

Assessment of the Not Too Young to Run Act and Youth Political Participation in Nigeria between 2019-2023 General Elections

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Abstract

Since the inception of the fourth republic in 1999, Nigerian youths have been relegated to the background in terms of elective and appointive political positions. Though, they constitute 52% of registered voters only 5% occupy elective positions. The paper examined Not Too Young to Run Acts and Youths Political Participation in Nigeria 2019-2023 General Election. The paper is a time series that relies on a qualitative method of data collection. The data collected was analyzed using content analysis. The research was guided by this research question; - 1) has the Not Too Young to Run Act enhanced youth political participation in Nigeria? The research is anchored on Group theory as a theoretical framework of analysis. The theory focuses on the collectivities of individuals who interact in pursuance of common political goals. The theory argues that interest is the primary propelling force and that every action is based upon the sharing of interest. The work revealed that the socio-economic conditions and bad governance in Nigeria reinvigorated the political consciousness of youths to participate actively in politics. The research concludes and recommends that youths should be economically empowered through job creation, education, and an enabling environment for them to participate more in politics.

Keywords: Youths, Political Participation, Mobilization, Election, Democracy.

Introduction

Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa as well as the seventh most populated country in the world. Youths in the country represent over 65 percent of her entire population. Countries plan to increase their youth population to tap into their energy, innovativeness, vibrancy, resilience, and ambition. Countries that invest in their youths witness economic growth and development. Unless deliberate efforts are made in Nigeria to harness the potential of her youth population, young people will continue to be confronted with growing challenges or barriers to their participation in the country's democracy. Apart from high levels of corruption in virtually all facets of democratic institutions, some other notable barriers to youth leadership are economic, institutional, and cultural barriers.

Nigeria's political history is not complete without appreciating the roles that youths played in achieving the country's independence. Youths were the driving force behind the nationalist activities that led to the dismantling and eventual overthrow of colonialism and the colonial masters. The activities of Herbert Macaulay, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, H.O. Davies, Tafawa Balewa, Ahmadu Bello, and Samuel Akintola among many

others in their 20s and 30s are legendary (Adebanjoko, 2019). During the post-independence political crises that engulfed the nation, youths played a remarkable role in ensuring that, the nation did not disintegrate. Youths were so vocal and resilient, willing to fight and defend the integrity of the nation.

But, the sudden decline in youth political participation has become a major concern to stakeholders both within and outside the shores of the nation; it has become a global concern. The present reality of politics in Nigeria indubitably portrays a system that is under siege by the actions, inactions, and reactions of the aging political drivers of this country in policymaking and implementation. The current crop of leaders ruling the economy of this country is a paradigmatic shift from what was obtainable in the post-colonial era where the nationalists who agitated and achieved independence from Britain were in their youth, but in Nigerian politics today, the reverse is the case.

"The youths are the leaders of tomorrow", is an aphorism that contradicts the leadership monopoly practiced by aging Nigerian kleptocrats because the Nigerian government of present is led by gerontocrats who have continued to sideline the youth in the political and economic sphere of the country (Adeyemi, 2021). Hence, expanding opportunities for young people to participate in politics has been prioritized through the passage of the "Not Too Young to Run Bill" into law in 2018. The act amended sections 65, 106, 131, and 177 of the Nigerian constitution to reduce the eligibility age for the Houses of Assembly and House of Representatives from 30 to 25 years old, the Senate and Governorship from 35 to 30 years old, and the office of the President from 40 to 35 years old. Despite the enactment of the Acts, it would appear that the level of youth participation in Nigerian politics has not improved considerably. Therefore, this paper tends to examine the "Not Too Young to Run Act and Youth Political Participation in Nigeria", focusing on the 2019 and 2023 general elections.

