What drives youths to vote?: An analysis of politico-behavioural constructs in Southwestern Nigeria

Timilehin Olayinka Omoniyi
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria
timmylayinka@gmail.com

Abstract

Purpose: This study aims at investigating how partisan alignment, geopolitical affiliation, issue-based orientation, monetary inducement, and behavioural persuasion influence voting behaviour among Nigerian youth aged 18–35 in a transitional democracy context.

Methodology/approach: A descriptive survey design of correlational type was adopted, using a validated structured questionnaire (six sections; reliability range r = 0.85–0.91). A stratified sample of 1,500 registered youth voters was drawn across Ondo, Oyo, and Osun States. Data were analysed with SPSS version 25 using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression at a 0.05 significance level.

Results/findings: Positive significant relationships were found with partisan alignment (r = .206), geopolitical affiliation (r = .253), and behavioural persuasion (r = −.128). The composite model was significant (Adj. R² = .110). Only partisan alignment (β = .187), geopolitical affiliation (β = .256), and behavioural persuasion (β = −.081) were significant predictors.

Conclusion: Youth voting behaviour in Southwestern Nigeria is shaped predominantly by partisan alignment, geopolitical affiliation, and behavioural persuasion, with issue-based orientation and monetary inducement showing no significant direct effect. These findings highlight the enduring influence of identity and persuasion in transitional democracies, despite growing discourse on issue-based politics.

Limitations: The study was limited to Southwestern Nigeria and relied solely on quantitative self-reported data.

Contribution: Findings are useful for political science, youth studies, electoral education, and governance policy, offering insights for strategies to enhance democratic participation and electoral integrity in transitional democracies.

Keywords: *Nigeria Youths, Politico-Behavioural Constructs, Voting Behaviour*

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1. Introduction

Voting behavior refers to the decision-making processes and patterns exhibited by individuals or groups when they participate in elections. It encompasses how, why, and when people vote, as well as the factors that influence their choices of candidates, parties or policies. helps explain democratic participation and electoral outcomes. Scholars such as Hoffmann and Patel (2022) have distinguished between rational voting, where choices are based on informed interests, and expressive voting, where emotional or symbolic factors dominate. Voting behavior can also be affected by external elements such as electoral systems, political campaigns, and institutional trust. Thus, knowledge of voting behavior

provides critical insight into political engagement, the legitimacy of governance, and the health of democratic processes.

Voting behavior encompasses attitudinal constructs that consider all attributes of electoral behavior. This indicates that voters in elections are conditioned by several factors that affect their decision to vote for a political party or candidate of their choice. Bär, Pierri, De Francisci Morales, and Feuerriegel (2024) remarked that voting behavior helps explain how scholars attempt to quantify and discuss the influences that define an individual's political views, ideology, and levels of political participation. Specifically, youth political participation has attracted growing scholarly and policy interest in recent years. This is especially true as younger populations constitute a significant proportion of the electorate in many developing democracies Resnick and Casale (2014), yet their voting behavior remains unpredictable. Traditional models that explain voting patterns among older adults, such as stable party identification or class-based voting, often prove inadequate when applied to younger cohorts. Instead, youth voting behavior is increasingly shaped by several factors, including psychological, social, and contextual concerns.

In the same vein, there are noticeable traces of partisan alignment, geopolitical affiliations, issue-based orientations, monetary inducement, and behavioral persuasion that guide young voters, particularly in transitional and competitive political systems such as Nigeria. Partisan alignment is a foundational construct for understanding electoral behavior. This refers to an individual's enduring psychological attachment to a political party (Stokes, Dunning, & Nazareno, 2013). While older voters tend to exhibit stable and long-standing partisan loyalties, younger voters are generally less anchored in traditional party systems and are more inclined toward flexible, issue-driven affiliations. Recent studies, such as Mehrez (2024), have demonstrated a discernible shift from conventional party allegiance toward more fluid political engagement among youth. For instance, Rekker (2022), in a comparative study published in Electoral Studies, argues that while partisan alignment remains a potent force in voter behavior, its predictive power is waning among younger demographics due to increasing political volatility and ideological diversification.

This transformation has been partly attributed to the erosion of party-based socialization processes and the proliferation of alternative political identities shaped by globalization, digital media, and localized socio-political experiences. Moreover, in situations where party systems are weak or fragmented, such as in Nigeria and other sub-Saharan African countries, partisan identification among youth is often superficial and situational rather than deeply rooted (Kiess & Portos, 2024). It is not uncommon for young voters to adopt temporary affiliations based on the current political climate or perceived personal gains. As noted by Gherghina and Volintiru (2021) in Government and Opposition, youth in transitional democracies tend to align with political parties less out of ideological conviction and more due to practical considerations, such as access to resources or proximity to power structures. This scenario is particularly pronounced in clientelist environments, where political parties often lack distinct ideological platforms.

