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An Exploration of Youth Political Disengagement in the City of Cape Town

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Abstract

The Electoral Commission of SA shows that only over eight million out of more than 26.2-million registered voters voted in the 2021 local government elections. This is a cause for concern when this figure is compared with other elections, which amounted to a preliminary turnout of about 30.5% by Monday 01 November 2021 at 21h00. Thus, the lower voter turnout is arguably a true reflection of the citizens frustration with and distrust of politicians. This study aims to explore the socio-economic factors that contributed to young people's apathy towards politics and discouraged them to engage in voting during COVID-19 and to suggest both short- and long-term solutions to address the youth political disengagement in South Africa. The qualitative approach was adopted in this study, followed by a convenient sample of 20 youths. Individual interviews was used to collect data. The collected data was anlysed through thematic analysis. The finding revealed that socio-economic factors such as nation-wide lockdown COVID-19 restrictions, youth unemployment, electoral system, poverty prevented young people from participating to political engagement. Accordingly, this study recommends for multifaceted electoral reforms in South Africa that will give voters the power to hold elected representatives accountable and provide clear details of who should hold a representative office.

Keywords: COVID-19, local government elections, lower voter turnout, political disengagement

1. Introduction and background

Political disengagement among the youth is a sign of youth showing no interest into electoral democracy (Moeller, Kuhne & De Vreese, 2018). Accordingly, Mabasa and Malatjie (2019) stress that the youth's political disengagement can result in problems for democracy and social transformation that will emerge in various communities as a result of young people not participating in the electoral democracy. Youth political disengagement is influenced by a variety of socio-economic factors and cultural contexts (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2012). Youth participation in political engagement is much lower in contrast with that of older people, and this is because of the political system that continues to disregard the needs of young people all over the world (UNDP & (Inter-Parliamentary Union) IPU, 2012). It was claimed that youths in areas, such as Tshwane in South Africa, decided to stay at home on 01 November 2021 and not vote because the youth did not believe there was any political party that could change their lives (Mitchley, 2021). Importantly, in 2019, the level of youth participation was also low in the national and provincial elections. 51.5% of

the registered youth between the ages of 18 and 19 years decreased, resulting in millions of youths not showing up on election day (Roberts, 2019).

In 2021 Local government election in South Africa 42% of young people self-reported having voted for the African National Congress, 25 % voted for the Democratci Aliance and the 9% voted for the Economic Freedoom Fighters. These figures show that majority of young voters still believed in the ruling party the African National Congress. (Bekker & Runciman, 2021). Runciman, Bekker, and Mbeche (2021) indicates a variety of reasons that made young people between the ages of 18 and 35 years old not to vote LGE 2021 in South Africa such as being at work, or saying they were simply 'too busy' to vote.

Importantly, Chauke (2020) states that in rural areas, the youth in South Africa refrain from participating in politics or the electoral democracy because they do not receive information about the electoral process. In this regard, the author further indicated that the Electoral Commission in South Africa needs to partner with the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) to promote voter education in schools. Chauke and Mudua (2019) social media can play vital role to increase youth participation in electoral democracy. Thus, political disengagement is concerning, since it continues to create socio-political problems (Njomboro & Deb, 2012).

The current study aims to explore the socio-economic factors that prevented young people from participating in political engagement by voting during the COVID-19 pandemic, and, furthermore, to suggest both a short-and a long-term solution to address the youth political disengagement in South Africa. To the researcher's knowledge, there is no study that looks at the socio-economic factors that grounded in the young citizens the habbit of political disengagement in the context of COVID-19 specific in the City of Cape Town in South Africa. Therefore, this study seeks to fill that gap by highlighting those socio-economic factors with the aim of providing solutions that can assist the Electoral Commission of SA to increase the youth political engagement in the national and provincial elections 2024 in South Africa. This study aims to contribute to the reformulation of youth policies in South Africa by presenting facts and arguments of a socio-economic nature about the necessity to formulate a policy for increasing interest and engaging youth in politics.

