

Year VI, v.1 2026 | Submission: 05/02/2026 | Accepted: 07/02/2026 | Publication: 09/02/2026

The impact of youth political participation on strengthening democracy in the municipality of Soyo.

The impact of youth political participation on the strengthening of democracy in the municipality of Soyo

Celestino Zacarias Olo - Holds a degree in Pedagogy, Management and School Inspection from the Higher Polytechnic Institute of Soyo and **is pursuing a Master's degree** in Political Science and Public Administration at Agostino Neto University, Angola. Orcid: 0009-0007-1637-3353

Summary

This qualitative study, supported by quantitative data and an exploratory approach, aimed to deepen the understanding of the role of youth in strengthening democracy in the Municipality of Soyo, considering their diversity, challenges, and contributions to political and social development. The research focused on different youth segments: higher education students, young workers, unemployed youth, and community leaders, recognizing that each group brings distinct experiences and perspectives. A semi-structured interview was conducted to identify perceptions, motivations, and barriers to political participation. The results show that students participate in debates and civic training, promoting critical thinking; young workers engage in community associations and mobilizations; unemployed youth seek social inclusion and empowerment; and community leaders act as mediators between the population and local bodies. Despite significant contributions, challenges remain, such as a lack of formal spaces, scarcity of information, time constraints, and low valuation of youth opinions. The study highlights that the active participation of youth is essential to strengthening democracy and ensuring public policies aligned with the needs of the local community.

Keywords: Political Participation, Youth, Democracy.

Abstract

The present study, of a qualitative nature with support from quantitative elements and an exploratory approach, aimed to deepen the understanding of the role of youth in strengthening democracy in the Municipality of Soyo, considering their diversity, challenges, and contributions to political and social development. The research focused on different youth segments: higher education students, young workers, unemployed youth, and community leaders, recognizing that each group brings distinct experiences and perspectives. A semi-structured interview was conducted to identify perceptions, motivations, and barriers to political participation. The results show that students participate in debates and civic education activities, promoting critical thinking; young workers engage in associations and community mobilizations; unemployed youth seek social inclusion and skills development; and community leaders act as mediators between the population and local authorities.

Despite their significant contributions, challenges persist, such as lack of formal participation spaces, limited access to information, time constraints, and low recognition of youth opinions. The study demonstrates that active youth participation is essential to strengthen democracy and ensure public policies that are aligned with the needs of the local community.

Keywords: Political Participation, Youth, Democracy.

1. Introduction

In the current era, youth political participation plays a central role in strengthening, in the vitality and sustainability of democracy, especially at the local level, where political decisions are made. They have a direct impact on the daily lives of citizens. In municipal contexts such as that of Soyo, the Youth represents not only a significant portion of the population, but also a social group.

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with high potential for mobilization, innovation and social transformation.

Thus, understanding how young people engage in political processes is crucial.

This becomes essential for assessing the state of democracy and the degree of civic inclusion that exists in municipality mentioned above.

Youth is characterized by its internal diversity, being influenced by different factors. social, economic, educational, and cultural conditions. In the present approach, this heterogeneity It manifests itself in segments such as higher education students, young workers, and young people. The unemployed and young community leaders. Each of these groups presents specific forms. Regarding the relationship with politics, differing perceptions about the functioning of democratic institutions. and their own motivations for participating in or withdrawing from political processes. Thus, the analysis Youth political participation requires an approach that recognizes this plurality of experiences. and contexts.

According to Carvalho (2017), Angolan youth face structural challenges. significant factors, among which youth unemployment and socioeconomic inequalities stand out. The limited integration of young people into formal political decision-making spaces. These factors contribute to the weakening of effective political participation and to the emergence of feelings of disbelief or detachment from democratic institutions. However, the The author also emphasizes that young Angolans are demonstrating a growing interest in civic and community involvement, especially when they feel represented and recognized as relevant political actors.

On the other hand, Santos (2016) argues that democracy is only fully consolidated when promotes the active, critical and informed participation of citizens, giving special importance to Youth involvement as a driving force in the public sphere. For the author, inclusion The inclusion of young people in political processes contributes to the renewal of democratic practices, to the Strengthening citizenship and building more just and participatory societies. In this In this sense, youth political participation should be understood not only as a right, but also as an essential element for democratic development.