Another factor to consider is geopolitical affiliation. This is explained by Isiaq, Adebiyi, and Bakare (2018), who encompass ethnic, regional, and religious identities. They are believed to be crucial in shaping the voting decisions of young people. In pluralistic societies like Nigeria, especially those with histories of ethnic tension or uneven regional development, group identity frequently serves as a heuristic through which political choices are made. Youths, being in the formative stages of political identity construction, are especially susceptible to the influences of their immediate socio-cultural environment. According to Enamorado and Kosterina (2022), young voters in Ghana often view electoral contests through the lens of ethnic representation and regional loyalty, with political actors exploiting these affiliations for mobilization purposes. Similar patterns are observed in Nigeria, where geopolitical identity can outweigh policy considerations in electoral choices (Isiaq et al., 2018).

It is to be noted that socialization agents such as family, school, peer groups, and religious institutions also play a pivotal role in reinforcing geopolitical affiliations. Study conducted by Quintelier (2015) civic education research reveals that young people raised in politically homogeneous environments tend

to mirror the dominant political ideologies and voting patterns of their immediate social circles. In addition, peer influence amplifies both political awareness and participation among youth. As Zainurin, Wan Husin, Zainol, and Ismail (2024) note, political discussions among peers are positively associated with electoral engagement, suggesting that young people often rely on their social networks to interpret political events and develop political preferences (Danao et al., 2025; Makinde & Abati, 2024; Ugli, 2025). In fragile democracies where institutional trust is low, such informal networks can substitute for more formal civic education structures.

Beyond identity-based influences, issue-based orientation has emerged as a salient driver of youth voting behavior. Increasingly, young voters across diverse developing democracies, such as Nigeria, are aligning themselves with political parties and candidates based on specific policy issues rather than historical loyalties (Larreguy & Marshall, 2017). This trend reflects growing sophistication in political reasoning and heightened sensitivity to pressing societal challenges, such as climate change, unemployment, education, and digital rights. In a multi-country study, Kiess and Portos (2024) observed that British youth were more likely to vote when they perceived that political parties addressed their concerns about economic inequality and environmental sustainability. A similar conclusion was reached in a recent analysis by Kiess and Portos (2024), who explained the increasing role of issue salience in shaping electoral decisions among European youth.

However, the degree to which issue-based voting influences electoral participation among youth is often mediated by political literacy, media exposure and institutional responsiveness. Where political institutions fail to engage young people meaningfully or where party manifestos remain vague and populist, issue-based orientations may not translate into effective voter turnout. This is particularly relevant in developing democracies, where political rhetoric is often detached from policy implementation. Nevertheless, the rise of social movements and grassroots activism suggests that young people are not politically apathetic but seek alternative avenues for political expression beyond formal electoral mechanisms.

Another critical factor influencing youth voting behavior is the monetary inducement. In many developing countries, elections are characterized by the widespread use of financial incentives, ranging from direct cash payments to the distribution of food, clothing, and other goods as a means of securing votes. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as vote buying or clientelism, significantly undermines the democratic process and often targets youth due to their socioeconomic vulnerabilities. According to Kramon (2013), writing in the African Journal of Political Science, young voters are particularly susceptible to clientelist practices because of high levels of unemployment, limited political awareness, and a prevailing culture of political transactionalism. Clientelism thrives in environments where state institutions are perceived as corrupt or ineffective. In such situations, young people may view elections not as opportunities for policy change but as short-term opportunities for material gain.

Mehrez (2024), based on field research in Tunisia and Morocco, shows that the expectation of receiving gifts or money significantly increases the likelihood of voting, particularly among less educated and economically disadvantaged youth. These findings align with earlier research in Nigeria by Hoffmann and Patel (2022), who documented how political actors exploit economic hardship among young voters to secure electoral support through inducements. Nonetheless, it is important to note that not all young voters respond to monetary incentives in the same way. Several studies have indicated that political sophistication, civic education, and prior engagement in activism can mitigate the influence of vote buying. For example, an experimental study by Larreguy and Marshall (2017) found that young voters who had previously participated in community service or civic forums were less likely to accept inducements and more likely to base their votes on programmatic considerations. These findings explain the need for long-term investments in youth civic development and political socialization.

