sustainable Development, 2022).

Institutional and structural challenges also play a significant role in limiting women's political participation. Political parties in Nigeria are predominantly male-dominated, with women facing discrimination, inadequate support, and high nomination fees. Leadership positions within parties are often elusive for women, and the lack

of gender-sensitive reforms further entrenches their marginalization. Additionally, the first-past-the-post electoral system favors candidates with substantial financial and political resources, which women often lack due to economic disparities. (Journal of Sustainable Development, 2022).

Efforts to address these challenges have included the implementation of affirmative action measures, such as the National Gender Policy's 35% target for women in elective and appointive positions. However, enforcement remains weak, and women's representation in government continues to fall short of both national and international benchmarks. For instance, women occupy less than 10% of seats in the National Assembly, a figure that is far below the global and African regional averages. (Journal of Sustainable Development, 2022).

Despite these obstacles, there have been notable advancements. Women have played pivotal roles in advocating for democracy and human rights, particularly during periods of military rule. Prominent female leaders and activists have contributed to the restoration of civil rule and the promotion of gender equality. Furthermore, women have achieved significant positions in the judiciary and civil service, demonstrating their capacity for leadership when given the opportunity. (Ediba, Zakari, & Shipurut, 2024).

To enhance women's political participation in Nigeria, it is essential to strengthen the implementation of affirmative action policies, reform political party structures, and promote gender-sensitive electoral laws. Empowerment initiatives should focus on education, economic opportunities, and the redistribution of unpaid care work. Additionally, media representation and public awareness campaigns can help challenge stereotypes and encourage broader societal support for women in politics. Addressing these issues is vital for achieving a truly inclusive and democratic society in Nigeria. (Ediba, Zakari, & Shipurut, 2024).

Youths

The concept of "youth" is both dynamic and context-dependent, often shaped by cultural, social, and institutional perspectives. Globally, the United Nations defines youth as individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 years, emphasizing the transitional nature of this stage from childhood dependence to adult independence (United Nations, 2021). However, this age-based definition is not universal, as different countries and organizations may adjust the age range to reflect local realities and policy needs. In Nigeria, for instance, youth are often considered to encompass those aged 15 to 35, reflecting the country's demographic and socio-economic context (Africa Practice, 2024). Beyond age, youth is conceptualized as a period marked by personal growth, identity formation, and the acquisition of social and civic skills. It is a phase characterized by energy, innovation, and a propensity for change, making young people crucial actors in societal transformation (Wikiwand, 2020). The fluidity of the youth category means that it cannot be strictly tied to chronological age; rather, it is also shaped by experiences, responsibilities, and levels of dependency on family and society (Wikipedia, 2003).

In the Nigerian context, youth represent a significant demographic force, accounting for approximately 70% of the population. This demographic advantage positions them as potential catalysts for political and socio-economic development (Africa Practice, 2024). Historically, Nigerian youth have played pivotal roles in the country's political evolution, from the struggle for independence to contemporary movements advocating for democratic reforms and good governance (Amzat, & Abdullahi, 2016). Despite their numerical strength and historical significance, Nigerian youth have faced persistent barriers to meaningful political participation. These include socio-economic challenges, limited access to political platforms, systemic corruption, and the high cost of political engagement (Onyewuchi, Jawan & Ahmad, 2024). Additionally, the dominance of older politicians and monetized politics further marginalizes youth voices, often relegating them to the periphery of decision-making processes (Ezeigbo, 2024).

Recent years, however, have witnessed a resurgence of youth activism and political engagement in Nigeria. The passage of the "Not Too Young to Run" bill and the widespread use of social media have enabled young Nigerians to mobilize, advocate for reforms, and contest for political offices (Africa Practice, 2024). The 2023 general elections, described as a "youthful election," saw unprecedented youth turnout and participation, signaling a paradigm shift towards greater youth inclusion in Nigeria's political landscape. (Ezeigbo, 2024). youth, as a conceptual category, encompasses more than an age range; it embodies a period of transition, potential, and agency. In Nigeria, the youth's demographic dominance and growing political consciousness

highlight their indispensable role in shaping the nation's democratic future. Addressing the structural barriers to their participation remains crucial for harnessing their potential as agents of positive change.