Cammaerts, Bruter, Banaji, Harrison and Anstead (2014) argue that it is a false narrative that the youth do not participate in electoral democracy through voting because they have no interest in politics. In fact, the actual reason for the youth's political disengagement is because they feel that the current political discourse does not address their needs. In addition to that youth has no interest in politics because the elected representatives do not serve their interests, but merely look after their own interests (Arowolo & Aluko, 2010). In contrast, Cammaerts, Bruter, Banaji, Harrison, Anstead (2016) indicates that politics is extremely important for many young people globally. Notwithstanding this fact, according to Ahmad (2018), some decided not to participate in politics out of personal choice. Furthermore, Ahmad (2015) alludes to the fact that the country's social problems, such as the high crime rate and unemployment, discourage the youth from participating in politics. Farthing (2010) contends that young people across the world keep rejecting politics and refuse to vote unless a new political party will be form, one that recognisez their needs and defend their rights.

The Youth Lab (2019) claims that political disengagement is caused by the fact that the youth have lost faith in the electoral process. Some youth representatives assert that political engagement through voting makes no difference, since the youth continue to be excluded (Graham, Stuart, Richards, Mthembu & Moller, 2019). Oyedemi, and Mahlatji (2016) point out that cynicism about politics continues to be a major problem that contributes to the low youth turnout in elections. Chiweshe's (2017) argues that, as much as social media can be used to encourage youth political participation, however it cannot be a solution to counteract youth political disengagement. Galais (2012) argue that the interest in politics is influenced by the era; in this regard, the youth born in the 90s are not interested in politics compared to the youth born in the 80s. In contrast, Waller, Satchell, Daley and Gordon (2020) argue that ICT can be used as a tool for promoting youth engagement in politics. Waller *et al.* (2020) point out that a lack of institutions that promote political socialisation among the youth is to be blamed for the youth's low voter turnout.

The literature review in this study was conducted pre-COVID-19; therefore, the current study contributes to a new body of knowledge by exploring socio-economic factors in the context of COVID-19 that resulted in young people not participating in the elections on 01 November 2021 in South Africa.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the socio-economic factors that contributed to young people's apathy towards politics and discouraged them to engage in voting during COVID-19 and to suggest both short- and long-term solutions to address the youth political disengagement in South Africa.

1.2 Research Questions

Which socio-economic factors have contributed to young people's apathy towards politics that discouraged them from participating in political engagements through voting in the era of COVID-19 pandemic?
    What are the short and the long term solutions that can address the youth political disengagement in South Africa?

2. Theoretical Framework

The ladder of participation theory that was developed by Roger Hart in the early 1960s underpins the present study. The aim of the ladder of participation theory was to describe how the institutions run by adults deny young people the opportunity to participate in decision-making and how meaningful participation can be increased (Arnstein, 1969). The ladder of participation theory was adopted to provide a clear picture of why young people have decided to disengage from the political process during COVID-19 in South Africa and to determine which youth development-based approach can enhance youth participation in a political process through voting. The ladder of participation theory is important in political engagement because it advocates meaningful participation in a community development project through adult-youth collaboration (Midgley, 1986). Importantly, Roger Harts´ ladder of participation identifies eight levels of participation as discussed below.

2.1 Manipulation

Roger Hart describes this first element as manipulation participation that promotes adultism rather than positive youth development. According to this element, adults pretend that their course serves the best interests of young people (Arnstein, 1969). Thus, projects are designed without the involvement of young people. Young people have no say in the project that serves to enhance their level of participation. Through the application of this element in the present study, The researcher argue that young people disengaged from the political process in the context of COVID-19 because they feel that the government has manipulated them for decades. Their needs have been neglected; therefore, staying away from participating in the voting process has been a viable option for them.