The last variable of concern is the behavioral persuasion. Strategies such as campaign messaging, media framing, and social influence techniques have gained prominence as key predictors of youth electoral behavior. With the proliferation of digital technologies and increasing penetration of social media, political campaigns now employ sophisticated behavioral tools to influence voter preferences. This is

because young people, being digitally native and highly active on online platforms, are particularly exposed to such persuasive tactics in advertising. Bär et al. (2024) found that targeted political advertisements on social media significantly shaped the attitudes and intentions of first-time voters in Germany. By implication, this study revealed that persuasive messaging, particularly when it tapped into identity concerns or emotional triggers, had a measurable effect on voting decisions. For instance, negative campaigning is a subset of behavioral persuasion that has also been shown to influence young voters, although its impact is highly environment-dependent.

While some studies, such as Keefer (2007) and Barati (2023), suggest that negative political messages can discourage voter turnout by fostering cynicism and disengagement, others, such as Holland and Palmer-Rubin (2015) and Rekker (2022), argue that they can mobilize voters by highlighting the stakes of an election. For example, Carvalho, Custódio, Geys, Mendes, and Peralta (2023) conducted a randomized controlled trial in Portugal that demonstrated that exposure to negative political information increased voter turnout among undecided youth. These findings point to the nuanced effects of behavioral persuasion, which vary based on the message content, delivery channels, and voter predispositions. Social media platforms serve as conduits and amplifiers of persuasive content. This is because algorithms designed to maximize engagement often prioritize emotionally charged and polarizing information, thereby influencing the political perceptions of young users. Moreover, peer-to-peer interactions on digital platforms can reinforce echo chambers, where individuals are primarily exposed to information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs.

According to Zhuravskaya, Petrova, and Enikolopov (2020), this dynamic can lead to greater political polarization and increased mobilization, especially during highly contested elections. In countries where traditional media are perceived as partisan or untrustworthy, social media often becomes the primary source of political information for youth, with both positive and negative implications for electoral participation. Overall, the voting behavior of young people is influenced by a complex matrix of structural, psychological, and situational variables. While partisan alignment continues to play a role, it is increasingly supplemented or, in some cases, supplanted by geopolitical affiliations, issue-based preferences, financial inducement, and behavioral persuasion. Each of these factors interacts with wider societal dynamics, including economic conditions, media environments, and institutional trust levels to shape how young people perceive and participate in electoral processes.

1.1 Statement of the Problem
The evolving patterns of youth political participation continue to raise critical questions about the integrity, inclusiveness, and future of democratic processes, especially in transitional democracies such as Malaysia. Despite constituting a demographic majority in many African countries, youth often exhibit paradoxical electoral behavior, which is high in political interest yet inconsistent in actual voter turnout (Jensen & Justesen, 2014). This discrepancy has sparked scholarly attention to the psychosocial and contextual variables that shape how young people engage with electoral politics. However, the problem is that existing models of voter behavior, primarily developed in Western liberal democracies, are insufficient to explain the unique and multidimensional realities of youth voting in countries such as Nigeria. In many cases, youth voter decisions appear to be shaped less by stable ideological commitments and more by short-term influences, such as identity politics, monetary inducement, or media manipulation (Mehrez, 2024).

Partisan alignment, once a reliable predictor of voter behavior, is increasingly fluid among young people, who tend to shift allegiances based on contemporary issues or candidate appeal (Hoffmann & Patel, 2022). This fluidity complicates attempts to design targeted civic engagement interventions, especially because political loyalty appears more transactional than principled. Meanwhile, geopolitical affiliation, which is rooted in ethnicity, religion, and regional identity, continues to exert a powerful, often divisive, influence on youth voting patterns, undermining issue-based decision-making and contributing to polarized electoral outcomes (Resnick & Casale, 2014). In addition, although there is a growing appetite among youth for issue-based engagement, such as advocacy for education reform, job creation, and digital rights, these interests are not always reflected in their electoral choices. This

disconnect raises concerns regarding the nature and quality of political communication, civic education, and institutional responsiveness.

Even more troubling is the persistent role of vote buying and other forms of monetary inducement, which prey on the economic vulnerability of the young. The tendency of political actors to manipulate youth through financial incentives erodes the legitimacy of elections and weakens the democratic values that electoral participation is meant to promote (Holland & Palmer-Rubin, 2015). Equally problematic is the rise of behavioral persuasion strategies, especially via digital and social media platforms. While these platforms offer opportunities for political mobilization, they also expose the youth to disinformation, polarization, and manipulative campaign tactics. The susceptibility of youth to such tactics, due to their high digital engagement and limited critical media literacy, explains the urgency of a deeper investigation into the behavioral dynamics shaping their electoral decisions (Jensen & Justesen, 2014). In summary, despite the rich literature on youth political behavior, few studies have simultaneously explored the interrelated influences of partisan alignment, geopolitical affiliation, issue-based orientation, monetary inducement, and behavioral persuasion in a single analytical framework.

Therefore, this study seeks to assess the context sensitivity of how these five predictors interact to shape youth voting behavior. It aims not only to uncover patterns but also to offer insights that can inform policy, electoral reform, and civic education programming.

