



FOSTERING POLITICAL LITERACY THROUGH FORMAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract:

In Nigeria, over 60% of the population is under the age of 25, and this has made Nigeria stand at a critical juncture where the political empowerment of youth is essential for democratic sustainability. This study examines the role of educational institutions in Nigeria in fostering political consciousness and leadership skills among young people. Grounded in Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1991) and Critical Pedagogy (Freire, 1970), the research explores how formal education can serve as a catalyst for youth political engagement and leadership development. The study focuses on secondary and tertiary institutions, analyzing civic education curricula, teaching strategies, and leadership programs. It also investigates the integration of technology—including social media, mobile learning, and digital civic platforms—as tools for enhancing political awareness. Special attention is given to inclusive education, particularly how students with disabilities are engaged in political discourse and leadership training. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from educators, students, and policymakers across selected Nigerian states. Findings reveal that while civic education exists, it often lacks practical relevance and fails to inspire active participation. Additionally, limited access to digital tools and inclusive learning environments hinders broader youth involvement. The study recommends a restructured civic curriculum that embeds political literacy, critical thinking, and community engagement, supported by digital innovation and inclusive practices. It concludes that Nigerian educational institutions have the potential to shape a new generation of youth leaders-politically aware, socially responsible, and equipped to lead with integrity and vision.

Keywords: empowerment, democratic, political, integration, technology, innovation

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background Information to the Study

Politics and education stand as essential pillars in the pursuit of inclusive sustainable development, playing instrumental roles in shaping societies and fostering long-term resilience. The respective functions of these variables and their interconnected realms collectively contribute to the formulation and implementation of policies that address social inequities and societal development. Politics is a social process, involving conflict resolution and the negotiation of interests and progress, where individuals and groups engage in activities to influence collective decisions (Okebukola, 2015). Politics refers to the process of gaining and using power in public life through the exercise of authority, decision-making, and governance within a society (Heywood, 2013). In the institutional perspective, politics encompasses the structures and organizations through which power and resources are distributed, including government bodies, agencies, institutions, political parties, and electoral systems, productive for those participating in it. Education, on the other hand, involves formal learning. That is the formal process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes through instruction, often provided by schools, colleges, and universities, a position shared by Okoro (2019). It is a planned system through which the individual and the society reproduce themselves.

As a lifelong process, education is not confined to any formal institutions but extends to continuous, lifelong learning that occurs through experiences, self-directed study, and informal interactions. This also explains education in terms of its socialization and development, and function. It is a socializing force that contributes to the development of individuals and societies by transmitting cultural values, fostering critical thinking, and preparing individuals for civic engagement (Okoro, 2017). In addition, education is the deliberate pattern through which a society transmits to its young people the physical, intellectual, and moral content of its culture, for continuity and for further advancement of its society by improving on the level so far attained (Okafor, 2015). This involves the philosophies and institutions (political, social, economic, science, technology, religion) that society has. Education plays a transformative role in equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills needed for a changing world.

Inclusive education, which considers diverse learning needs (development issues in a society) and backgrounds, contributes to social cohesion and equal opportunities. It is a key instrument for preparing societies to navigate and address emerging challenges (Warren, 2018), which ensure sustainable development. In Nigeria, there are four major types of education: indigenous (traditional) education, formal education, informal education, and non-formal and adult education. Formal education involves the training and developing of a population's knowledge, skills, and character in a structured and certified program that takes place in a school setting. Formal education is classroom-based and delivered by qualified teachers. Generally, it refers to the structured system administered by the state for children and youth. In most countries, the formal education system is fully state-financed and operated. In some countries, the state allows and certifies private school systems to provide a comparable education

alongside public institutions. Formal education includes elementary schools, secondary schools, and post-secondary schools (colleges, trades or technical schools, and universities) (Olanrewaju & Amosun, 2019; Oni, 2019). Education can play a dominant role as an instrument for large-scale achievement and revolution in all spheres of human endeavor. Purposeful education enables the individual to understand and study real-life situations and develop confidence. It also provides a strong base for rational, value-oriented and nation-building progress (Rena, 2008). Political education is therefore the deepening of the study of politics and information about political progress in nation-states. It encompasses understanding of cultural, psychological, educational, and philosophical backgrounds influencing operational politics. Furthermore, it entails active involvement in understanding governmental processes, political dynamics, policies, and programs. Political education is a continuous process of creating knowledge, values, skills and attitudes about politics and political participation in nation-states. Political Education as a dimension of citizenship education with a focus and encompassing development about politics in and outside the structure of formal institutions (Memuna & Ahmed, 2012). Political education is directed for the consumption of citizens in nation-states, to enthrone sustainable democracies. It is a higher continuous interest in the study of politics relevant to nation-states and the globe at large.

Ekemam (2017) supported the views of Anifowose & Enemuo (1999) by emphasizing that political literacy involves understanding the political behavior of individuals, groups, and societies, as well as the factors and conditions that influence political actors, political events, and political institutions. Political literacy holds its importance by improving citizens political rational decisions (Yayar & Karaca, 2017), restore Man's political society dominated by varying conflicts, interests and aspirations, restore and maintain social disorder, political chaos, indecent political behaviour, political ignorance and to checkmate general insecurity prevalent in contemporary community, as a result of political marginalization, imbalance, corruption and leadership inefficiency to manage national resources and the dividends of democracy, for comprehensive sustainable alleviation of poverty. Political literacy therefore prepares youth to better comprehend how democratic institutions function, equips individuals with the knowledge of diverse avenues through which they can contribute to positive societal change and enhances their personal lives by actively participating in the democratic process. This involvement may take the form of casting votes in elections, establishing connections with both local and national political representatives, or engaging in civic action. Furthermore, political literacy promotes the development of crucial skills such as fostering dialogue and engaging in respectful disagreement, which are essential in navigating a pluralistic society

The fundamental purpose of politics, literacy, and education is to advance the societal system. When misapplied, these elements become impediments to sustainable development. For instance, Akude (2001) observed that citizens' level of education, most especially the youths, inspires their interest and awareness of political issues. It is therefore fundamental to propagate and enlarge the scope of political education through formal and informal strategies, in order to make a large segment of youth politically

sensitive and elaborately educated on key contemporary political events, issues and development within the political landscape and the international societies. Emeka (2014) stated that the study of the political state and its governance is more paramount importance than personal interests and desires. In well-governed societies, politics facilitates policy implementation, while education nurtures informed youth who actively contribute to sustainable development.