2.2 Decoration

Regarding this element, adults design projects for the youth without the youth, but the youth are used to helping adults, so the projects can attract many young people (Arnstein, 1969). This is the current state of politics in South Africa where different political parties propose the young as the ward candidate's councillors or as members of parliament, but\ these youths have no say in matters that affect young people in South Africa. Even more so, young people view this decorative participation with cynicism because they realise that they are used to pushing the agendas of the

elders in the political space. Therefore, the youth decide not to show up on election day, as a way of showing elders they are not happy with their leadership. Dlamini (2019) argues that young people do not vote because political parties led by elders keep making empty promises.

2.3 Tokenism

In contrast with the first two, tokenism is another level of adultism where elders can give the youth an opportunity to say something concerning their development, but, in reality the elders do not take the youth's voice seriously. (Arnstein, 1969). In the context of this study, the elders from politics and government institutions pretend to take the youth's concerns seriously by organising youth seminars or youth debates to give the youth a voice. However, after these seminars, the taken resolutions are not implemented in mainstream positive youth development. This results in anger among the youth that decided not to participate in the voting process.

2.4 Assigned but informed

This element is based on a community development-based approach where the youth are informed what the project is all about and why they must become involved (Arnstein, 1969). In the context of this study, politicians begin to inform young people about the importance of participating in the electoral democracy through voting by doing door-to-door campaigning. However, the youth feel that their needs are not met and, therefore, they remain at home on election day.

2.5 Consulted and informed

At this stage, the youth are involved in projects that aim to develop them, young people also give advice on how projects should be implemented, but adults make the final decision (Arnstein, 1969). This element can be instrumental in increasing youth participation in the electoral democracy by ensuring that the youth are consulted and make some inputs in matters that affect them. This will also encourage the youth to engage in politics through voting.

2.6 Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people

Concerning this element, adults initiate projects for the youth and merely share the decisions with the young people (Arnstein, 1969). This element can promote youth participation in the electoral democracy as well, if adults can design a programme of action that can mainstream the youth in the labour market in South Africa.

2.7 Young people-initiated and directed

This element promotes the level of youth participation. At this stage, the youth initiate a programme that seeks to promote their development, while adults are only available to offer support (Arnstein, 1969). The researcher believe that this element can be used to increase youth participation in electoral democracy in South Africa. Politicians should give the youth an opportunity to design policies that can address the youth's challenges and government officials should provide financial, and emotional support to the youth. This will enable the youth to see the government level of commitment with regard to promoting positive youth development; This action, I believe, may motivate the youth to involve in the political activities and may increase their participation in the elections.

2.8 Young people-initiated, shared decisions with adults

According to Arnstein (1969), these elements pertain to the fact that the youth are given the power to devise solutions for matters affecting the them. Thus, adults offer the youth support in return to ensure that these solutions are implemented as programmes of action for youth development. In the context of this study, this is the highest level of youth participation that can reduce towards politics in South Africa, because the youth will see that the government is willing to work with them to address the youth's challenges.

The researcher adopted this theory in the present study because the first four elements of the ladder of participation theory provide a clear picture of why young people disengage themselves from the political process. Furthermore, it shows that political disengagement is the result of adults (politicians, in the context of this study), for not prioritising youth development. On the other hand, the last four elements can be used to promote youth political engagement by ensuring that young people are involved in decision-making and provide solutions to youth problems and are supported by the government regardless of their race, gender, location.

3. Methodology

In this study, qualitative research was adopted to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic under study by exploring the socio-economic factors that have contributed to young people's apathy that results in them not participating in political engagement by voting during COVID-19 and to suggest both a short and long-term solution to address youth political disengagement in South Africa. In turn, De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport, (2011) and Creswell and Clark (2007) describe the qualitative research method as a research method that aims to make sense of the social world through the perceptions and lived experiences of the affected participants. This research method was appropriate because it helped the researcher to interact with the participants with the aim of understanding the socio-economic factors that result in youth apathy towards politics in the 01 November 2021 local government elections and how this can be mitigated.