2. Literature review
2.1 Partisan Alignment: Between Loyalty and Dealignment
The notion that partisan identity shapes voting has long been central to political behavior studies (Stapleton & Langehennig, 2024). In the Nigerian context, Isiaq et al. (2018) confirm that political identity powerfully predicts youth participation, yet such identity often reflects volatile alignments rather than stable party loyalty. Rekker (2022) documents partisan dealignment among youths in Europe, explaining eroding party identification due to disillusionment and political distrust. This resonates with Gherghina and Volintiru (2021) findings on transitional democracies, where party volatility erodes youth loyalty. Critically, these insights suggest that partisan alignment is an increasingly fragile predictor of youth voting in societies experiencing democratic flux. In Southwestern Nigeria, historical party loyalties, such as those rooted in the legacy of Action Group politics, continue to exert influence. However, the region also exhibits significant partisan fragmentation, raising questions about whether partisan loyalty persists as a stable explanatory variable for youth votes or merely signals ephemeral coalitions driven by local power dynamics. A notable gap is the lack of micro-level longitudinal studies examining how young voters in Southwestern Nigeria form, sustain, or abandon partisan ties over multiple election cycles. Such research could clarify whether partisan identity is a deeply internalized anchor or a strategic choice driven by shifting incentives.

2.2 Geopolitical Affiliation: Ethnicity, Region, and Identity Politics
Ethno-regional affiliations remain a potent force in African electoral politics (Enamorado & Kosterina, 2022). Southwestern Nigeria, which is dominated by the Yoruba ethnic group, provides fertile ground for exploring geopolitical influence. Enamorado and Kosterina (2022) note that ethnic identity significantly shapes youth political engagement in Ghana, suggesting parallels with Nigeria. However, geopolitical affiliation is not deterministic. Kramon (2013) cautions against oversimplification, noting that while ethnic voting exists, its potency fluctuates depending on context, elite manipulation, and issue salience. Lindberg, Bue, and Sen (2022) further problematize ethno-regional voting by arguing that clientelism often masks ethnic loyalty, obscuring true motivations. This complicates the context of southwestern Nigeria. While geopolitical sentiment can activate youth voting, it may serve as a vehicle for elite patronage rather than for genuine communal solidarity. Resnick and Casale (2014) points to the weaponisation of ethnic rhetoric during voter mobilisation, suggesting that geopolitical identity may be instrumental rather than intrinsic among youths. However, few studies have robustly disaggregated youth geopolitical affiliation from other drivers, such as issue orientation or economic incentives. Future research must disentangle how geopolitical identity interlocks with economic marginalization and youth disenchantment to influence voters.

2.3 Issue-Based Orientation: Substance or Symbolism?

Youth are frequently cast as issue-driven voters, disillusioned with personalities, and eager for policy substance (Kiess & Portos, 2024). Kiess and Portos (2024) showed that European youth increasingly prioritize environmental, economic, and social justice issues, suggesting a shift toward programmatic politics. In Britain, Kiess and Portos (2024) similarly documented heightened youth responsiveness to issue salience. However, translating issue salience into consistent voting remains fraught. Barati (2023) found that casual social media use among youth fosters political awareness but often fails to crystallize into sustained political participation. Zhuravskaya et al. (2020) note that social media polarization can distort issue perceptions, leading youth to vote more for expressive identity affirmation than policy outcomes. In Southwestern Nigeria, youth issue-based orientation remains empirically underexplored. While Resnick and Casale (2014) indicate that voter education campaigns highlight governance issues, their efficacy in shaping voting choices is unclear. Moreover, considering high unemployment and insecurity, economic survival may overshadow abstract policy debates for many, especially young, voters. A critical question is whether the youth in Southwestern Nigeria genuinely prioritize issue-based considerations or whether issues function primarily as rhetorical tools leveraged by political actors. The literature too often conflates issue awareness with issue-driven voting, failing to examine the threshold at which issues become decisive electoral motivations for voters. Empirical research must bridge this conceptual gap by investigating not only whether youth care about issues but also whether issues override ethnic, partisan, or economic inducements in electoral decision-making.