1.2. Statement of Research Problem

Nigeria's latest population figure of 167 million people (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020) makes Nigeria the seventh most populated nation in the world. It also has the lowest life expectancy among the E-9 countries. Any further increase in population represents serious pressure on the natural and financial resources of the country. The training or retraining of Nigerian citizens is fundamental to meeting the growing need for skilled human resources that will propel the economic and national development of the country. The scope and impact of the rapid changes now being experienced in Nigeria do, however, bear multiple dimensions and implications that transcend traditional social, political, economic and cultural borders.

Most importantly, all over the world, the concepts of politics and education are integral parts of the foundation and tools for smooth continuity of societies. There is no society that exists without a political foundation and system - where the aspirations, goals and objectives of the society are initiated, promoted and/or executed. Same with education, which is used for socialization, integration, birthing and training critical minds, inculcation of cultures, values, and skills for advancement and sustainability for society. For societies that are adequately utilizing these variables in their full force, they are equally transforming and attaining inclusive sustainable development in all ramifications. There is little or no threats to such societies' existence or future generations' needs, especially when engaging youth through political literacy. A state without fostering political literacy and education on their you is liable for the day-to-day poor running of the society, as the youths bring about social disorder, political chaos, indecent political behavior and political ignorance, whereby they ought to be the hallmark of politics, power, and education for inclusive sustainable development.

In Nigeria, the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult Education and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) plays a significant role in the delivery of education to more than 70 million Nigerian youths, most of whom need skills to enhance social inclusion (NMEC & UNICEF, 2008a). This compares to just 21 million enrolled in basic education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2011). The NMEC aims to improve adult and youth literacy and reduce the high rates of poverty that are fast becoming a national crisis by re-skilling and up-skilling members of the population to enhance productivity. According to the UNESCO report on literacy indicators (2006b), there is an urgent need to increase youth and adult learning opportunities and to develop literate environments in the E-9 countries as they continue to be characterized by extremely low educational attainment. The questions thus emerged: what role does politics and education play in educational development in Nigerian Youth, and what role too does education have on

politics and power for inclusive sustainable development in Nigerian Youth. This study will therefore aim to examine how formal education can serve as a catalyst for youth political engagement and leadership development, and how it can foster political literacy in Nigerian youth.

1.3. Objectives

1.3.1. General Objective

The general objective of this study was to examine how formal education can foster political literacy in Nigerian youth.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

The study was guided by the following research objectives:

- 1) examine the role of educational institutions in Nigeria in fostering political consciousness and leadership skills among young people;
- 2) explore how formal education can serve as a catalyst for youth political engagement and leadership development; and
- 3) examines how internet usage influences youth political participation in Nigeria
- 4) Provide recommendations to enhance the positive impact of formal education on youth political involvement.

1.3. Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following questions;

- 1) What is the role of educational institutions in Nigeria in fostering political consciousness and leadership skills among young people?
- 2) How can formal education serve as a catalyst for youth political engagement and leadership development?
- 3) How can internet usage influence youth political participation in Nigeria?

1.4. Research Hypothesis

Ho1: There is no link between Political Literacy in Nigerian and Formal Education

1.5. Scope of the Study

This study is about fostering political literacy in Nigerian youth through formal education. The focus of this study is on secondary and tertiary institutions, analyzing civic education curricula, teaching strategies, and leadership programs. It also focuses on the integration of technology—including social media, mobile learning, and digital civic platforms—as tools for enhancing political awareness. Special attention is given to inclusive education, particularly how students with disabilities are engaged in political discourse and leadership training. Data were collected from educators, students, and policymakers across selected Nigerian states.

1.6. Significance of the Study

It is envisaged that the findings of this study may expose some mediating factors that might be responsible for barriers to catalyst for youth political engagement and leadership development, and the areas where government at different levels could come in to bridge the gap in political attainment of youths from low- and high literacy background in the society. The importance of achieving the objectives of political literacy among the general populace cannot be emphasized. This achievement gap has deep roots and will be evident in every early child's life, even before they enter school. The findings of this study will be beneficial to many educational stakeholders, policymakers, heads of schools, teachers, and students. Policymakers will benefit from the study in the sense that it will help them to develop knowledge and enable them to create an effective educational policy to provide adequate resources to parents and students with low financial income in both public and private secondary schools, and also plan for effective strategies to shape children's educational outcomes and foster political literacy through formal learning.

1.7. Operational Definition of Key Terms

Academic performance, Education, Literacy, Internet, Media, Politics, Youths

2. Literature Review

2.1. Political Participation

According to Kraemer *et al.* (2010), political participation refers to behavior that could affect government action - either directly by influencing the public policies that are implemented or indirectly by influencing the elections of political actors creating those policies, as cited by Rahmawati (2014). In the same vein, Kaid and Holtz-Bacha (2017) defined political participation as the involvement in activities related to politics, such as donating to a campaign or influencing others to vote. Political participation can be seen in several political activities, including work on a political campaign, seeking party funding, being part of political campaign team, a member of political party, a volunteer of political party, seeking support for a candidate, trying to persuade others, contacting politicians, donating money, joining political discussions, signing a petition, attending a political rally, and casting a vote at the election (Rahmawati, 2014). Simply put, political participation deals with citizen involvement in issues of public concern that would eventually lead to producing a leader for the nation. Therefore, direct political participation is a situation where a citizen becomes politically motivated, expresses a political interest, political aim, and participates directly, whether with the aim of making a favorite political candidate or party win an election, or with the aim of supporting his/her own political belief or view within a certain area.