3.1 Location and population

The study was conducted in Cape Town, in the Western Cape, in South Africa. Cape Town is one of the popular tourist destinations in South Africa; however, some townships are among one of the impoverished townships in South Africa with the highest rate of unemployment among the youth, as well as community violence. Cape Town is comprised of Coloured, Whites and Xhosa- speaking people with a number of Africans from Mozambique, Nigeria, Ghana, and Zimbabwe who left their home countries to seek greener pastures in Cape Town. According to Statistics South Africa (2021), 4,709,990 people are living in Cape Town with a total of 42.4% Coloureds, 38.6% "Black Africans," 15.7% Whites, 1.4%, Asians or Indians, and 1.9% others (Western Cape Government, 2021). The population in this study was the group of young men and women between the ages of 18 and 35 years who were eligible to vote in the LGE 2021, but decided not to vote for a variety of reasons that the current study has explored.

3.2 Sampling

A convenient sample of 20 youths in Cape Town was sampled in this study. The sample was selected to participate in this study from Cape Town, in the Western Cape, in South Africa. Convenience sampling is non-probability sampling where the participants are sampled because they are close at hand, rather than being selected randomly, and the researcher believed the selected participants were the representatives of the population from which they were selected (Neuman, 2011; Babbie &

Mouton, 2010). This sampling was effective, since it helped the researcher to sample the most accessible participants, which helped to save time and it was the least expensive for the researcher.

3.3 Data collection

The purpose of this study was explained to the participants before the data collection process started. Individual interviews were adopted to collect the data in this study. This data collection method was extremely useful in this current study, because it gave the researcher an opportunity to have a normal conversation with the participants. In addition, this helped the researcher to achieve the study objectives. Some individual interviews were recorded, while others were not recorded. The inclusion criteria for this study were that the youth must be between the ages of 18 and 35 years who were eligible to vote in the LGE 2021, but decided not to vote for a variety of reasons residing in Cape Town.

3.4 Saturation

According to Hennink and Kaiser (2019), saturation is extremely important in qualitative research because it helps to provide clarity regarding whether there are enough or adequate data to validate the study's findings and understand the social phenomenon that the study aims to explore. To achieve data saturation in this study, the participants with in-depth knowledge regarding the subject matter, were sampled to participate in this study.

3.5 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected. According to Kiger and Varpio (2020), "Thematic analysis is an appropriate method of analysis for seeking to understand experiences, thoughts, or behaviours across a data set." In this case, thematic analysis entailed following certain steps carefully to make sense of the data collected. The researcher first familiarise himself with the data set; the researcher did this by trying to look at some other data sets that were repeated. The researcher then listened to the audio recordings to try and get some sense of what the participants were trying to say and went through some written notes that were made during some of the individual interviews. The second step entailed the coding process; during this step, the researcher began to take note of the interesting data sets that emanated during the individual interviews. After that, step three was implemented where important themes were identified to achieve the study's objectives. This step was extremely useful because it gave the researcher a clear indication of the identified data set. Thereafter, the researcher moved to step four, where the identified themes were reviewed to determine whether the identified themes had adequate supporting data, and themes were found in the supporting data. Furthermore, the researcher moved to theme five, where the researcher started naming the identified themes with the aim of making sure the themes are well understood by the readers. These named themes are included in the final report. Then moved to the final step of the thematic analysis, where the researcher produced the final report in the form of a manuscript. Thematic analysis was extremely useful , because it was easy to apply and did not involve any use of theory.

3.6 Trustworthiness

The researcher assured the participants that all the data collected during the interviews would be confidential and would only be useful for the purpose of the current study. The individual interview questionnaires were pilot studied with an equivalent sample of three young people. The validity of the collected data was achieved by submitting a copy of the study's findings to a number of young people to check if the study findings reflect their responses.

3.7 Ethical considerations

The participants were informed about what the study entailed, in addition, the researcher assured the participants that their privacy would be ensured and the real names would be protect. Ethical clearance ref number 2022/04/13/ 90501543/10/AM was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee at the University of South Africa in the current study. The participants also signed consent forms to participate in this study.