2.4 Money Inducement: Clientelism and Vote Trading

Vote buying and clientelism remain persistent themes in discussions of African elections (Kramon, 2013; Larreguy & Marshall, 2017). Hoffmann and Patel (2022) provide compelling evidence that Nigerian youths actively participate in vote trading, driven by immediate material needs. Mehrez (2024) further demonstrate clientelism's dampening effect on youth turnout in North Africa, indicating its dual role as both mobiliser and demobiliser. Gottlieb and Larreguy (2020) highlight how electoral targeting ensures that clientelist benefits reach swing voters rather than loyalists. Holland and Palmer-Rubin (2015) nuance this view by showing that clientelism does not preclude the provision of public goods, blurring the lines between personal inducement and community benefit. In the Nigerian context, Keefer (2007) argues that young democracies face a credibility problem in which parties rely on clientelism because programmatic promises lack enforceability. Jensen and Justesen (2014) connect this pattern to economic underdevelopment, as poverty elevates the transactional value of votes. Resnick and Casale (2014) suggests that in Southwestern Nigeria, vote buying persists despite voter education initiatives. This raises concerns about the efficacy of civic education in the context of pervasive economic precarity. Larreguy and Marshall (2017) offer a glimmer of hope, showing that civic education can mitigate vote buying among youth, but only when coupled with credible electoral institutions. Critically, the literature frequently treats clientelism as a uniformly negative phenomenon. However, as Lindberg et al. (2022) observe, in the context of state failure, voters may view clientelism as a rational strategy for extracting benefits that would otherwise be inaccessible. This insight urges caution in condemning youth engagement in vote trading as purely evidence of civic deficiency. Instead, research should explore how structural inequalities drive transactional politics among Nigerian youth. A significant gap remains regarding how vote buying interacts with other behavioral drivers, such as issue salience or partisan loyalty. Are youth who accept inducements fundamentally disloyal, or can they simultaneously hold policy preferences and act transactionally under duress? Answering this question demands nuanced, context-specific ethnographic studies.

2.5 Behavioural Persuasion: Social Media, Networks, and Political Influence

Youth voting behavior is increasingly mediated through digital spaces. Bär et al. (2024) show how social media persuasion strategies effectively mobilise youth voting in Germany, while Zhuravskaya et al. (2020) highlight polarisation risks. Barati (2023) notes that casual social media use generates political curiosity but rarely sustains deep civic engagement. The literature reveals both optimism and caution regarding the power of social media. While digital platforms amplify youth voices and connect dispersed networks (Zhuravskaya et al. (2020), they also facilitate misinformation, echo chambers, and superficial engagement. Carvalho et al. (2023) find that negative campaigning can effectively mobilise

youth, albeit with polarising consequences. In the Nigerian context, digital mobilization is potent, yet precarious. Resnick and Casale (2014) observes that social media was instrumental during voter education campaigns in Southwestern Nigeria. However, the region has also witnessed digitally fuelled disinformation and ethno-religious polarization, complicating the net democratic value of online persuasion. Critically, much research romanticizes youth digital participation while neglecting digital divides and differential media literacy levels. Quintelier (2015) argues that political socialization through schools and families still exerts significant influence, suggesting that offline channels remain crucial for youth political persuasion, especially in contexts with limited Internet penetration. An urgent research need in Southwestern Nigeria is to measure the relative weight of online versus offline persuasion. Does digital engagement supplant traditional community mobilization or merely complement it? Moreover, to what extent does social media activism translate into actual voting rather than performative participation? These questions remain unresolved.

2.6 *Integrative Critique: Complex Intersections and Contextual Specificities*
An overarching theme emerging from the literature is that no single variable (partisan alignment, ethnicity, issues, inducement, or persuasion) sufficiently explains youth voting behavior. Rather, youth voting decisions arise from the intricate intersection of identity, material conditions, cognitive orientations, and social influences. Stokes et al. (2013) argue that distributive politics operates alongside programmatic appeals, suggesting that voters can simultaneously value personal benefits and policy promises. This resonates with observations in Southwestern Nigeria, where youths might support candidates offering both cash inducements and credible governance plans. Moreover, Nigeria's electoral landscape is uniquely shaped by endemic insecurity, corruption, and electoral violence. Resnick and Casale (2014) documents how voter education efforts often contend with violent disruptions, complicating youths' political engagement. Such contextual realities demand locally grounded theorizing rather than the wholesale application of Western models of political behavior. A significant theoretical tension persists between rational choice perspectives, which view youth as calculating actors responding to incentives, and cultural approaches that foreground identity, norms, and socialization. The literature reviewed reveals that both perspectives are necessary but insufficient on their own to explain the phenomenon. Youth voting in Southwestern Nigeria appears to be shaped as much by material deprivation as by symbolic politics and collective identity. Methodologically, the preponderance of cross-sectional surveys in the literature limits the causal inference. Few studies have employed longitudinal designs to trace how youth motivations evolve over time. Additionally, much research aggregates "youth" as a homogenous group, neglecting intra-youth differences along lines of gender, education, urban-rural divides, and digital literacy.