In this context, it becomes essential to analyze how the different segments of The youth of the municipality of Soyo participate in local political processes; what are their roles? perceptions about democracy, the obstacles it faces, and the motivations that guide its political involvement.

Studying this reality allows us to identify the weaknesses and strengths of participation. youth, as well as contributing to the formulation of more inclusive and youth-oriented public policies for the strengthening of local democracy. Thus, the present investigation seeks to deepen the Understanding the role of youth in strengthening democracy in the municipality of Soyo, valuing the

2. Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature, employing quantitative methods, adopting an exploratory approach framed within a case study. The choice of this approach is justified-whether due to the need to integrate different methodological approaches, allowing for a better understanding. a broader and more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under analysis. As Gil (2008) argues, this type of This approach allows for a deeper analysis of the social reality being investigated, by combining different techniques and perspectives of investigation.

The investigation was carried out in the municipality of Soyo and targeted young people. local, namely higher education students, young workers, unemployed young people and young community leaders. Each of these groups consisted of 10 participants, making a total of a total of 40 young people. The selection of participants was done by convenience sampling. considering the accessibility and availability of respondents, a strategy frequently used in exploratory and social studies (Gil, 2008).

For data collection, a semi-structured interview was used, one of the suitable instruments for obtaining information about perceptions, experiences, and levels of Political participation of young people in local democratic processes.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Contextualization of youth political participation in the municipality of Soyo

The political participation of young people in the municipality of Soyo is influenced by several factors. historical, social, and economic factors that shape opportunities for civic engagement in the region. In Angola, young people constitute a significant portion of the population, with specific needs. related to education, employment and social inclusion.

The National Youth Policy (Presidential Decree No. 273/19) highlights the importance of to promote the active participation of young people in decision-making processes, reinforcing the role of civic education and associativism as instruments of citizenship (Government of the Republic of Angola, 2019).

Studies conducted by Angolan authors indicate that, although young people represent a Although a relevant social force, they face structural challenges regarding their performance in political spaces. formal. Ribeiro and Menezes (2010) argue that "the civic and political participation of young people in Angola is frequently shaped by socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional factors, which These obstacles can hinder effective integration into decision-making processes" (p. 45). low representation in political bodies, unequal access to information, and the influence of practices.

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clientelists.

Furthermore, Rodrigues (2010) highlights that the experiences of youth in Angola are shaped by specific historical and economic contexts, noting that "the involvement of Youth politics is directly related to the opportunities for expression available and with the social recognition of their needs" (p. 102).

In the municipality of Soyo, this reality is particularly noticeable due to the presence of strategic economic activities, such as the oil sector, which has a direct relationship to local socioeconomic organization and, consequently, the profile of youth aspirations.

From an international perspective, studies on youth political participation emphasize that Involvement is not limited to formal practices such as voting and party affiliation, but includes also community activism and the use of digital platforms as means of mobilization and political expression (Dunn, Thompson & Pacheco, 2024). This approach suggests that the youth of Soyo, as in other contexts, seeks to articulate its political participation in various ways. innovative, often outside of traditional institutions, expanding their impact on society and in local politics.

3.2. Forms of political participation of young people today

According to Carvalho (2017), the political participation of young people today assumes multiple forms, which go beyond the simple act of voting, reflecting social, cultural and Technological advancements of our time. Young people are not limited to the formal channels of politics; many They resort to innovative strategies and alternative spaces for intervention. Youth participation can be organized into three main categories: electoral participation, civic and community participation, and digital participation and online activism.

4. Electoral participation

The most classic form of political participation is voting, where young people have an influence. directly influencing the choice of political representatives. This form of participation is formal, regulated, and institutionalized, often being the first contact young people have with the political system. Furthermore In addition to voting, electoral participation can include involvement in political campaigns, working in political parties or running for representative positions, especially in youth organizations and local youth councils.

5 Civic and community participation

Beyond the formal sphere, many young people actively participate in civil society. This Forms of participation include social movements, cultural associations, community groups and

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Non-governmental organizations (NGOs). For example, young community leaders can... to get involved in local development projects, civic awareness campaigns or initiatives through volunteering, contributing to the resolution of social problems and the building of citizenship. active.

According to Carvalho (2017), community participation strengthens the social integration of young people and promotes their inclusion in decision-making processes, especially in contexts places like the municipality of Soyo.