4. Results and Discussions

The individual interviews illustrated specific socio-economic factors that conducted to young people towards politics that resulted in them not participating in political engagement through voting during the COVID-19 pandemic and. To suggest both a short-and a long-term solution to address the youth political disengagement in South Africa. The socio-economic factors that rooted the antipathy towards politics among the youth and which reduced their presence in voting during the COVID-19 pandemic, are the following: The nation-wide lockdown, the COVID-19 restrictions, youth unemployment, the electoral system, and poverty.

4.1 Nation-wide lockdown COVID-19 restrictions

In response to COVID-19, South Africa, like other countries globally, has instituted a national lockdown that has been proven by a number of scholars to affect the development of young people negatively (Chauke, & Chinyakata, 2020). The majority of the participants reiterated that the government's decision to ignore the socio-economic challenges that the South African youth face and the imposed long nation-wide lockdown COVID-19 restrictions are to be blamed for the youth's low turnout on election day. Furthermore, the youth interviewed in the study felt that the lockdown made their lives a nightmare because they could not participate in the labour market at all. In addition to that, the youth interviewed in this study, experienced suffering as a result of being excluded from the labour market and decided not to participate in the elections. Tatar and Apateanu (2019) agure that youth who are social excluded to participate in socioeconomic activities are politically marginalized and not participate to elections. One of the youths revealed that:

> *"I ran my own business, the decision of the government not allow us to operate due to the national lockdown and without any assistance from them, made me lose faith not only in the government, but in all the political parties. Since none of them ever bothered to fight for us, particularly at lockdown level five that made me fail to see a reason to vote for any political parties."*

Another youth also commented:

> *"I wouldn't go and vote for the government that shows us they do not care about us. We have been struggling since lockdown, while they were enjoying a good life, so I couldn't vote for heartless people."*

This finding indicates that there is a strong connection between the nation-wide lockdown during COVID-19 and the youth's low voter turnout in the 2021 LEG in the City of Cape Town. It was suggested that the youth felt the government has forgotten about their socio-economic issues and has prolonged the nation-wide lockdown during COVID-19, forgetting how this measure was affecting the wellbeing of the South African youth, particularly the out-of-school youth. Therefore, the way the youth wanted to punish not only the ruling party, but all the political parties, was to ensure that they stayed at home on election day. Graham, Stuart, Richards, Mthembu & Moller, 2019) stated that youth feels voting makes no difference to their lives.
Another young member also commented:

"So, the government has decided to lock us at home saying there is COVID-19, and we must maintain social distancing, but come the elections, public gatherings were allowed. Politicians take us for a ride. I decided not to vote to avoid public gatherings and maintain a social distance, so I cannot be affected or infect others as we have been told by politicians."

The above statement is a strong indication that some youths interviewees of this study, did not support the decision taken by the government to impose a hard nation-wide lockdown during COVID-19, while during the election period, the regulations were overlooked. Therefore, the youth decided to maintain the social distance and avoid public gatherings to adhere to COVID-19 regulations, rather than participating in the electoral process through voting. This finding is in agreement with the work of Ahmad (2018) which shows that youth's decision to not participate in the electoral democracy through voting is a personal choice. Landman, Gennaro Splendore (2020) argued that COVID-19 pandemic poses a dangerous threat to the democracy since it prevents so many people globally to participate in the electoral process through voting and limited the political railes.