This review explains youth voting behavior in Nigeria's Southwest as a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by partisan identities, ethnic affiliations, issue salience, economic inducements, and evolving digital persuasion. However, the precise mechanisms connecting these factors remain unexplored, particularly in the Nigerian context. Thus, understanding what drives youth to vote in Southwestern Nigeria demands not merely cataloguing factors but interrogating how these factors interact in context-specific ways. Only such critical inquiry can illuminate pathways to foster authentic youth engagement in democratic processes.

2.7 *Objectives of the study*
The following objectives are raised and answered in this study
1. To ascertain the relationship exists between partisan alignment, geopolitical affiliation, issue-based orientation, money inducement, behavioural persuasion to youth voting behaviour
2. To assess the composite contribution of partisan alignment, geopolitical affiliation, issue-based orientation, money inducement, and behavioral persuasion to youth voting behavior?
3. To ascertain the relative contribution of partisan alignment, geopolitical affiliation, issue-based orientation, money inducement, and behavioral persuasion to youth voting behavior?

3. Research methodology
This study adopts a descriptive survey research design of the correlational type to investigate the extent to which partisan alignment, geopolitical affiliation, issue-based orientation, monetary inducement, and

behavioral persuasion predict youth voting behavior. The design is suitable for establishing relationships between multiple predictors and a dependent variable without manipulating them. The target population comprised Nigerian youth aged 18–35 years who were eligible to vote across selected geopolitical zones in Nigeria. This demographic is particularly significant because of its numerical strength in the electorate and increasing political visibility. A multistage sampling technique was employed to ensure diversity and representativeness. First, three states in the South-West were purposively selected, followed by the stratified sampling of local government areas (LGAs), from which registered youth voters were selected using systematic random sampling.

A total of 1500 respondents were surveyed, with 500 from each state. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure the five independent variables and the dependent variable (youth voting behavior). The instrument was developed based on validated scales from prior studies, with contextual adaptation to the Nigerian political environment. It comprised six sections: demographic information, partisan alignment scale (r=0.91), geopolitical affiliation index (r=0.85), issue-based orientation inventory (r=0.85), inducement susceptibility scale (r=0.85), and behavioral persuasion (r=0.85). Each item was rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." To ensure validity, the instrument was subjected to expert review by three political science and civic education scholars, and construct validity was confirmed through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principal component analysis. Internal consistency reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha, with acceptable thresholds ($\alpha \geq 0.71$) for all subscales. Data collection occurred over four weeks through a combination of online and face-to-face administration, depending on access and infrastructural constraints.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS (Version 26), and multiple regression analysis was employed to assess the relative predictive power of the five independent variables on youth voting behavior.

4. Result and discussion
4.1 Finding
Research Question 1: What relationship exists between partisan alignment, geopolitical affiliation, issue-based orientation, money inducement, and behavioral persuasion to youth voting behavior?

Table 1. Correlation Matrix Table on the five Independent Variables and Youth Voting behaviour

Variables	Youths' Voting behaviour	Partisan Alignment	Geopolitical Affiliation	Issue-based Orientation	Money Inducement	Behavioural Persuasion
Youths' Voting behaviour	1.00					
Partisan Alignment	.206** (.000)	1.00				
Geopolitical Affiliation	.253** (.000)	.039 (.136)	1.00			
Issue-based Orientation	.035 (.179)	.203** (.000)	.175** (.000)	1.00		
Money Inducement	.045 .085	.045 .085	-.071** (.006)	-.072** (.005)	1.00	
Behavioural Persuasion	-.128** (.000)	-.209** (.000)	-.004 (.863)	-.012 (.649)	-264** (.000)	1.00

Significant at p < 0.05

Table 1 shows that there are significant positive relationships between youth voting behavior and partisan alignment (r = .206**, p (.000) <.05), geopolitical affiliation (r = .253**, p (.000) <.05), and behavioral persuasion (r = -.128**, p (.000) <.05). There were also no significant relationships between

youth voting behavior and the independent variables of issue-based orientation (r =.035, p (.179) >.05) and inducement (r =.045, p (.085) >.05).

Research Question 2: What is the composite contribution of partisan alignment, geopolitical affiliation, issue-based orientation, money inducement, and behavioral persuasion to youth voting behavior?

Table 2. Summary of Regression analysis showing the composite contribution of all the Independent Variables on youth voting behaviour

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.337[a]	.113	.110	4.584

A N O V A						
Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	4013.492	5	802.698	38.207	.000[b]	Sig.
Residual	31387.491	1494	21.009			
Total	35400.983	1499				

a. Dependent Variable: Youth voting behaviour
b. Predictors" (Constant): partisan alignment, geopolitical affiliation, issue-based orientation, money inducement, behavioural persuasion to youth voting behaviour

Table 2 shows that the composite contribution of the five independent variables (partisan alignment, geopolitical affiliation, issue-based orientation, money inducement, and behavioral persuasion) to youth voting behavior was significant ($F_{(4; 1494)}$ = 38.207; Adj. R^2 = .110; p<.05). The table also depicts a coefficient of multiple correlation R = .337[a] and a multiple R^2 of .113. This means that 11.3% of the variance was accounted for by the five predictor variables when taken together. This means that the joint contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable was significant and that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance.