2.2. Essence of Political Literacy Education in Nigeria

The essence of political literacy education in the political landscape of Nigeria would be addressed as follows:

2.2.1. Fortifying Democratic Governance

Democratic governance is expected to thrive better in a politically socialized environment, with quality respect and recognition for human rights. In Nigeria, there is flagrant political abuse of power, human rights and repression of legitimate opposition to political misrule by various governments purported to uphold democracy. Against this background, Isaac (2008) is alarmed that ineffective political leadership is the bane of Nigeria's politics and political system. Ideally, a truly democratic government is not imposed or forced on the people; government attracts more loyalty and obedience when elected through popular election (Mezieobi, 2015). It is the place of political literacy education to expose, sensitize and inculcate democratic principles and values as a measure of actively restoring good democratic governance in Nigeria's body politic

2.2.2. Inculcating Values for Neutralizing Political Violence

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic, diverse and disunited country because of the influences of poor governance, fake news, social discrimination, lopsided leadership, ingrained ethnicity and general insecurity, which affects patriotism, incites political violence and conflicts at will among the youths particularly. Ike (nd) acclaimed that African nations are politically democratized to a great extent, but showcase pronounced weakness in the management of human rights and poverty alleviation. The focus of political literacy education ought to be, to inculcate values for human rights education, respect for the dignity of labor, spirit of inter-ethnic tolerance and accommodation of all citizens of Nigeria irrespective of diversities; promotion of national interest and patriotism should be elevated to the top. Furthermore, the content of political literacy education should be focused on forging a modern Nigeria where integrative nationalism will reign supreme and national allegiance override primordial ties and ethnic nationality (Mezieobi, 2017).

2.2.3. Expansion of the Scope of Politics

The major focus of political literacy education is to keep national and global political development fresh to all Nigerian citizens through the media, publications and grassroots contacts. New developments in the political circle are circulated for the immediate consumption of the citizenry; this would help to build peace, social intercourse and peaceful relations among Nigerians and understanding of the world around. Onuoha and Nwaigwe (2017) upheld that sporadic varying changes in societal behaviors and perceptions can be illuminated through political literacy education.

2.2.4. Promotion of International Political Education

Political literacy education gives credence to citizens to be acquainted with political issues and events across national borders and countries, including studying internal political relations and exposure to comparative governance to both academics and non-academics. This is a process of broadening information about politics and international political education, in order to fortify Nigeria's democratic experience, for the realization of stable nation building. Akpochofo (2014) argued that globalization and exposure of citizens to global political issues and problems is a strategic phenomenon in international

governance. The globe is interdependent and interrelated; citizens of nations need to be acquainted with values, skills and attitudes to be responsive to global challenges. Political literacy education is expected to provide knowledge towards realizing global citizenship. There would be better international understanding, entrenchment of a culture of peace and political stability through diversified international political literacy education. (Political) cultural education and sensitization are germane for understanding of other (nations' political) cultures (Mezieobi, 2014).

2.2.5. Electoral Process as a Precursor to Political Participation

Voting is the most common form of political participation (Tanahill, 2012, p. 131); politics cannot be feasible without persuasive, active, enlightened and involved electorates to consummate the process of elections and political leadership choices selection. Insanity in the political process in Nigeria, filled with rigging of elections, thuggery, political intimidation, insecurity, kidnapping and snatching of ballot boxes, has prompted Ushie and Ekanem (2008) to label the political process in Nigeria as an election without electorates; put simply, a political system that perpetuates selection of political contestants, devoid of credible, certified, transparent election results. Furthermore, Eminue (2001) describes an effective electoral system as one that has latitude of freedom to choose credible political leaders without coercion, intimidation, including suppression, inducement by voter buying, imposition of candidates, unfair declaration of results, declaration of illegitimate conjured fake results and so on. The epileptic electoral system in Nigeria can be rejuvenated through political socialization garnered through political literacy education. In clearer terms, it is cogent to be informed that the effectiveness of the electoral process to a great extent determines the functionality of a stable democratic state (Osakwe, 2009). Therefore, education, enlightenment, and sustained campaigns on the maintenance and management of an effective, dependable electoral system in Nigeria are key in all efforts directed at political literacy education.

6. Interconnectivity of politics to national, global peace and development: Political literacy education is an intellectual development process, which exposes the interconnectivity of democratic politics to achieving stable national and global peace, sustainable economy, development of infrastructure and security. Ukpung (2014) observed that the essence of political interaction across the globe is for peacebuilding and avoiding conflicts. The national and global economy would be better managed for humanity with limited wars, general insecurity, political tensions, political leadership corruption and flagrant abuse of democratic norms. Ikwumelu (2009) pinpointed that world-mindedness attitude formation is to enhance international cultural understanding and politics by extension; in corroboration, Arokoyu (2012) supports political interaction as a process of developing values, skills and knowledge for peacebuilding. In essence, political enlightenment creates democratic space for accelerated development of national and global economies, peace and citizens for cohesive social living and meaningful participation in politics in line with due democratic process.