Statement of the Problem

The exclusion of youths in governance is alleged to have created economic impoverishment for the nation. This allegation becomes stronger with the teaming population of youth of Nigerian origin excelling in other countries of the world due to their impact on the global economy but languishing in Nigeria due to economic hardship and unfriendly political environment. The Nigerian youth is endowed with intellectual capacity; innovative skills and the drive to achieve but, lacks the political space for proper utilization. These skills have been channeled to crime and criminality such as banditry, kidnapping, internet fraud, and political thuggery. Insecurity of lives and properties has been experienced in every geopolitical zone in Nigeria due to the emergence of splinter groups terrorizing the citizens as well as threatening the government, and the majority of the members of these groups are youths.

The contemporary poor economic performance of Nigeria has been blamed on the recycled leaders who have taken over the mantle of political leadership since 1999. These leaders

lack the synergy and innovative capacity to transform and put to positive use the natural and manpower resources in Nigeria. This is made visible from the kind of policies and programs initiated and embarked upon by these leaders across the board. Most of these programmes breed corruption which increases the poverty rate, insecurity, crime and criminality, and foreign debts. The policies are so artificial that the unemployment rate among the youth has increased beyond measure. The youths are, therefore, migrating to other parts of the world due to the high economic hardship perpetuated by the elderly politicians who refuse to give political space for youths' active political participation. It is worthy to state that, countries that invest in their youths and practice youth inclusiveness witness economic growth and development (Onyeizu, 2023). Youths are deliberately excluded from playing key roles or taking up leadership positions in democratic institutions in the country through financial hindrance. Okibe (2022) maintained that the monetized politics introduced and sustained by older politicians remain a disincentive for youth participation.

Despite creating positions for youth leaders in the country's political parties, most of the time, individuals who occupy these positions fall outside the age demography of youths. Youths according to United Nations (UN), are individuals whose ages are between 17 to 35 years. The fact that the national youth leaders of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Rt. Hon Ude Okoye and that of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Alhaji. Ibrahim Dasuki is 41 and 48 years old respectively, underscores a disturbing trend of youth exclusion in the country's democratic institutions (Onyeizu, 2023).

However, the Not Too Young to Run Act was expected to expand the opportunities for young people to participate in Nigeria's governance and politics in elective capacities. The Act amended the Nigerian Constitution to lower the eligibility age for candidates to run for president or the offices of the Federal House of Representatives and the state Houses of Assembly. Though the act lowered the ages for elective political positions in Nigeria, the youth are invisibly seen occupying elective positions in Nigeria.

Research Question

Has the Not Too Young to Run Act enhanced youths' political participation in elective positions in Nigeria between the 2019-2023 general elections?

Objective of Study

To examine whether the Not Too Young to Run Act enhanced youths' political participation in elective positions in Nigeria within the years of study.

Conceptual Framework

Not Too Young To Run Act (NTYTA)

Several scholars have written about the Not Too Young to Run Act, which started as a movement of young people in Nigeria in 2016 to reduce the age limit to stand as political

candidates in an election. The movement anchored the struggle on the decisions reached by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the United Nations (UN) seeking to collect data and develop strategies to elect a larger share of young people to national parliaments (Krook & Nugent, 2018). Not Too Young to Act is an act of parliament that sought to reduce the age limit for running for elective offices in Nigeria. The campaign started in support of the bill and motion in the House of Representatives and Abdul Aziz Nyako in the Senate (WFD, 2019). The #NotTooYoungToRun act aimed to amend sections 65, 106, 131, and 177 of the Nigerian constitution. The law lowered the age limits for political offices from 35 to 30 years in the Senate, and 30 to 25 years in the House of Representatives and state House of Assembly (WFD, 2019).

Table 1: Constitutional Age Provisions for Elective Office(s) in Nigeria

S/N	Position	Previous Age(s)	Present Age (s)	Amended Sections in the 1999 Constitution
1	President	40 years	30 years	Section 131 (a)
2	Senate	35 years	30 years	Section 65 (1) a and b
3	House of Representatives	30 years	25 years	Section 65 (2) b
4	Governor	35 years	30 years	Section 177 (b)
5	State House of Assembly	30 years	25 years	Section 106 (b) and (d)

Source: Mohammed (2022)

The law was intended to reflect the changing demographics of Africa's most populous nation and help usher in younger leaders (WFD, 2019). The ultimate goal of the law was to promote increased youth participation in the political process, hence Ahmad Alhendawi in Envoy on Youth (2016) advocated that young people have every right to be active participants in civic and public life and it is time to ensure that the youths no longer face arbitrary barriers to run for public office whether at the local, regional or national level (Oloyede, 2020). This was a remarkable achievement for young people in the country, as it meant that they had opportunities for representation that were not previously possible (WFD, 2019).

