

Demographic Shifts, Political Stability and Youth Attitudes in Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

In many developing societies, rapid demographic changes have continued to reshape political processes and influence young people's orientation toward governance. This study examined the connection among demographic shifts, youth political attitudes, and political stability in Osun State, Nigeria. A descriptive correlational research design was adopted. Multistage sampling technique was used to select a sample of 420 youths which ensure adequate representation. A structured questionnaire titled Demographic Shifts, Political Stability and Youth Attitudes Questionnaire (DSPSYAQ) was used to collect data which was validated by experts for face and content adequacy, while its reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.84, indicating high internal consistency. Pearson Product Moment Correlation and simple linear regression were used to test three hypotheses formulated for the study at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings showed a statistically significant moderate positive linkage between demographic shifts such as changes in population structure, urbanisation, and youth population and political stability ($r = 0.462$, $p < 0.01$). Political stability significantly predicted youth attitudes toward governance, explaining 26.4% of the variance ($\beta = 0.514$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, a significant moderate positive relationship was found between demographic shifts and youth attitudes toward governance ($r = 0.389$, $p < 0.01$). The study concludes that demographic dynamics significantly shape political stability and youth engagement in governance. It recommends the integration of demographic considerations into policy planning and the execution of targeted political education programmes to strengthen democratic stability.

Keywords: Demographic Shifts, Youth Political Attitudes, Political Stability, Governance.

Introduction

In recent decades, the political situation in Nigeria has been significantly conditioned by shifting demographic structures, changing governance patterns, and the spirited behaviour of its youthful population. In

particular, Osun State, located in the South-Western geopolitical region, presents a distinctive case for examining how demographic dynamics impact stable political climate and youth perspectives towards governance. With its mix of urban

areas, agrarian communities, and a majorly youth population, Osun State mirrors the broader national population characteristics in which youthful population constitute for more than 60% of the population (Akinyemi & Ojo 2023). This age bracket benefits, often referred to as the “youth bulge,” has major influence for democratic governance, electoral participation, and political stability.

Globally, population dynamics have been found to shape the patterns of political participation, the reliability of management structures, and the effectiveness and efficiency of political systems to citizen yearnings (UNDP, 2021; Adebayo, 2020; Adeyemi & Adebayo 2023). Akinyemi, (2022) posited that in sub-Saharan Africa, the interaction of demographic outburst, development, and raising increased level of education among the youth has intensified expectations for all-inclusive governance and socio-economic advantage. In Nigeria, these yearnings often clash with persistent governance failures, including inequalities, joblessness, primary poverty, and views of corruption, reflecting youth conception towards politics in both productive and uncontrollable ways (Adesoji & Babatunde, (2023).

Osun State’s demographic data has undergone crucial changes in recent years, propelled by rural urban movement, changing fertility rates, and socio-economic mobility structures. These changes have the benefit of changing the composition of the electorate, impact voting behaviour, and reshaping the nature of political competition

in the state. The youth in Osun State, like their fellow across Nigeria, are increasingly exposed to different sources of political information through online apparatus, civic advocacy groups, and social movements (Olawale & Smith, 2023; Akinyemi & Bello 2024; Eze & Arinze, 2023; Ibrahim & Musa, 2023). These exposures play a critical role in impacting their political attitude, degree of confidence in government, and readiness to participate in governance processes.

Political stabilisation, seen as the absence of widespread political crises, efficient and effective functioning of government apparatus, and progression of participatory governance, is deeply blended with the comprehension and participation of the youth (Eze & Okafor, 2024; Ogunyemi & Lawal, 2023). In Osun State, the participation of youthful population in political discourse, poll, and public life can serve as both a reinforcing force and a prospective driver of political conflict, depending on how holistic and effective administrative apparatus are to their needs.