Political Participation

Political participation is a foundational concept in political science, encompassing the various ways individuals engage with, influence, and shape the political system. At its core, political participation refers to voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers and, directly or indirectly, in the formulation of public policy (McClosky, as cited in Aisedion, Omoregie, & Aghemelo, 2021). These activities range from voting in elections to engaging in discussions, joining political parties, or taking part in protests and advocacy efforts.

Political participation is often categorized into conventional and unconventional forms. Conventional participation includes activities expected of responsible citizens, such as voting, attending town hall meetings, joining political parties, and campaigning for candidates. Unconventional participation, on the other hand, involves less traditional forms like protests, demonstrations, and boycotts, which are sometimes used when conventional avenues are perceived as ineffective or inaccessible. (Falade, 2024). Both forms are essential for expressing political will and ensuring that diverse voices are heard in the governance process.

A healthy democracy relies on robust political participation, as it legitimizes government authority and ensures that policies reflect the will of the people. High levels of participation are associated with greater government accountability and responsiveness. Conversely, political apathy or exclusion can lead to governance crises, reduced trust in institutions, and the marginalization of certain groups within society. (Oloyede, 2016). Thus, promoting inclusive participation is a central goal for democratic systems worldwide. In the context of Nigeria, political participation is constitutionally recognized as an inalienable right. The Nigerian Constitution guarantees citizens the right to vote, contest for public office, and freely choose their representatives at all levels of government. (Okibe, 2022). Despite these legal provisions, actual participation rates in Nigeria remain relatively low. Studies show that, factors such as lack of confidence in political leaders, gender disparities, economic challenges, and systemic barriers have contributed to widespread political apathy and limited engagement, especially among women and youth. (Nomor & Orjime, 2018).

The forms of political participation in Nigeria have evolved over time. While traditional activities like voting and party membership remain central, the rise of social media and youth-led movements has introduced new avenues for engagement. For example, the #EndSARS protests against police brutality demonstrated how digital platforms can amplify citizens' voices and mobilize collective action. (Okibe, 2022). However, challenges such as monetized politics, high costs of candidacy, and persistent patriarchal norms continue to hinder broader participation, particularly for marginalized groups. (Nomor & Orjime, 2018). In conclusion, political participation is vital for the sustenance and quality of democracy, both globally and in Nigeria. While Nigeria has made constitutional and legislative efforts to enhance participation, significant obstacles remain. Addressing these challenges requires targeted reforms, political education, and the dismantling of structural barriers to ensure that all segments of society especially women and youth—can actively contribute to the nation's political life. Only then can Nigeria achieve a truly inclusive and representative democracy. (Nomor & Orjime, 2018; Okibe, 2022).

Political Development

Political development is a multifaceted concept that involves the evolution and institutionalization of political systems, processes, and behaviors within a society. Fundamentally, it refers to the transformation from disorganized, haphazard political activities to more structured, conscious, and stable political practices. This evolution includes the establishment of political institutions that regulate and channel political actions, making them more predictable and effective. Political development also entails the integration of social and political systems, where citizens become more politically socialized and engaged, transitioning from apathy to active participation in governance. (Arnopoulos, 2016).

The process of political development can be understood through various conceptual frameworks. One such framework highlights the cyclical nature of political leadership, involving stages like political promises, mandates, representation, and causation. These stages underscore the importance of political legitimacy and public trust, which are often contingent on leaders fulfilling their promises and demonstrating competence and honesty. This framework emphasizes the dynamic interaction between political leaders and the electorate, where the satisfaction of public expectations can restart or sustain the political leadership cycle (Aragonès, Cruz, & Markwat, 2007).

Political development is also closely linked to the broader political economy and state-building processes. The concept of political settlements analysis (PSA) offers insights into how elites negotiate power arrangements that enable states to function effectively and deliver development outcomes. PSA is particularly useful in understanding the conditions under which states avoid collapse, manage conflicts, and pursue developmental pathways. This analytical approach integrates the role of political elites, institutional capacity, and the socio-political context in shaping development trajectories, especially in fragile or conflict-affected states (Ingram, 2014; Goodfellow, 2018).

At a micro level, political development involves the socialization of individuals into political life, fostering citizenship and collective responsibility. It is a process of increasing political awareness and participation, which enhances the autonomy and self-determination of societies. Institutionalization plays a critical role here by providing structures that support political engagement and governance. Without such institutional frameworks, political activities remain fragmented and ineffective, hindering development (Arnopoulos, 2016).