Concept of Youth

According to Middaugh, Schofield & Ballard (2017), youth is a time of rapidly expanding capacities, expectations of autonomy, and identity exploration. Civic engagement during adolescence predicts adult volunteering and voting. Youth is the time of life when one is young but often means the time between childhood and adulthood. Furthermore, civic engagement during adolescence can promote positive developmental outcomes, particularly for marginalized and at-risk youth. Definitions of the specific age range that

constitutes youth or adolescence vary. An individual's actual maturity may not correspond to his/her chronological age, as immature individuals can exist at all ages. The Nigerian National Youth Development Policy (2001) described youth as people aged 18–35. The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 as youth without prejudice to other definitions by member states. Youth could also be described as "the appearance, freshness, vigor, spirit, etc. The characteristic of one who is young (youth) is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood independence. Youth is a more fluid category than a fixed age group. However, age is the easiest way to define this group, particularly about education and employment" (NNYDP, 2001). Youth is often indicated as a period between the age where a person may lead compulsory education and the age at which he/she finds his/her first employment. This latter age limit has been increasing as higher levels of unemployment and the cost of setting up an independent household, puts many young people into a prolonged period of dependency. Youth constitute a dominant force for national mobilization and growth and as such have a crucial role to play in the all-important task of nation building. Youth are an important group in every society. The success or otherwise of any nation depends on the quality of its youth. Participating in political life is proposed to play an important role in youth development.

Concept of Political Participation

Political participation is a broad range of activities through which people develop and express their opinions on the world and how it is governed, and try to take part in and shape the decisions that affect their lives (NIH). These activities range from developing social issues at the individual or group level and campaigning at the local, regional, and national level, to the process of formal politics such as voting, joining a political party, or standing for elections.

Political participation is any activity that shapes, affects, or involves the political sphere (EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership 2020). Uhlaner (2015) opines that political participation refers to voluntary activities undertaken by the mass public to influence the selection of persons who make policies. He states the examples of these activities as voting in elections, helping a political campaign, donating money to a candidate/cause, contacting officials, petitioning, protesting, and working with other people on issues. Deželan (2015) states that political participation largely focuses on the activities of citizens aiming at influencing political decisions. In the same vein, Verba and Nie (1972) cited in Weiss (2020) opine that political participation is those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take. They think that private citizens can participate in politics not just by casting votes or joining parties but through numerous other activities such as voting, campaign activity, contacting public officials, and cooperative or communal activities. This definition has paved the way for the analysis of actions such as protests, strikes, or petitions as activities

that participate in politics through other means than elections (Verba and Nie, 1972) cited in Weiss (2020).

Lending credence to this, Mohammed (2022) attests that, political participation is where freedom is not only a right to participate effectively in a given space but the right to define and to shape that space. This is entirely about power and influencing social and political change. Okolie (2004) opines that political participation expresses actions, interactions, reactions, and role expectations as one finds himself an integral member of a society. Political participation enables one to express such rights to demand better social and health services, better working conditions, and an increase in wages. It expects individuals to be part of efforts to achieve political stability in the system. In light of this assertion, Dahl (1973) cited in Weiss (2020) declares that political participation is an essential part of modern democracies as it enables citizens to hold their governments accountable. This conceptualization covered actions within the given institutional framework of a nation as pertain to governance. He portrays the underlying importance of accountability of government.

Empirical Review on Youth Political Participation

According to Deth (2001), youth political participation can be understood as the active and voluntary engagement of young people in any activity that shapes, affects, or involves the political sphere. Afolayan (2018) argued that Nigeria's political history would be incomplete without the indelible records of the youth's participation and involvement in achieving independence. However, the political trajectory of Nigeria is into two phases; military rule and civilian rule. The country experienced a handful of youth who were in their early 30 years or a little above 30 years that spearheaded the administration of the country with many economic achievements and stability (Agbo, Atu, Odeh & Odibo 2019).