Recent election periods in Osun State have indicated mixed patterns of youth participation. On the standby, there are signs of raising enthusiasm in political discourse, propelled by digital apparatus and social movements. On the flip side, there is consistent lack of interest in the political process, lack of trust in office bearers, and a grasp of politics as a corrupt or aristocratic enclave. These point of view are influenced not only by the political landscape but also larger socio-economic realities such as

destitution, joblessness, educational achievement, and cultural ideals linked to governance (Adeowu, 2025; Bello & Yusuf, 2022; Akinola & Adebawale, 2022)

Despite the symbiotic relationship among these constructs, empirical studies emphasising on Osun State remain scarce. Prior studies on the relationship between demographic patterns, stable political situation, and youth political attitudes have mainly focused on national situation, often failed to spot state-level particularity (Olawale & Adegbite, 2023; Omodia, & Aliu, 2023; Oloruntoba, 2022; Okunade, 2022). This breach hinders a refinement perception of how Osun State's distinct socio-political realities such as its urban-rural contrast, historical political blending, and cultural values dictate the views and behaviours of its youthful population. Furthermore, while there is growing concern about the role of youth in sustaining or destabilising democratic governance, empirical evidence that integrates demographic trends with political attitudes within Osun State is limited. In the view of Adeowu and Adeyemi, (2025) without a clear understanding of these dynamics, policies and interventions aimed at promoting youth political inclusion and sustaining democratic stability risk being ineffective or misaligned. Therefore, a descriptive investigation into how demographic changes intersect with political stability to influence youth attitudes in Osun State is for advancing knowledge and informing practical governance strategies.

Objectives of the study

This study was guided by the following objectives,

- i. Examined the influence of demographic shifts on political stability in Osun State;
- ii. Examined the relationship between demographic changes and youth political attitudes in Osun State and,
- iii. Investigated the attitudes of youth towards governance and political participation in Osun.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were raised for the study;

- H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between demographic shifts and political stability in Osun State,
- H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between demographic change and youth attitudes toward governance in Osun State.
- H₀₃: Political stability does not predict youth attitudes toward governance in Osun State

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive correlational survey design. The choice of a correlational survey design was informed by its suitability for collecting quantitative data that describe existing conditions and determine the nature and strength of relationships among variables without manipulation.

The population of the study comprised all youths aged between 18 and 35 years

residing in Osun State who are legally eligible to participate in political processes. According to the National Population Commission (NPC, 2022) population projections, Osun State has an estimated population of approximately 4.7 million people. Given that youths constitute about 35% of the population, the estimated youth population for this study was approximately 1,645,000. This population estimate provided a realistic and credible basis for sampling, ensuring that the study captures a broad representation of politically active individuals.

A sample size of 420 respondents was selected for the study. The selection was considered adequate for a correlational study of this nature, as it enhances statistical power and generalisability of findings. A multistage

sampling technique was employed in a systematic and chronological manner to ensure representativeness across the state. In the first stage, six Local Government Areas (LGAs) were selected from the three senatorial districts using simple random sampling to ensure equal representation. In the second stage, two wards were randomly selected from each chosen LGA to capture grassroots diversity. In the final stage, purposive sampling was used to select respondents within each ward based on clearly defined inclusion criteria such as age (18–35 years), residency, and voting eligibility. This combination of probability and non-probability techniques ensured both representativeness and relevance of the selected participants.

Table 1: Summary of Sampling Procedure

Stage	Unit of selection	Number Selected	Total
1.	Senatorial Districts	3	3
2.	Local Government Areas	2 per District	6
3.	Wards	2 per LGA	12
4.	Respondents	35 per ward	420

The instrument used for data collection was a self-developed structured questionnaire titled Demographic Shifts, Political Stability and Youth Attitudes Questionnaire (DSPSYAQ), developed after extensive review of relevant literature. The questionnaire consisted of four sections: Section A captured respondents' demographic information; Section B measured political stability; Section C assessed youth attitudes toward governance; and Section D examined perceptions of demographic shifts. All items were structured on a four-point Likert scale

ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree, which was considered appropriate for eliciting clear and decisive responses.

The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by three experts in Political Science and Social Studies Education to ensure that the items adequately represented the constructs under investigation. A pilot study was conducted among 30 youths in a neighbouring state to establish the reliability of the instrument. The test–retest method was employed, and the reliability index was determined using the Pearson Product

Moment Correlation (r), which is appropriate for measuring the stability of an instrument over time. In addition, Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument, as it is suitable for Likert-scale items and measures the degree to which items in a scale are interrelated. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.84, indicating a high level of consistency and reliability.

Data collection was carried out with the assistance of trained research assistants who administered the questionnaire to the respondents. Respondents were adequately informed about the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality to encourage honest and independent responses.