In the context of Nigeria, political development has been a complex and ongoing challenge. The country's political landscape has been marked by struggles with institutional weaknesses, ethnic and regional divisions, and issues of governance and accountability. Nigeria's political development involves efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, improve political leadership, and enhance citizen participation. However, challenges such as corruption, electoral malpractice, and political instability continue to affect the consolidation of political development. Applying the conceptual frameworks discussed, Nigeria's experience underscores the need for effective political settlements, credible leadership, and robust institutions to foster sustainable development (Leftwich, 2007; Aragonès, Cruz, & Markwat, 2007).

Conclusively, political development is essential for the stability and progress of any nation. For Nigeria, advancing political development means deepening institutional reforms, promoting inclusive political participation, and ensuring that political leaders fulfill their mandates responsibly. The conceptual frameworks of political leadership processes and political settlements provide valuable lenses to analyze and guide Nigeria's political evolution. Enhancing political development in Nigeria will require addressing structural challenges and fostering a political culture that supports transparency, accountability, and the rule of law.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The participation of women and youths in the political development of the Fourth Republic carries significant implications when analyzed through the lenses of Liberal Feminist Theory and Liberal Democratic Theory. Liberal Feminist Theory emphasizes the importance of equal opportunities, individual rights, and freedom for women to engage in politics, advocating for the dismantling of patriarchal barriers that have historically excluded women from political power (Olaniyan, 2023). In the context of the Fourth Republic, increased participation of women challenges discriminatory laws and promotes gender-sensitive policies, thereby fostering a more inclusive political environment. This engagement not only advances gender equality but also enriches policy-making processes by incorporating diverse perspectives that reflect the interests of a broader population segment.

From the perspective of Liberal Democratic Theory, which is grounded in principles such as the protection of individual rights, pluralism, and the rule of law (Britannica, 2025), the active involvement of women and youths strengthens democratic governance. Liberal democracy values the dispersal of political power among various groups and the protection of civil liberties, which includes the political enfranchisement of marginalized groups. The participation of youths and women in politics enhances pluralism and ensures that democratic institutions are more representative and responsive to the needs of all citizens. This inclusivity is crucial for the legitimacy

and stability of democratic systems in the Fourth Republic, as it promotes political competition and accountability.

Moreover, feminist critiques of liberal democracy highlight that traditional liberal democratic frameworks have often been gendered, privileging male participation and relegating women to the private sphere (Waylen, 2010). The Fourth Republic's political development, therefore, must address these structural exclusions by fostering institutional reforms that enable women and youths to participate on equal footing with men. This requires not only legal guarantees of rights but also proactive measures such as quotas and capacity-building initiatives to overcome social and cultural barriers. Such reforms align with the developmental model of liberal democracy, which emphasizes broader political participation and inclusive governance (Raimo, 2025).

In summary, the implications of women and youths' participation in the Fourth Republic are profound: it promotes gender equality and social justice as advocated by Liberal Feminist Theory, and it reinforces the foundational principles of liberal democracy by enhancing pluralism, representation, and the protection of individual rights. Together, these theories underscore the transformative potential of inclusive political participation for sustainable democratic development in the Fourth Republic.

Gap in Knowledge

This study hopes to fill a significant gap in knowledge in relation to this research. There has been insufficient exploration of how structural and institutional factors especially the political party system constrain women and youths effective participation. While existing studies document low representation rates, socio-cultural barriers, and economic challenges facing women and youths, there is limited research on how internal party dynamics, nomination processes, and party support mechanisms specifically hinder their political advancement. Additionally, youth political participation research often highlights lack of political skills and awareness but does not fully address how systemic corruption and exclusion from decision-making platforms undermine their influence. These gaps restrict a comprehensive understanding of the political development trajectory in the Fourth Republic and limit the design of targeted reforms that could enhance inclusive governance and democratic consolidation.