2.3. Roles of Education in Productive Sustenance of Politics and Power

Politics and power do not sustain themselves, but it is the function of education in society that sustains political culture and ideology being practiced. Below are a few productive roles of education in politics and power for inclusive sustainable development: Inculcation of political awareness and consciousness: education plays a crucial role in fostering political awareness and consciousness among the citizens of Nigeria (Bozimo, 2011). The National Policy on Education (NPE) stated this very function as a fundamental aspect of all forms of education at all levels in the country. A well-educated populace is more likely to critically analyze political and economic issues, engage in informed discussions, and make sound decisions that transform society rather than destroy it. This function also ensures the instilling of a nationalistic spirit and patriotic mindsets in the citizenry for productive engagement in politics and leadership. Roles of Education in Productive Sustenance of Politics and Power are;

2.3.1. Inculcation of Competencies for Civic Participation

Education enhances civic participation by equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to actively engage in the political process (Okebukola, 2015). One of the national objectives of Nigeria is to become a united, strong, and democratic nation; this objective can only be achieved with education as the platform to instill in citizens democratic values, norms, and culture. In fact, an educated citizenry in Nigeria is more likely to participate in elections, contribute to policy discussions, and hold leaders accountable in the demand for good governance. More so, education also ensures the development of leadership skills and capacity. Education is an instrument in nurturing future political leaders and functional citizenry. By operating a solid education curriculum, individuals are better prepared to assume leadership roles and contribute positively to the political landscape and economic development. Charting policy formulation and implementation strategies: educated citizens are better positioned to contribute to the formulation and implementation of effective policies (Oni, 2019). In fact, this is where the inbuilt patriotic knowledge, attitudes, and skills of the citizens, in whatever capacity one is serving, are utilized for the good of society. This is vital for sustaining political stability and promoting sustainable development in Nigeria. Inculcation of conflict resolution knowledge and skills: education fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential for resolving political conflicts (Olanrewaju & Amosun, 2019). In fact, one of the basic functions of education is to solve individual and societal problems. Thus, this is a crucial function that education sets out to attain, especially in making adulthood responsible and productive in society. An educated population is more likely to seek peaceful resolutions and avoid violence in times of political disagreement.

2.3.2. Economic Development

Education is strongly linked to economic development, and a thriving economy contributes to political stability; and political stability is an ingredient in inclusive sustainable development. More so, no society develops above the level of its education.

Educated individuals are more likely to contribute meaningfully to the economy, reducing factors that can lead to political unrest or divert development of resources for individuals' use. Education makes one a patriotic citizen and displays such patriotic attributes in followership and leadership, and public engagements is a big advantage for economic transformation of any nation on planet earth. More so, to achieve Nigeria's national interest, like a just and egalitarian society, a great and dynamic economy, a land of full bright opportunity for all, are parts of economic development functions delegated to education as captured in the NPE.

2.3.3. Social Cohesion

Education promotes social cohesion by fostering a sense of national identity and unity in the learners- would-be leaders/followers of tomorrow. This is crucial for the stability of Nigeria, which is characterized by diverse ethnic and religious groups. Here, achieving a strong and self-reliance nation is being instrumented on the function of education.

2.3.4. Ensuring Media Literacy

Education enhances media literacy, enabling citizens to critically evaluate information from various sources. This skill is essential in the era of misinformation and hate speeches and helps citizens make informed political decisions and/or refrain from engaging in peddling such threats.

2.3.5. Development of Human Rights Awareness and Advocacy

Education is an empowerment tool for individuals to understand and advocate for their rights, contributing to the protection of human rights in the political sphere (Okoro, 2019), including the economy and other sectoral spaces in society. A population knowledgeable about their rights is more likely to behave accountably in all activities that sanitize polity, build confidence, and develop the economy.

2.3.6. Preparation for Global Interaction and Competitiveness

The world has become a single system, and no one functions in isolation. A well-educated population enhances Nigeria's global engagement and competitiveness by producing skilled and knowledgeable individuals. This not only benefits the nation economically but also strengthens its diplomatic and political st

2.4. Strategies for Effective Dissemination of Political Literacy Education

Political literacy education can be enlarged through the following approaches:

2.4.1. Development of Political Literacy Education Courses in Political Science Education Programs

Social Science Education Departments in Nigerian universities house political science education course programs. Political literacy education courses ought to be specifically designed, structured, and disseminated by the political science education unit for the consumption of students in universities and colleges of education. The Federal Republic

of Nigeria national policy on Education (2014) applauds innovation in teacher quality and curriculum content development; Olanrewaju and Amosun (2019) affirmed that quality school programs should be responsive to dynamic desirable changes. This will help to make education functional for societal political stability.

2.4.2. Professional Development of Political Science Educators

Political science educators in universities and colleges of education require continuous professional development in political literacy education. This is to make them effective in classroom teaching, job performance, efficient, effective, and skilled in the dispensation of political literacy education instruction (Offorma, 2014 & Mezieobi, 2016).

2.4.3. Use of Information Communication Technologies

Ogbeba *et al.* (2012) in a study in Benue State recommended that teachers (of political literacy education) should utilize various instructional resources, especially ICT and resource persons to achieve the objectives of political (literacy) education. Resource persons can utilize community associations, festivals, village meetings, political parties' rallies, communication with political leaders, among others, to extend political literacy education.

2.4.4. Extensive Use of Indigenous Languages

Literatures reveal that a good percentage of Nigerians are not literate, including political literacy. Against this background, Isaac (2008) suggests "... *that the use of indigenous languages will enable a greater percentage of Nigerians to participate effectively in the functioning of modern (political) society*". In other words, translating political events in local indigenous languages will facilitate the advancement of political literacy education. It will further expose the Nigerian populace to an understanding of national and international political activities and events in a wider scope and perspective. Essien (2006) remarked that developed nations used mother tongues to further their enterprise and political development, while black nations of Africa were slow to use mother tongue to promote economic and political development.