6. Digital participation and online activism

Technological advancements and the expansion of social networks have provided young people with new opportunities. Forms of political intervention. Digital activism allows for mobilizing opinion and sharing information. politics, organizing protests and online petitions, and putting pressure on policymakers quickly and effectively. comprehensive.

As Norris and Inglehart (2009) argue, digital technologies have transformed the way how young citizens become politically involved, making them active agents in the public sphere and creating opportunities for expression and mobilization. Platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok have been used by young people to denounce injustices, support social causes, and... They promote political debates, but they also take advantage of the opportunity to spread false information and slander. Insults, and other practices that tarnish the reputation of both individuals and groups. It is

in this context that the Angolan State, through its institutions, approved Law No. 14/25, which establishes the legal framework for preventing and combating the spread of false information. on the internet. This decree emerges as a necessary regulatory instrument, taking into account the increasing vulnerability and the biased effects associated with the spread of misinformation in digital space, a phenomenon that has intensified in recent decades (National Assembly of Angola, 2025).

The political participation of young people today is therefore plural and multifaceted. combining traditional practices with innovative forms of intervention. Although voting continues to Being a central mechanism, civic activities and digital activism broaden the reach of youth influence, allowing them to contribute more directly to decision-making and to The consolidation of democracy. Recognizing and supporting these different forms of participation is essential. to guarantee an inclusive and representative democracy, capable of incorporating the voices and expectations of youth.

Therefore, understanding youth political participation in Soyo requires analyzing both the structural conditions that limit involvement as well as the strategies adopted by young people for to make themselves heard, highlighting the need for public policies that strengthen inclusion and

7. Challenges faced by youth in political participation

The political participation of young people faces several challenges that vary depending on the social, historical and institutional context in which it is embedded. In Angola, despite the youth constituting For a significant portion of the population, political participation continues to be limited by factors structural, economic and social factors that condition effective involvement in decision-making processes. decision.

In this context, Vieira (2019), in the work João Lourenço and the great challenges, resorts to statement by the President of the Republic of Angola - "at the very least it would be ungrateful if I didn't like being "President of those who elected me" - spoken by João Lourenço during his first interview. collective after the presidential election, already in office, in 2018. The quote highlights a A political discourse centered on democratic legitimacy and responsibility to voters. basic elements for promoting political trust and, consequently, for stimulating Civic participation, including that of youth (João Lourenço, 2018, cited by Vieira, 2019).

It is in this vein that Ribeiro and Menezes (2010), in studies on civic participation and Angolan youth policy, "the effective inclusion of young people in formal decision-making processes is often conditioned by institutional and socioeconomic barriers, such as inequality of access to information, limited representation in decision-making bodies, and the influence of practices "clientelists" (p. 45).

These obstacles hinder not only the involvement of young people in political parties. and in municipal bodies, but also the expression of their demands within the scope of public policies. which directly affect their living conditions. Furthermore, the presence of economic sectors Strategic factors, such as the oil industry in the municipality of Soyo, influence opportunities and... expectations of local youth, generating additional challenges to effective political engagement.

Given this context, the Angolan Executive promoted the implementation of a new political-administrative division, through Law No. 14/24, of September 5, as one of the strategies to mitigate regional inequalities and promote the accessibility of public services to the population.

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8. Results

Table 1: Sample of the survey

Designation	Gender (M/F)	Age	
University students	4	6	18-30
Young workers	7	3	27-35
Unemployed young people	5	5	19-27
Young community leaders	8	2	25-29
			31-50
			36-44
			28-40
			30-45

The interview reveals that youth political participation is recognized as an element central to strengthening democracy in the Municipality of Soyo. The following are the... main extracts from different segments of youth students in higher education, young workers, unemployed youth, and young community leaders, highlighting how each The group becomes involved in political processes and contributes to local civic life.

8. Importance of youth political participation in the Municipality of Soyo

The active participation of higher education students, young workers, young people The involvement of unemployed individuals and young community leaders in the political life of the Municipality of Soyo is essential for that public policies reflect the diversity of youth experiences. Students experience Challenges related to academic training and professional integration; young workers face difficulties related to technical and professional conditions; unemployed young people deal with better alternatives from a socioeconomic point of view; and community leaders coexist directly addressing the problems of the communities.

According to Agostinho Neto, youth is a transformative force in society and should... To participate consciously in the construction of political and social development. Thus, inclusion The participation of these different youth segments contributes to fairer, more inclusive public policies and aligned with local reality (Neto, 1979).