Implications Of Women And Youths Participation In Political Development

Women's and youths' participation in Nigeria's political development has profound implications for the country's democratic growth and inclusivity. Despite constituting a significant proportion of the population, women remain underrepresented in both elective and appointive positions, with structural barriers such as patriarchal norms, high cost of political participation, and discriminatory institutional frameworks hindering their involvement. For instance, the National Gender Policy recommends a 35% affirmative action quota for women, but actual representation in elective and appointive offices remains below 7%, far beneath both global and African regional averages. Institutional efforts, such as legal funds to support women candidates and the introduction of quota systems, have been proposed to address these disparities, but implementation remains inconsistent (Oloyede, 2016; Baruwa, 2020).

The participation of Nigerian youth in politics has seen notable advancements, particularly following the passage of the Not Too Young to Run Act in 2018, which lowered age requirements for political office and enabled a new generation of leaders to emerge. Youth activism, exemplified by the EndSARS protests has catalyzed broader calls for systemic reforms and accountability. Structural examples include youth-led civil society organizations such as YIAGA Africa, which have provided technical and financial support for young candidates. However, challenges persist, including the high cost of party nomination forms and entrenched political interests, which continue to limit the full realization of youth potential in governance (Elijah, 2024; Baruwa, 2020).

Collectively, the increased engagement of women and youth has the potential to foster a more inclusive and responsive political system in Nigeria. Structural and institutional reforms such as enforcing internal party democracy, providing mentorship and leadership programs for young women, and ensuring equitable access to political resources are essential for sustaining these gains. Without such measures, the political landscape risks

remaining exclusionary, perpetuating cycles of marginalization and undermining democratic consolidation (Baruwa, 2020; Oloyede, 2016).

Barriers To Women And Youth Inclusion In Democratic Governance In Nigeria

Women and youths in Nigeria face significant structural and institutional barriers to inclusion in democratic governance. Internal party dynamics are a major obstacle, as political parties often operate within patriarchal frameworks that marginalize women and young people. The nomination processes are typically dominated by entrenched elites and “godfatherism,” which limits access to party tickets and leadership positions for these groups. Even when parties establish positions like “Women Leader,” these roles rarely translate into substantive influence or increased recruitment of women and youths into core decision-making bodies. The nomination process is further complicated by exorbitant costs for party tickets and campaigns, which disproportionately affect women and young aspirants who have less access to financial resources and political networks (Baruwa, 2020; Hope Newspaper, 2025).

Systemic corruption and monetization of the political process also hinder the meaningful participation of women and youths. The political environment in Nigeria is characterized by high levels of patronage, where access to resources and opportunities is often determined by willingness to engage in corrupt practices or pay bribes. Women, in particular, face additional social stigma for participating in these corrupt systems, and many are excluded from advancement if they refuse to comply. Corruption also manifests in the commercialization of political participation, where leadership opportunities are reserved for the highest bidders, further marginalizing those without substantial economic backing. This climate discourages women and youths from seeking leadership roles and erodes public trust in the political process (Jonah, 2024; Hope Newspaper, 2025).

Exclusion from decision-making is perpetuated by both formal and informal institutional mechanisms. Party caucus meetings and key decisions are often held at times and in venues that are inaccessible or culturally inappropriate for women and younger members. Furthermore, deeply rooted socio-cultural norms and stereotypes reinforce the perception that leadership is the domain of older men, discouraging women and youths from aspiring to political office. These barriers are compounded by inadequate policy implementation, such as the insufficient enforcement of affirmative action and youth inclusion laws, and the lack of targeted support mechanisms within parties to mentor and empower emerging leaders. As a result, women’s representation in elective and appointive positions remains below 10%, and youth participation is similarly stifled despite legal reforms like the Not Too Young to Run Act (Baruwa, 2020; The Hope Newspaper, 2025; Jonah, 2024).

The Impact of Women and Youths Participation in Nigeria Democratic Governance

The participation of women in Nigeria’s democratic governance remains a critical factor for the realization of inclusive and representative democracy. Despite constituting nearly half of the population, women’s representation in elective and appointive positions remains alarmingly low, averaging around 6.7% far below global and regional averages (Oloyede, 2016). Multiple barriers, including entrenched patriarchal norms, gender-based violence, economic disadvantages, and a lack of enforced gender quotas, continue to impede women’s full engagement in politics (Baruwa, 2020; Olubela, 2023). However, increased women’s participation has been shown to broaden the scope of policy debates, enhance the responsiveness of government to diverse societal needs, and promote gender-sensitive governance. Empowerment initiatives, such as affirmative action and gender quotas, are recognized as essential pathways for improving women’s political inclusion and, by extension, strengthening Nigeria’s democratic institutions (Oloyede, 2016; Olubela, 2023).