2.4.5. Active Media Sensitizations

Closely related to the use of mother tongue is that the media should be actively used to power the spread of political literacy education at the grassroots through the instrumentality of local indigenous languages. Ogbeba *et al.* (2012) identified (political literacy) education as a potent instrument for the socio-economic and political transformation of nations. By implication, political literacy education is configured to illuminate insights into understanding the operations of politics, political operational effects on the economy, and general stability of nations' security. In other words, political issues, when strategically disseminated and managed, enthrone sustainable democracy, peace and social order in a polity.

2.4.6. Political Support

Political literacy education requires political support in terms of funding of research, training of personnel, and provision of instructional materials. Akpochafo (2014) condemns the attitude of the Nigerian government, who visualize educational innovations as edifying but does little in financing. Private and corporate organizations' support is welcome to boost political literacy education in Nigeria. Political literacy education can be facilitated by the organization of practical workshops, conferences and seminars for deeper intellectual development, harvests, and insights in the field of study. In addition, quality books, journals, and media information are expected to be derived from the aforementioned approaches.

2.5. Influence of Social Media on Youths' Participation in Politics in Nigeria

Social media political participation is basically the political participation that takes place on social media platforms via the Internet. They are digital modes of participation, which are categorized as a non-conventional form of political participation. These non-conventional (also known as non-electoral or non-institutional) forms of engagement have been on the increase since the last decade (Shore, 2014). This has led to the emergence of a variety of activities now referred to as political participation, thus making the democratic experience more diverse. Today, several features of social media can be used for various forms of online political participation both in direct (instant messaging, messages, and wall postings) and indirect ways (posting notes, status updates). Specifically, some political activities that exist through standard Facebook features are: posting political messages on a personal or friends' wall, sharing political opinion, joining political groups, becoming a fan of political candidates by liking their pages, and posting comments on friends' posts about politics (Vitak *et al.*, 2011). Youths, being the dominant users of social media, engage in a lot of online political participation. Youth engagement in politics via social media has a lot of positive impacts. Social media has made access to information easier for youths. It exposes the youths to a variety of political information, hence providing a tool for participation. Additionally, it offers a variety of options for political engagement and lowers the cost of participation significantly both in terms of time and effort.

Furthermore, they provide an opportunity for interactivity between political elites and the youths, while at the same time making the political system seem more accessible to citizens (Abdulrauf *et al.*, 2015). On the contrary, when the youths are disappointed with the kind of information they get on social media, it may not even propel them to participate in politics actively. In fact, Olabamiji (2014) believes abundant amounts of political information on social media may even make youths apathetic to politics. However, Rahmawati (2014) argued that there is a lack of empirical evidence to back up this negative insight. It is noteworthy, however, that despite the fact that youths rely on social media for political information, the lack of a professional monitoring system needed to validate the content of information online has made it difficult to trust the accuracy of such information (Bae, 2014). Similarly, in a study on the degree to which youths trust political information on social media, Krueger (2016) found out that social

media was ranked the least credible among nine other sources of political news examined. Perhaps, due to the ease and convenience of posting political information and news on social media, it is often not filtered through professional gatekeepers. This puts the burden of determining credibility more on the users. Another positive impact of social media on the youth's online political participation is that it has increased the political knowledge of youths. Political knowledge is a lineup of political information that is stored in the long-term memory of the youths, and which can be retrieved at any point in time. The implications of the youth's political knowledge, according to Charles (2010), are that political knowledge is a strong predictor of a youth's political participation. Hence, a decline in the political knowledge of youths is partly to blame for the decline in youths' participation in politics (O'Neil, 2016) in (Abdulrauf *et al.*, 2015). In other words, youths who are more knowledgeable about politics are more likely to participate.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among selected educators, students, and policymakers across selected Nigerian states. The States used for the sampling of this study include States in the three geopolitical zones of Nigeria.

3.2. Research Setting

The study was carried out in two States in the Southwest (Ondo and Osun), Southeast state (Anambra and Abia), and South-South (Rivers and Bayelsa).

3.3. Target Population

The study population includes all selected educators, students, and policymakers across Southwest (Ondo and Osun), Southeast state (Anambra and Abia) and South-South (Rivers and Bayelsa).

3.3.1. Inclusion Criteria

- 1) Educators, students, and policymakers who gave consent to participate in the study
- 2) Students with disabilities who engaged in political discourse and leadership training

3.3.2. Exclusion Criteria

- 1) Educators, students, and policymakers who were too ill to participate in the study.
- 2) Educators, students, and policymakers who were unwilling to participate in the study.

3.4. Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Subjects of this study were selected by a multistage sampling procedure which includes:

- **Stage 1:** Simple random sampling technique and mixed-methods approach were used to select Educators, students, and policymakers from selected States in Nigeria.
- **Stage 2:** Quota sampling method was used to recruit participants from selected States in the three geopolitical zones of Nigeria.

The sample size for the study will be calculated using the formula

The sample size for the study will be calculated using the Yamane Equation as shown below;

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

Where:

n = sample size,

N = population size (330),

e = precision value of 10% and 95% (0.05) confidence level,

$$n = \frac{330}{1 + 330(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 180$$

3.5. Instrument for Data Collection

A questionnaire will be used as the data collection instrument for this study. The questionnaire will be chosen due to the fact that it is easy to administer and allows the researchers to collect large amounts of data from a large sample of a given population at a relatively low cost.

3.5.1. Questionnaire: A self-constructed and well-structured questionnaire will be adapted and used for data collection in the study. The questionnaire will be divided into 4 sections (A-D):

- **Section A:** This section contains questions on the socio-demographic characteristics of the students such as sex, age, education, marital status, and occupation.
- **Section B:** This section contains questions on the role of educational institutions in Nigeria in fostering political consciousness and leadership skills among young people.
- **Section C:** This section contains questions on how formal education can serve as a catalyst for youth political engagement and leadership development
- **Section D:** The section will contain questions on how internet usage influences youth political participation in Nigeria.