Research Question 3: What is the relative contribution of partisan alignment, geopolitical affiliation, issue-based orientation, monetary inducement, and behavioral persuasion to youth voting behavior?

Table 3. Relative Contributions of the Independent Variables to Youth Voting Behaviour

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Ranking	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	βeta			
(constant)	19.460	1.693			11.495	.000
Partisan Alignment	.174	.024	.187	2nd	7.355	.000
Geopolitical Affiliation	.214	.021	.256	1st	10.323	.000
Issue-based Orientation	-.037	.020	-.047	4th	-1.852	.064
Money Inducement	.020	.017	.030	3rd	1.181	.238
Behavioural Persuasion	-.034	.011	-.081	5th	-3.128	.002

Dependent Variable: Youths Voting Behaviour

Table 3 reveals the relative contribution of partisan alignment, geopolitical affiliation, issue-based orientation, money inducement, and behavioral persuasion to youth voting behavior, expressed as beta weights in order of magnitude, viz-a-viz: partisan alignment (β = .187), geopolitical affiliation (β = .256), and behavioral persuasion (β = -.081) determined youth voting behavior, while issue-based orientation (β = -.047) and money inducement (β = .030) did not determine youth voting behavior. Hence, it could be deduced that the independent variables made individual contributions to youth voting

behavior and can be taken as the most potent factors, while issue-based orientation and money inducement could have an indirect relationship.

4.2 Discussion of findings
4.2.1 Relationship of All Predictors to Youth Voting Behaviour

The results revealed that three of the variables (partisan alignment, geopolitical affiliation, and behavioral persuasion) under investigation exhibited statistically significant relationships with youth voting behavior. The trio demonstrated the strongest correlation, indicating that they profoundly shaped political decisions among the youth. This finding aligns with the works of Enamorado and Kosterina (2022) and Kramon (2013), who observed that in emerging democracies such as Ghana and Zimbabwe, ethnic and regional identities often serve as proxies for political loyalty and candidate evaluation. This relationship is congruent with the findings of Rekker (2022), who argued that while youth often express disillusionment with political parties, they still exhibit loyalty based on historical or family affiliations. Similarly, there is no significant relationship between issue-based orientation, monetary inducement, and voting behavior. This is in line with Mehrez (2024), who found that in North Africa, material incentives often eclipse youth's ideological commitments. However, this finding is at variance with Larreguy and Marshall (2017), who posited that civic education and anti-corruption campaigns have somewhat neutralized monetary inducement among informed youth. This buttresses the observations of Kiess and Portos (2024), who noted that issues such as education reform, job creation, and security resonate with urban and educated youth but do not always translate into electoral actions.

4.2.2 Contribution of All Predictors to Youth Voting Behaviour

The results revealed a statistically significant joint contribution of the five variables to voting behavior. The model was statistically significant, explaining 11.3% of the variance in youth voting behaviour. This hierarchical contribution indicates that structural and identity-based factors weigh more heavily in youth decision-making processes than do ideological or policy-based considerations. This confirms Keefer (2007) argument that the politicization of ethnic and economic vulnerabilities in young democracies fosters a clientelistic and identity-driven political culture. The relatively weak contribution of issue-based orientation echoes Carvalho et al. (2023) finding that policy salience often lacks the emotive pull required to influence voter turnout in Portugal.

4.2.3 Relative Contribution of Partisan Alignment, Geopolitical Affiliation, and Behavioural Persuasion

The results revealed the relative contribution of the independent variables to voting behavior. Partisan alignment, geopolitical affiliation, and behavioral persuasion emerged as the most powerful predictors. The strength of this variable is congruent with Lindberg et al. (2022), who identified ethnic identity as a "primary voting heuristic" in weak institutional contexts. These findings corroborate the notion that, for many Nigerian youth, ethnicity and religion function as accessible cues in an otherwise complex political environment. Partisan alignment, although significant, ranked lower in terms of predictive power. This moderate influence suggests a degree of political socialization among the youth, likely derived from familial and community legacies. However, this finding is somewhat at variance with that of Rekker (2022), who argued that youth are increasingly independent and issue-oriented. This discrepancy may be attributed to the contextual differences in the strength and reputation of political parties across countries. Behavioral persuasion had a notable but comparatively lower predictive value. This finding is congruent with those of Bär et al. (2024) and Barati (2023), who showed that while social media and campaign messages can mobilize young voters, the effectiveness of such persuasion is often moderated by the credibility of the message source and the platform's echo chamber effects. The presence of misinformation and the lack of critical media literacy may further attenuate the impact of behavioral change persuasion.