Youth participation in democratic governance in Nigeria has gained momentum, particularly following the enactment of the Not Too Young to Run Act in 2018, which lowered the age requirements for political office (Jonah, 2024). This legislative reform has enabled a new generation of young Nigerians to contest and win political offices, contributing to the rejuvenation of the political landscape. Youth activism, exemplified by movements such as EndSARS, has demonstrated the capacity of young people to mobilize, demand accountability, and advocate for systemic reforms (Elijah, 2024; GoVote.ng, n.d.). Nevertheless, youth engagement is still challenged by socioeconomic barriers, limited access to political platforms, and persistent political disillusionment (Onyewuchi, Jawan, & Ahmad, 2024). Despite these obstacles, increased youth

involvement is associated with greater innovation in governance, improved accountability, and the potential for more responsive and future-oriented policymaking (Elijah, 2024).

The combined participation of women and youths in Nigeria's democratic processes is vital for achieving sustainable and inclusive governance. Their involvement not only diversifies decision-making but also enhances the legitimacy and effectiveness of democratic institutions (Jonah, 2024; Elijah, 2024). Studies indicate that when women and youths are empowered to participate meaningfully, there is a corresponding improvement in the quality of governance, social equity, and policy outcomes (Baruwa, 2020; Oloyede, 2016; Elijah, 2024). However, realizing these benefits requires the dismantling of structural barriers, targeted policy interventions, and the creation of enabling environments that support their political aspirations. Without these measures, Nigeria risks perpetuating a democracy that fails to reflect the aspirations and needs of its diverse population (Baruwa, 2020; Elijah, 2024).

CONCLUSION

The participation of women and youths in Nigeria's Fourth Republic has profound implications for the country's political development, offering fresh perspectives that enhance democratic governance and responsiveness to critical issues like education, unemployment, and gender equity. Their inclusion strengthens representational democracy by ensuring diverse voices in policy making, fostering accountability, and reducing political stagnation. However, systemic barriers such as entrenched patriarchal norms, economic marginalization, godfatherism, and inadequate implementation of supportive policies like the Not Too Young to Run Act continue to limit their effective participation. Women and youths face challenges including limited access to financial resources, political know how and institutional support within party structures. Despite these obstacles, progress has been made through affirmative action policies, advocacy by civil society, and the emergence of inspiring female and young leaders who challenge discriminatory practices and promote gender equality. For Nigeria to realize a truly inclusive democracy that harnesses the potential of its youth and women, comprehensive reforms are needed mandating gender quotas, enhancing political education, empowering economically, and reforming political party dynamics to create equitable opportunities. Such measures will not only empower marginalized groups but also contribute to sustainable political development and social progress in Nigeria's democratic journey.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Institutionalize Affirmative Action and Quotas: To increase women's political representation, Nigeria should enforce legal frameworks mandating quotas for women in elective and appointive positions. This will help address the persistent marginalization of women and ensure their interests are represented in governance.
2. Strengthen Capacity Building and Mentorship Programs: Establish sustained mentorship and leadership development initiatives targeting young women and youths. Programs like #ElectHerNG and #ReadyToRun have proven effective in building a pipeline of capable young leaders who can influence political processes and decision-making.
3. Create Enabling and Safe Political Environments: Develop policies and mechanisms that protect women and youths from violence, harassment, and discrimination in political participation. Ensuring a safe and supportive environment encourages more inclusive and meaningful engagement in politics.
4. Promote Gender and Youth-Sensitive Policies: Women and youth political participation leads to broader policy priorities such as education, health, and social welfare. Encouraging their involvement will enhance democratic responsiveness and promote sustainable development goals tailored to marginalized groups.
5. Enhance Economic Empowerment: Economic empowerment of women and youths is critical for effective political participation. Providing financial resources, legal support, and economic opportunities will reduce barriers related to campaign financing and political engagement.
6. Foster Cross-Generational and Cross-Party Alliances: Build networks and alliances across generations and political parties to facilitate knowledge transfer, collective advocacy, and collaborative governance. Such coalitions can amplify the voices of women and youths and help overcome patriarchal and partisan obstacles.

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