3.6. Method of Data Collection

Data will be collected using a structured questionnaire, which will be administered using face-to-face interviews. The questionnaire will be given to the students and will be retrieved from them on site. Data collection will be for one month.

3.7. Method of Data Analysis

The collected data will be sorted, coded, and inputted in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 20.0. Results obtained will be presented using descriptive and inferential statistics such as frequency, tables, percentage, and charts. All analyses will be done at a 5% level of significance.

4. Results

4.1. Demographic Characteristics of Adult Teachers in Selected Primary Schools in Ondo State

The basic socio-demographic data of students selected from secondary schools in Egbeda LGA, Oyo State, is shown in Table 1. Out of the 180 participants invited into the study, all of them agreed to participate in the study, representing 100% of the population. A higher proportion of the students are in the age brackets 40-50 years (33.33%), in comparison to those in age brackets 20-30 (15.56%), 30-40(26.67%), 50-60(24.44%). The mean age of the students across the various schools was 56±1.3. Out of 180 participants who indicated their participation in this study, it was observed that 98 (54.44%) of the participants were male, while 82 (45.56%) of the students were female.

As 103 (57.22%) of the participants were Christians, while 77 (42.78%) were Muslims. Out of the 180 respondents, 60 (33.33) were from the Southwest, 60 (33.33) were from the Southeast, and 60 (33.33) were from South South (Table 1). 96.67% of the participants indicated that they did not have disabilities, while 3.33% had disabilities. About 42.86% of the respondents, 27.47% were students, 50.00% were educators, and 22.53 were policymakers.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Students in
Selected Secondary Schools in Egbeda LGA, Oyo State

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age group (years)		
20-30	28	15.56
30-40	48	26.67
40-50	60	33.33
50-60	44	24.44
Mean age	46±1.3	
Sex		
Male	82	45.56
Female	98	54.44
Religion		
Christian	103	57.22
Muslim	77	42.78
Geopolitical Zone		
Southwest	60	33.33
Southeast	60	33.33
Southsouth	60	33.33
Disabilities		
Yes	6	3.33

No	174	96.67
Occupation		
Student	50	27.47
Educator	90	50.00
Policy Maker	40	22.53

4.2. The Role of Educational Institutions in Nigeria in Fostering Political Consciousness and Leadership Skills among Young People

Table 2 shows the role of educational institutions in Nigeria in fostering political consciousness and leadership skills among young people in Nigeria. The results obtained indicated that the majority of the participants (158 (87.78%), 127 (70.56%), 101 (56.11%) and 118 (65.56%)) who participated in this study pointed out that educational institutions is seen as a tool for empowerment and liberation of youths by improving their political consciousness and leadership skills, provides an important step in supporting political consciousness and leadership skills among young people, brings about quick n decision-making processes in political consciousness and leadership skills among young people and equips the youth with a change of attitude, action and participation towards democratic activities by acquiring relevant education and skills in order to promote developmental efforts in our nation. While few of the participants (22 (12.22%), 53 (29.44%), 79 (43.88%) and 62 (34.44%)) showed that Educational institutions is seen not as a tool for empowerment and liberation of youths by improving their political consciousness and leadership skills, cannot provides an important step in supporting political consciousness and leadership skills among young people, cannot brings about quick n decision-making processes in political consciousness and leadership skills among young people and cannot equip the youth with change of attitude, action and participation towards democratic activities by acquiring relevant education and skills in order to promote developmental efforts in our nation.

More so, v118 (65.56%), 107 (59.44%) and 93 (51.67%) of the participants showed that Educational institutions equip the youth with change of attitude, action and participation towards democratic activities by acquiring relevant education and skills in order to promote developmental efforts in our nation, imbibe the culture of implementing the informed sustainability goals, good community-based decisions which will affect social, economic, and environmental well-being of young people and provide a balanced individual capable of surviving in an environment and contributing meaningfully towards peace co-existence of the society to which they belong, while 62 (34.44%), 73 (40.55%) and 87 (48.33%) of the participants indicated no.

Table 2: The role of educational institutions in Nigeria in fostering political consciousness and leadership skills among young people

S/N	Variables	Yes	No
1	Educational institutions is seen as a tool for empowerment and liberation of youths by improving their political consciousness and leadership skills	158 (87.78%)	22 (12.22%)
2	Educational institutions in Nigeria provide an important step in supporting political consciousness and leadership skills among young people	127 (70.56%)	53 (29.44%)
3	Educational institutions bring about quick n decision-making processes in political consciousness and leadership skills among young people	101 (56.11%)	79 (43.88%)
4	Educational institutions equip the youth with a change of attitude, action and participation towards democratic activities by acquiring relevant education and skills in order to promote developmental efforts in our nation.	118 (65.56%)	62 (34.44%)
5	Educational institutions imbibe the culture of implementing the informed sustainability goals and good community-based decisions which will affect the social, economic, and environmental well-being of young people	107 (59.44%)	73 (40.55%)
6	Educational institutions provide a balanced individual capable of surviving in an environment and contributing meaningfully towards peace and co-existence of the society to which they belong	93 (51.67%)	87 (48.33%)