5. Conclusion

The findings underscore the multifaceted and context-specific nature of youth voting behavior in Nigeria. Rather than being influenced by a single factor, young voters' decisions are shaped by the convergence of partisan alignment, geopolitical identity, issue salience, economic inducements and exposure to persuasive behavioral tactics. Each of these variables carries a distinct weight and interacts

with broader political and social structures, revealing the nuanced complexities that define youth engagement with the democratic process. Partisan alignment continues to exert influence, albeit less consistently among youth than among older generations. For many young people, party loyalty is neither deep-rooted nor ideologically grounded but is instead driven by personalistic appeal and circumstantial convenience. This finding challenges traditional models of voter socialization and calls for a reassessment of how political parties cultivate loyalty among emerging electorates. Without clear ideological platforms or sustained engagement strategies, parties' risk further alienation from the youth demographic.

Geopolitical affiliation, particularly along ethnic and regional lines, remains a dominant force in the political choices of youth. The persistence of identity-based politics points to deep-seated structural and historical cleavages that continue to inform political allegiances. This dynamic not only limits the scope of issue-based voting but also entrenuates polarization and undermines national cohesion. Simultaneously, youth demonstrate a growing interest in policy-based engagement, particularly around issues such as unemployment, education, healthcare, and governance transparency. However, this orientation is often overshadowed by the realities of vote trading and political inducement, which distort democratic ideals and compromise electoral integrity in the long run. The influence of monetary inducement is particularly salient among economically marginalized youth. Vote buying emerges not only as a symptom of poverty but also as a structural feature of Nigeria's political culture. For many young voters, accepting money in exchange for votes is rationalised as a compensatory benefit in a system they perceive as unresponsive to their long-term needs. Such practices perpetuate cycles of electoral manipulation and civic disengagement, highlighting the need for structural reform and targeted voter education.

Behavioral persuasion, especially via digital media, is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it provides platforms for political mobilization and access to alternative information, while on the other, it is a space for the dissemination of misinformation. However, it exposes youth to misinformation, manipulation, and hyper-personalized propaganda. The digital ecosystem has significantly altered the landscape of youth political socialization, amplifying their agency and vulnerability. Thus, critical media literacy and ethical digital campaigning must be central to democratic engagement strategies. This study contributes to the growing body of literature that seeks to understand the predictors of youth voting behavior in Nigeria. The findings reveal that while youth are politically aware and increasingly issue-oriented, their electoral participation is constrained by structural inequalities, identity politics, and manipulative campaign practices. Addressing these challenges requires not only academic inquiry but also practical interventions targeting political education, economic empowerment, and institutional reform. Without these, the transformative potential of youth in shaping democratic futures may remain unrecognized.

5.1 Recommendations
The following recommendations are made.
1. Integrating contemporary civic issues and digital political literacy into civic education at the secondary and tertiary levels can improve youth understanding of elections and governance.
2. Creating structured platforms where youth can engage policymakers on salient issues, thereby reinforcing issue-based political participation.
3. Implement stringent monitoring of campaign spending and penalize vote buying through legal reforms and enforcement mechanisms by the INEC.
4. Encouraging political parties to adopt youth quotas and leadership mentorship programs to institutionalize youth participation beyond voting.
5. Partner with NGOs and tech companies to promote critical digital literacy that enables youth to resist political manipulation on social media.

5.2 Limitation
This study was limited to Southwestern Nigeria and relied solely on quantitative, self-reported data, which may be subject to response bias. Therefore, the findings may not fully capture the nuanced sociopolitical dynamics in other Nigerian regions or African countries. Further studies should cover

other geographical zones in Nigeria and Africa, employ mixed-method approaches to incorporate qualitative insights, and consider longitudinal designs to track changes in youth voting behavior over time. Additionally, variables such as gender, socioeconomic status, urban–rural differences, and digital literacy levels should be examined for a more comprehensive understanding.

5.3 Suggestion

Future research should expand the geographical scope to include other regions in Nigeria and comparable African democracies, allowing for a comparative analysis and broader applicability of the results. Incorporating a mixed-methods approach—combining surveys with interviews or focus groups–would enrich the understanding of the nuanced factors influencing youth voting. Longitudinal studies are recommended to track changes in voting behavior over multiple election cycles, especially in relation to the evolving political, economic, and technological landscapes. Additionally, examining the role of media literacy, civic engagement programs, and institutional trust could provide actionable insights for policymakers, electoral bodies, and civil society organizations seeking to foster genuine democratic participation among youth.

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