4.2 Youth unemployment

The South African youth bear the burden of unemployment which affects their overall wellbeing. Thus, COVID-19 made it worse by fuelling the higher rate of youth unemployment. The results reflect that one of the key socio-economic issues that demotivated the young people interviewed in this study to see the importance of casting their vote, is the ever-increasing the rate of unemployment among the youth. This finding agrees with the work of Ahmad (2015) that indicates that the country's social problems, such as the high crime rate and unemployment increase youth apathy in the electoral democracy. Thus, young people in the City of Cape, as is the case in other cities in South Africa, are unable to participate in the labour market either through youth entrepreneurship or first-time work experience in the private or public sector due to the closure of the economy with the aim of containing the spread of COVID-19. Contrary to this study study Galais (2012) argues that those born in the 90s have no interest in politics. The study further revealed that there is no reason for them to continue voting, because voting is aimed at making politicians and their families wealthier, while they suffer severely because of the high rates of unemployment. One of the youth revealed that:

"I have registered to vote but, I didn't vote because my vote will make no difference; I have gone to school, participated in the last elections; yet I can't find a job. People who have political connections are getting jobs, while we remain unemployed."

Another interviewee also commented that:

"Why must I vote while I am unemployed? Let those who are working go and vote because there are the ones who are voting for a democracy?"

This background reveals that one could say that the government lacks plans to address youth unemployment, which will continue to discourage the youth from participating in the electoral democracy through voting. Potgieter and Lutz (2014) Young people feels the issues that affect them is not in the government agenda and this contribute to their apathy towards the electoral process. This has emanated as a result of the youth in the study alluding to voting while they cannot get a job with qualifications and no connections, but, people with political connections continue participating in the labour market, is one of the socio-economic issues that increase the youth apathy in the City of Cape Town. The declined of young people employment prospects over the years has contributed to young people participation to electoral democracy (Fergusson, 2013).

4.3 Electoral system

The findings revealed that some youth could not participate in the electoral process because the electoral system has let them down. The Youth Lab (2019) says youth have lost faith in the electoral process In addition, as a result of the local government elections, expecting voters to vote where they are residing, some of the interviewees in the study claimed that they could not update their addresses because the electoral system did not give them an option to do so until the closing date. A previous study (Chauke, 2020), indicates that youth apathy towards politics arises as a result of the youth not trusting the Electoral Commission of SA and its electoral processes. An interviewee revealed that:

> *"I am from the Eastern Cape. I came to the City of Cape Town for a better life because, at home, there are few opportunities, so I have tried to update my address online, but, it failed, then I had no money to go to the IEC offices to update my address. That's why I didn't vote."*

Another interviewee also commented:

> *"I have relocated to Cape Town; I updated my address online but, when I went to the voting station, my address was not on the voter's roll. I tried to get help, none of the IEC officials tried to help me, so I got angry and left the voting station without voting because it was not as if I was going to benefit at all."*

This finding indicates that the electoral system had an influence on the low voter turnout, particularly among the youth, as a result of some youth particulars not being captured on the voters' roll, which will automatically allow a young person to cast his or her vote and the electoral system was referred to as not being user friendly, and that led to some of the youth not exercising their democratic rights.

4.4 Poverty

In South Africa the COVID-19 pandemics raised the level of poverty among youth who depended on everyday income for survival. The young people who were interviewed in this study stated that they remained in absolute poverty after participating in the previous elections and COVID-19 made the situation worse. Cammaerts, Bruter, Banaji, Harrison and Anstead (2014) state that over the years, the elected political parties have been falling young people, which has led to many young people living in poor conditions where there is a high rate of poverty, with some even living in squatter camps. Young people interviewed in this study indicated that voting is a waste of time since the elected political parties are not addressing the issues with which the communities are confronted. (Arowolo & Aluko, 2010) showed that youth have no interest in politics because politicicans do not serve their interests. The younger generation is subjected to poverty. Therefore, they decide not to participate in the electoral democracy. Thus, the elected political parties need to address the standard of living, particularly in the township, so young people, Africans, in particular, can enjoy life to the fullest. One of the young persons interviewed said the following statment:

> *"I can't vote while I have been living in a squatter house with no toilets, no water and no electricity. Let all the elected parties work together to address poverty in our community, then I will vote."*

Another youth also commented:

> *"[The] DA does not care about the Coloured Township, we live in a bad environment, no houses, during COVID-19 we didn't even get food parcels. That made me angry, and I decided not to vote."*

Reflecting on the above statement, one could conclude that young people of colour in Cape Town are living in inhumane conditions where the ruling political party in the City of Cape Town is discriminating against them in terms of service delivery, which discouraged some of the young people from exercising

their constitutional right to cast their votes. Ahmad (2015) believed that poverty and unemployment remain the major factor to discourage youth to vote. When addressing the low voter turnout of the youth, the elected representatives need to prioritise the community's needs and address poverty.