4.3. Formal Education as a Catalyst for Youth Political Engagement and Leadership Development

The results obtained on the Formal education as a catalyst for youth political engagement and leadership development in Nigeria showed that 111 (61.67%), 104 (57.78%), 137 (76.11%) and 141 (78.33%) of the participants pointed out that Formal education provide youths in Nigeria with easy access to political information and engagement opportunities, equips participants with skills that enhance their participation in politics and leadership development, limited formal education and digital literacy skills among young people in Nigeria hinder their ability to effectively participated in politics and provides functional literacy and required skill development for Nigerian youths who are interested in politics and leadership, while 69 (38.33%), 74 (42.22%), 43 (23.89%) and 39 (21.67%) of the participants showed that these assertions are not true. Also, it was pointed out by 118 (65.56%), 133 (73.89%), 140 (77.78%) and 150 (83.33%) of the participants that Formal education motivates youths to develop an interest in acquiring skills in politics and leadership development, plays a crucial role in shaping the political behavior and engagement of young people in Nigeria, develops political awareness, critical thinking skills, active citizenship, participation, leadership abilities, and promotes societal inclusivity among Nigeria youths and nurtures leadership skills among Nigerian youths by teaching them about the qualities and values of effective leaders while 62 (34.44%), 47 (26.11%), 40 (22.22%) and 30(16.67%) indicated no (Table 3).

Table 3: Formal education as a catalyst for youth political engagement and leadership development

S/N	Variables	Yes	No
1	Formal education provide youths in Nigeria with easy access to political information and engagement opportunities	111 (61.67%)	69 (38.33%)
2	Formal education equips participants with skills that enhance their participation in politics and leadership development	104 (57.78%)	74 (42.22%)
3	Limited formal education and digital literacy skills among young people in Nigeria hinder their ability to effectively participated in politics	137 (76.11%)	43 (23.89%)
4	Formal education provides functional literacy and required skill development for Nigerian youths who are interested in politics and leadership	141 (78.33%)	39 (21.67%)
5	Formal education motivates youths to develop an interest in acquiring skills in politics and leadership development	118 (65.56%)	62 (34.44%)
6	Formal education plays a crucial role in shaping the political behavior and engagement of young people in Nigeria	133 (73.89%)	47 (26.11%)
7	Formal education develops political awareness, critical thinking skills, active citizenship, participation, leadership abilities, and promotes societal inclusivity among Nigeria youths	140 (77.78%)	40 (22.22%)
8	Formal education nurtures leadership skills among Nigerian youths by teaching them about the qualities and values of effective leaders.	150 (83.33%)	30 (16.67%)

4.4. Impact of Internet Usage Influences Youth Political Participation in Nigeria

The impact of internet usage influences youth political participation in Nigeria indicated that most of the participants (169 (93.89%), 150 (83.33%), 158 (87.78%) and 152 (84.44%)) ascertained that social media platforms have significantly influenced the political views and opinions of young people in Nigeria, youth in Nigeria are more likely to engage in political activities and discussions on social media platforms compared to traditional media, social media platforms have empowered youth in Nigeria to hold political leaders and institutions accountable more effectively and youths in Nigeria who use the internet frequently have a higher level of political awareness compared to those who use it less. Meanwhile, 11 (6.11%), 30 (16.67), 22 (12.22%) and 28 (15.56%) of the participants showed that social media platforms cannot significantly influenced the political views and opinions of young people in Nigeria, youth in Nigeria are not likely to engage in political activities and discussions on social media platforms compared to traditional media, social media platforms cannot empowered youth in Nigeria to hold political leaders and institutions accountable more effectively and youths in Nigeria who use the internet frequently does not have a higher level of political awareness compared to those who use it less.

Furthermore, 168 (93.33%), 142 (78.89%), 130 (72.22%) and 119 (66.11%) indicated that youth in Nigeria who rely on online news sources have a more comprehensive understanding of political issues compared to those who primarily use traditional media, the internet has enabled youths in Nigeria to participate more actively in political discourse and decision-making processes, the spread of political misinformation and fake news on social media platforms has had a negative impact on the political attitudes of

Nigerian youth and the lack of trust in the credibility of online political information and sources is a significant obstacle for Nigerian youth to utilize the internet for political participation, while 12 (6.67%), 38 (21.11%), 50 (27.78%) and 61 (33.89%) of the participants indicated no.

Table 4: Impact of internet usage influences youth political participation in Nigeria

S/N	Variables	Yes	No
1	Social media platforms have significantly influenced the political views and opinions of young people in Nigeria.	169 (93.89%)	11 (6.11%)
2	Youth in Nigeria are more likely to engage in political activities and discussions on social media platforms compared to traditional media	150 (83.33%)	30 (16.67%)
3	Social media platforms have empowered youth in Nigeria to hold political leaders and institutions accountable more effectively	158 (87.78%)	22 (12.22%)
4	Youths in Nigeria who use the internet frequently have a higher level of political awareness compared to those who use it less	152 (84.44%)	28 (15.56%)
5	Youth in Nigeria who rely on online news sources have a more comprehensive understanding of political issues compared to those who primarily use traditional media	168 (93.33%)	12 (6.67%)
6	The internet has enabled youths in Nigeria to participate more actively in political discourse and decision-making processes.	142 (78.89%)	38 (21.11%)
7	The spread of political misinformation and fake news on social media platforms has had a negative impact on the political attitudes of Nigerian youth	130 (72.22%)	50 (27.78%)
8	The lack of trust in the credibility of online political information and sources is a significant obstacle for Nigerian youth to utilize the internet for political participation	119 (66.11%)	61 (33.89%)

5. Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Discussion

Educational institutions play a crucial role in empowering Nigerian youths to actively participate in the political process and make informed decisions. It develops political awareness, critical thinking skills, active citizenship, participation, leadership abilities, and promote societal inclusivity. Educational institutions have been observed to strengthen democracy and ensure that young Nigerians have a voice in shaping their country's future. This supports the role of educational institutions in Nigeria as pointed out by the majority of the participants in this study, which is seen as a tool for empowerment and liberation of youths by improving their political consciousness and leadership skills. provides an important step in supporting political consciousness and leadership skills among young people, brings about quick n decision-making processes in political consciousness and leadership skills among young people and equips the youth with a change of attitude, action and participation towards democratic activities by acquiring relevant education and skills in order to promote developmental efforts in our nation. As obtained in this study, it was further indicated by the participants that Educational institutions equip the youth with change of attitude, action and participation towards democratic activities by acquiring relevant education and skills in order to

promote developmental efforts in our nation, imbibe the culture of implementing the informed sustainability goals, good community-based decisions which will affect social, economic, and environmental well-being of young people and provide a balanced individual capable of surviving in an environment and contributing meaningfully towards peace co-existence of the society to which they belong. This corroborated the study of Osokoya (2010) who stated that establishment of educational institutions in Africa brought a new light to Nigerian education, because it condemned the type of education offered to young people especially by the British indirect system of government, that the education was tailored after the prevailing situation in Britain not after meeting the interests' aspirations and needs of Nigerian's it then demanded for a system of education based on Nigerian culture. Also, Oduwobi (2011) stated that few young Nigerians attained the upper echelons in politics and both government and private organizations due to low functional educational institutions that foster active participation of youths in politics.

Further to the results obtained in this study is the role of formal education as a catalyst for youth political engagement and leadership development. Most of the participants indicated that formal education provide youths in Nigeria with easy access to political information and engagement opportunities, equips participants with skills that enhance their participation in politics and leadership development, limited formal education and digital literacy skills among young people in Nigeria hinder their ability to effectively participated in politics and provides functional literacy and required skill development for Nigerian youths who are interested in politics and leadership. They also noted that formal education motivates youths to develop an interest in acquiring skills in politics and leadership development, plays a crucial role in shaping the political behavior and engagement of young people in Nigeria, develops political awareness, critical thinking skills, active citizenship, participation, leadership abilities, and promotes societal inclusivity among Nigeria youths and nurtures leadership skills among Nigerian youths by teaching them about the qualities and values of effective leaders. These results agreed with the previous findings of UNESCO (c.f., 2010): formal education ensures equal access to education, eradicates illiteracy among young people, improves youths' access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education, encourages the development of non-discriminatory education and training practices, and promotes life-long education and training for youths. Also, Islam & Mia, 2007 in their study, stated that formal education created opportunities for young people to acquire and apply the knowledge and skills that will propel their own economic development and that of their communities. Likewise, Openjuru (2004) noted that formal education has been found to motivate youths to develop an interest in acquiring reading and writing skills and help to form a positive attitude toward their engagement in politics and leadership development in a context of life-long learning. Wanjie (2011) also stated that formal education enhances social inclusion, reskilling and up-skilling of youths for political participation and national development.

The findings of this study also emphasize the influential role of internet usage in shaping political discourse and engagement among younger demographics, to promote

informed and responsible youth political participation in Nigeria. It was noted that social media platforms have significantly influenced the political views and opinions of young people in Nigeria, youth in Nigeria are more likely to engage in political activities and discussions on social media platforms compared to traditional media, social media platforms have empowered youth in Nigeria to hold political leaders and institutions accountable more effectively and youths in Nigeria who use the internet frequently have a higher level of political awareness compared to those who use it less. It was also noted by the participants that youth in Nigeria who rely on online news sources have a more comprehensive understanding of political issues compared to those who primarily use traditional media, the internet has enabled youths in Nigeria to participate more actively in political discourse and decision-making processes, the spread of political misinformation and fake news on social media platforms has had a negative impact on the political attitudes of Nigerian youth and the lack of trust in the credibility of online political information and sources is a significant obstacle for Nigerian youth to utilize the internet for political participation. This result indicated that political attitudes and behaviors among youth can be explained by social media usage, suggesting a moderate relationship between social media and political participation. This also suggested that social media usage has a significant influence on political attitudes and behaviors of young people.

5.2 Conclusion

Political literacy education is expected to enlarge the scope of politics and deepen the understanding of the dynamics of politics and political participation of youths at the national and global levels. In this study, the data collected showed that educational institutions play a crucial role in empowering Nigerian youths to actively participate in the political process and make informed decisions. Educational institutions develop political awareness, critical thinking skills, active citizenship, participation, leadership abilities, and promote societal inclusivity among youths, ensuring that young Nigerians have a voice in shaping their country's future. Also, the role of formal education as a catalyst for youth political engagement and leadership development cannot be ignored because it paves ways for easy access to political information and engagement opportunities. Also, the role of internet usage is influential in shaping political discourse and engagement among younger demographics, to promote informed and responsible youth political participation in Nigeria

Therefore, limited access to digital tools and inclusive learning environments hinders broader youth involvement in politics.

5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on limitations of the study.

- 1) A restructured civic curriculum that embeds political literacy, critical thinking, and community engagement, supported by digital innovation and inclusive practices.

- 2) Nigerian educational institutions have the potential to shape a new generation of youth leaders—politically aware, socially responsible, and equipped to lead with integrity and vision.
- 3) Political support and funding of research in political science education would help the spread of political literacy education, which would help to enhance political mobilization and sensitization at the grassroots in Nigeria.
- 4) Academic staff development in political science education is key to producing highly qualified intellectuals for the realization of the envisaged goals and objectives of political literacy education
- 5) Political leaders and politicians are admonished to be transparent, corrupt controlled in order to deliver good governance. This scenario, if effected, will prompt interest in political literacy education by the Nigerian populace.
- 6) The level of illiteracy in Nigeria should be greatly reduced for effective political mobilization, sensitization and development of citizens. In addition, mother tongues should be actively utilized in the democratic process for meaningful political participation of large segments of the country, cognition and interpenetration of political dynamics even at the global level.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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