Results

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between demographic shifts and political stability in Osun State.

Table 2 Presents the Pearson Correlation results between Demographic Shifts and Political Stability.

Variable	Mean	SD	r	p-value
Demographic Shifts	3.42	0.84		
Political Stability	3.56	0.79	0.462	0.000

Note: $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed)

The results in Table 1 reveal a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between demographic shifts and political stability ($r = 0.462$, $p < 0.01$). This implies that as demographic shifts occur

The data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarise the data. Inferential statistics, specifically Pearson Product Moment Correlation and simple linear regression, were employed to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Pearson correlation was used to determine the strength and direction of relationships among variables, while regression analysis was used to assess the predictive influence of independent variables on dependent variables. These statistical techniques are appropriate for correlational studies seeking to establish both association and predictive relationships among variables.

(changes in population structure, urbanisation, and youth proportions), there is a corresponding change in the political stability of Osun State hence the hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant influence of political stability on youth attitudes toward governance in Osun State.

Table 3: Regression Analysis of Political Stability Predicting Youth Attitudes toward Governance (n = 420)

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p-value
Constant	1.872	0.221	—	8.47	0.000
Political Stability	0.538	0.061	0.514	8.82	0.000

Model Summary: $R = 0.514$; $R^2 = 0.264$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.262$; $F(1, 418) = 77.79$, $p < 0.001$

The regression results indicate that political stability significantly predicts youth attitudes toward governance ($\beta = 0.514$, $p < 0.001$). Political stability accounts for 26.4% of the variance in

youth attitudes toward governance. This suggests that increased political stability is associated with more positive youth perceptions of governance. Therefore, hypothesis two is rejected.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between demographic shifts and youth attitudes toward governance in Osun State.

Table 4: Relationship between Demographic Shifts and Youth Attitudes toward Governance (n = 420)

Variable	Mean	SD	r	p-value
Demographic Shifts	3.42	0.84		
Youth Attitudes	3.61	0.77	0.389	0.000

Note: $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed)

The results in Table 3 show a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between demographic shifts and youth attitudes toward governance ($r = 0.389$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that demographic changes such as a growing youth population and migration patterns are linked with shifts in young people's political attitudes the hypothesis is hereby rejected..

Discussion of Findings

The finding from hypothesis one of this study indicated that significant differences in youth political behaviour in Osun State could be attributed to demographic variables such as age, gender, education attainment, and urban-rural divide. The impact of these

findings for political stabilisation in Osun State are immense. While youthful population remain a formally aware group, their anger with established political structures could lead to apathy or acceptance of unrestrained forms of protest if deep-rooted changes are not undertaken. This align with the work of Akinyemi (2024), who posited that unaddressed youth political discontent can magnified into larger political unrest, particularly in states where government does not provide a competent response to citizens' concerns. The finding of this study, which revealed a significant intersection between population dynamics and political stability, resonates with Okorie, Eze, and Balogun, (2021) who posited that

the growing army of marginalised youth in Nigeria has become a major variable stoke up political violence, social unrest, and political uncertainty. The result further corroborate with the work of Ajayi (2022) who found that population pressures in the form of rising population have a direct relationship with the incidence of political uncertainty across West African states. This finding aligns with the evidence from the current study, further demonstrating that demographic shifts cannot be divorced from the quality of political order. Again, the present finding also agrees with Okoye and Iwaru (2023) who posited that structural-demographic theory, population growth, youth bulges, and elite competition are crucial drivers of political instability in both historical and contemporary societies.

However, in contrast to this finding, Akinyemi and Ojo (2023) observed that Nigeria's youthful population, if adequately harnessed through education, entrepreneurship, and inclusive governance, can become a source of political stability rather than instability. This aligns with the concept of the demographic dividend, which suggests that favourable age structures, coupled with appropriate policies, can foster development and enhance stability. The present study, by establishing a major connection between demographic shifts and political stability, support the argument that population dynamics represent both a risk and an opportunity depending on government response.