The current study indicates that the COVID-19 nation-wide lockdown contributed to the youth's low voter turnout. Accordingly, the ladder of participation theory is essential in this study because it emphasises the need for adults to give young people an opportunity to design and initiate projects that seek to improve young people's lives so that they can take charge of their own development. In addition, this will instil a sense of moral agency in young people to participate in the electoral democracy.

5. Conclusion

The study investigated the socio-economic factors that contributed to young people's apathy with regard to participating in political engagement by voting during COVID-19 and suggested a short- and long-term solution to address youth political disengagement in South Africa. The study findings reflect that young people in South Africa have become radically unpolitical due to the government and political parties continually not prioritising youth development, but continuing to use young people to undermine them. The nation-wide lockdown introduced by the South African government to curb the spread of COVID-19 was cited as one of the socio-economic factors that resulted in some young people not voting on election day. Furthermore, corruption amongst government officials is a disturbing factor that hampers youth development in South Africa. Because of the corruption committed by government officials, young people decided not to vote because some did not think the political leaders of the different parties were doing enough to fight corruption in South Africa. For futher study the researcher recommend a need for a post-COVID-19 study to verify the study hypotheses in the absence of the pandemic.

6. Recommendations

6.1 NYS democratic governance

Youth political disengagement that contributes to youth apathy in the electoral democtratic is the result of the lack of civil and voter education in South Africa. Therefore, the Electoral Commission of SA and the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), with the help of the job fund, should initiate NYS democratic governance as well as one-year projects where proposals can be submitted for projects for which non-profit organisations can apply. Furthermore, the NEET youth should be mobilised and supervised by graduates as Democratic Elections Officers, to implement civil and voter education, particularly in areas where there is a low voter turnout, while earning a monthly stipend. This will give the NEET youth and unemployed graduates, an opportunity to raise voter education awareness every day instead of doing this during the election period. On the other hand, it will help the youth to participate in the labour market as volunteers, and will also help to address youth unemployment, while addressing youth apathy, on the other hand.

6.2 Multifaceted electoral reforms

There is a need for multifaceted electoral reforms in South Africa that will give voters the power to hold elected representatives accountable, and clear details should be provided of who should occupy a representative office. Therefore, this electoral reform should stipulate the following;
- A mayoral candidate should hold a master's degree and have experience in public administration and government, a good understanding of state organs, and demonstrated leadership skills in community development.

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- A candidate older than 60 years should not stand for office to represent the public.

6.3 Reintroduced school debate competitions

The Department of Basic Education should bring school debates back and integrate them into the school curriculum. This will help to impart leadership skills to young people at a young age, and enhance their research skills. These research skills will help them to understand the country's political landscape so that they can begin to participate in the political process. This will be a great foundation to help empower the youth when they are eligible to vote.

6.4 Voter education

For years, education in many developing countries has played a fundamental role in shaping individual minds that enable them to make informed decisions. Against this backdrop, when fostering young people's democratic participation through voting, the Department of Basic Education should introduce voter education subjects in schools from primary school level upwards. This will help young people to understand the importance of political engagement through voting at a young age.

6.5 I-Voting

The youth live and breathe the internet, against this backdrop, it is vital for the Electoral Commission of SA to explore viable options with regard to adopting I-voting, where citizens can vote online. This will play an important role in increasing youth voter turnout, particularly during the COVID-19 era and future shock, where being in overcrowded places should be avoided.

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