9. Frequency of youth participation in political activities

Political participation among young people in Soyo is uneven across different groups. youth segments. University students participate more frequently in debates. academics and civic education; young workers and the unemployed are primarily involved in community meetings and youth associations; while young community leaders participate in More regularly, this occurs in local gatherings and social mobilizations.

According to Mário Pinto de Andrade, political participation is conditioned by social conditions. and by unequal access to information and institutional spaces. The lack of dissemination, time and The lack of regular opportunities limits more continuous and structured participation among the different

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youth groups (Andrade, 1980).

10. Youth participation and strengthening democracy in Soyo

The political participation of students, young workers, unemployed youth, and leaders.

Community involvement contributes directly to strengthening democracy in the Municipality of Soyo.

Students bring new ideas and critical thinking; workers and the unemployed reinforce the oversight of public policies; and community leaders ensure the link between local government and the communities. According to Manuel Rui, democracy is consolidated when citizens exercise a Active citizenship, participating both in electoral processes and in daily public life. A Youth participation in voting demonstrates civic awareness and reinforces democratic legitimacy. local (Rui, 2001).

11. Factors that motivate young people to participate in politics

The factors that motivate young people in Soyo to participate in politics vary among...

Different youth segments, but they converge on the search for better living conditions. Students They are motivated by the expectation of entering the job market; young workers seek improvements in working conditions; unemployed young people seek job opportunities and Social inclusion; and community leaders are motivated by defending the interests of their communities.

According to Pepetela, Angolan youth are historically mobilized by awareness of social inequalities and the desire for transformation. Civic education, the academic environment and Community involvement and examples of positive leadership reinforce this political motivation (Pepetela, 1993).

12. Measures needed to increase youth political participation

The increased political participation of higher education students, young workers, Unemployed youth and community leaders in the Municipality of Soyo are demanding differentiated measures and inclusive. For students, it is essential to strengthen civic education; for workers and for the unemployed, create employment and vocational training policies; and for community leaders, institutionalize formal spaces for participation.

Agostinho Neto argues that the political education of young people and the creation of mechanisms Institutional bodies are essential for conscious and organized participation. The openness of the bodies Providing spaces for dialogue with all youth segments is therefore indispensable (Neto, 1979).

13. Main factors that discourage young people from getting involved politically.

The factors that demotivate students, young workers, unemployed youth and Community leaders' lack of political involvement includes the lack of concrete opportunities for

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participation, the low value placed on youth opinions, and distrust of institutions.

public. Students feel that their debates do not influence decisions; workers and

The unemployed face limitations of time and resources; and community leaders perceive little

A response to local demands. For Mário Pinto de Andrade, political and social exclusion generates apathy and

The alienation of youth from democratic processes (Andrade, 1980).

14 Opportunities offered by local bodies for youth participation

In general, local bodies still do not offer sufficient opportunities for the political participation of university students, young workers, and unemployed youth and community leaders in the Municipality of Soyo, as efforts are being made to ensure that Let's improve this particular aspect.

Building on the previous idea, Manuel Rui emphasizes that democracy weakens when... Citizen participation is neither institutionalized nor valued. The limitation of spaces for dialogue and the The lack of effective inclusion of different youth segments reduces political engagement and They compromise the strengthening of local democracy (Rui, 2001).

15. Suggestions for strengthening local democracy through youth involvement.

To strengthen local democracy in the Municipality of Soyo through youth involvement, it is necessary to adopt strategies that encompass all youth segments. This includes the creation of permanent forums for dialogue with higher education students, the promotion of policies of Employment for young workers and the unemployed, and recognition of the role of leaders. Community-based. Following this logic, Pepetela argued that a solid democracy is built upon... Critical and conscious participation of youth, capable of questioning, proposing, and transforming reality. social (Pepetela, 1993).

16. Conclusion

The political participation of youth in the Municipality of Soyo has a significant impact on Strengthening democracy by expanding inclusion, renewing political ideas, and reinforcing oversight. of local governance. By involving higher education students, young workers, young people unemployed people and community leaders, democracy becomes more representative and sensitive to real needs of the population.

Furthermore, youth engagement contributes to political and social development. Promoting more inclusive public policies in the areas of employment, education, and social inclusion. Active participation of young people also promotes the formation of more conscious citizens and committed, strengthening democratic culture and ensuring the consolidation of democracy

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Local long-term.

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