Finding from hypothesis two reveals that there is a significant relationship between political stability and youth attitudes towards governance. This finding agree with the finding of Okolie (2021) who noted that the political attitudes of Nigerian youths are necessary to either preserving peace or fuelling instability, as disenchanting youths are often easily mobilised for political violence. In line with this position, the current study confirms that negative youth attitudes resulting in apathy, distrust, or hostility towards government compromise stability, while positive orientations promote peaceful coexistence and democratic stabilisation. The finding also agree with the observation of Adebani and Obadare (2020) who posited that the youthful population, being the most politically responsive and socially energetic group, dictates the governance narrative through their understanding and attitudes. They further observed that when young people develop trust in governance, it translates into active civic participation, which in turn reinforces political stability. The result of this study aligns with their view by confirming statistically that youths' attitudes remain a significant determinant of stable political processes. Again, the finding agreed with Akinyemi (2022) who posited that the governance challenges facing Nigeria are deeply tied to the attitudes of young people who constitute the majority of the population. It needs to be stress that poor governance breeds cynicism among youths, which may manifest in protest movements and political unrest. This reinforces the present finding

that youth attitudes are not passive but are directly related to the extent of political stability in the country.

Another finding of this study reveals that there is a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between demographic shifts and youth attitudes towards governance. This suggests that demographic dynamics in Nigeria such as the youth bulge, urbanisation, rising literacy levels, and population expansion moderately shape the way young people perceive, engage with, and respond to governance. In practical terms, demographic changes do not wholly determine youths' political attitudes but exert a significant influence on how they interpret governance processes, trust in institutions, and participate in political life. This result is consistent with the finding of Okolie (2022) who notes that Nigeria's growing youth population, if not adequately integrated into governance, will produce restiveness and unpleasant attitudes towards political institutions. The present study agrees with his view by indicating that population shifts, especially the growing population, are significantly related to the political orientations of young people. Along the same lines, the present study is consistent with the finding of Adebayo & Ibrahim (2021) who posited that the rise in youth education and urban movement has reshaped young people's presumption of governance. Similarly, the finding corroborates with the work of Eze and Nwankwo (2020) who observed that demographic transformations, especially an expanding educated youth base, are closely

associated with increasing civic consciousness and political activism in Nigeria. In recent times, Eze & Okafor (2024) found that population realities such as destitution, joblessness, migration, and the centralisation of young folks in urban centres are key determinants of youths' inclination towards governance. The implication of this is that negative demographic burden, if unmanaged, translates into discontent and apathy, while positive ones can reinforce constructive participation. The present finding strengthens this line of reasoning, showing that demographic change has a moderate but major impact on influencing either positive or negative attitudes among youths.

Conclusion

This study showed that demographic shifts specifically changes in population composition, movement patterns, and youth population growth are significantly connected with political stability in Osun State, with significant implications for youth attitudes toward governance. The findings suggest that stable political landscapes promote youths' confidence in government, civic participation, and commitment to democratic ideals, whereas instability tends to enhance apathy and disengagement. It was further observed that the impact of demographic structure operates alongside variables such as governance quality and civic education in determining youth political orientations. The study therefore concludes that population shifts and political stability are mutually complementary factors

that shape youth political behaviour. Accordingly, policymakers must integrate demographic considerations into governance structures to strengthen democratic sustainability.

Recommendations

Based on the established statistically relevant relationships among demographic shifts, political stability, and youth attitudes toward governance in Osun State, this study suggests that government and interested parties formulate data-driven youth involvement policies that show the state's population realities, especially the growing youth population. Given that political stability markedly predicts youth attitudes, efforts should be channeled at strengthening institutional credibility through transparent electoral systems and consistent policy execution to sustain positive youth viewpoints of governance.

Furthermore, in response to the moderate positive relationship between demographic changes and youth attitudes, structured political education programmes should be

deliberately planned at heavily populated and rapidly accelerated development where demographic pressures are most evident. Such interference should emphasise civic competence, reflective engagement, and active involvement rather than ordinary awareness.

In addition, considering that demographic structure alone do not fully account for differences in youth attitudes, policymakers should incorporate complementary factors such as employment opportunities and all-inclusive governance systems that directly engage youths in decision-making processes. This will help translate demographic advantages into meaningful political participation.

Finally, given the strong impact of political stability on youth orientation, online platforms widely used by young people should be harnessed to circulate credible political news and counter misinformation, thereby strengthening trust and enhancing sustained democratic engagement.

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