Since the return to civil rule in 1999, none of the Presidents that ruled Nigeria was below 50. Amzat (2016) asserts that the history of youth involvement in Nigerian politics is a gradual dissipation; that's gradually withering away. He further states that the average age of the Nigeria cabinet is usually over 50 with a substantial number in their 60s and a few in their 70s. Mohammed (2022) attests that youths in Nigeria are manipulated by the political elites to engage in illegal political participation through the assassination of political opponents, snatching of ballot boxes, and political thuggery.

However, there has been a general resurgence in youth political activism in political parties, voting, and social media political engagement since the passage of NTYTRA, in 2018 (Kura, Shehu & Ladan, 2023). Scholars have shown the level of youth participation in political activities such as voter registration, campaigning, social media usage during an election, voting, and political mobilization; Kura & et al (2023), Mohammed (2022), Agbo & et al (2019), Youth Report (2019). Olatunji (2021) affirms that Nigeria's political space is still overtly dominated by the old generation and god-fathers, who determine who gets what and favor their cronies to the detriment of many young Nigerians who are willing to

participate in politics. This affirmation is strongly rooted in the facts that, Nigeria has conducted seven general elections from 1999-2023 but, no youth has been elected as President, Vice-President, Senate president, or speaker of the house of representative. Though, evidence abound that NTYTRA opened up space for the youth to for electives positions, Olatunji (2021), Oloyede (2020), Afolayan (2018), Isuwa (2023), Amata (2022), Kazeem (2019), Amaza (2022) and Okibe (2022).

Theoretical Framework of Analysis

Group theory was developed for political analysis by Arthur F. Bently in his book "The Process of Government" (1908). He explained group as actions of men directed towards one end; that is collectivities of individuals who interact in pursuance of common political ends. To him, a group is seen as a mass of activity that tends to move to some definite course of conduct. Interest is seen as what gives direction to this mass of activity; hence a group can be perceived as a mass of activity directed by interest. The social system consists of a large number of groups that mark the arena for the interaction of group activity. It is interest that leads to the formation of groups.

The theory, however, came to the limelight in 1951 when David B. Truman in his work "The Governmental Process" made good use of the theory. David Truman defined a group as a collection of individuals who based on one or more shared attitudes, make certain claims about other groups in society for the establishment, maintenance, or enhancement of behavior that is implied in the shared attitude. The basic deduction from this definition is that a group is an aggregate of individuals who interact in varying degrees in pursuance of a common interest.

Application of Theoretical Framework of Analysis

Nigeria's political environment is divided into groups; the older politicians that control the economic resources and wield political power. This group comprises the wealthy and influential personalities in Nigeria who have amassed wealth and built industries locally and internationally. Also, these older politicians have been in governance for decades; making key decisions for the country and initiating programs and policies for economic-cum-political development. Most of these policies and programs have not transformed the country or bettered the lives of the citizens. The high rate of the infrastructural decade, low standard of education, increased foreign debts, corruption and embezzlement of government funds, disregard for the rule of law, and poor governance shows that the older politicians do not have the interest of the younger generation at heart.

On the other hand, the other group which constitutes the younger generation is strategically positioning itself to wrestle power from the older generation. This group is technologically driven, innovative, entrepreneurial, energetic, and goal-oriented. This group has been sidelined in politics and governance by the older politicians who have been re-cycling and rotating power among themselves. To the younger generation, the older

politicians have failed in governance; and failed Nigeria's Youth and Africa continent. What matters to them is how to continuously acquire wealth and hold tight on political power, instead of thinking on how to improve the lives of the citizens and bring about development.

The younger generation feels that the older generation does not have their interest at heart; that is why there is a high rate of poverty, unemployment, migration, cybercrime, criminality, kidnapping and banditry, separatist agitation, terrorism, and other vices indicating a total rejection. The older politicians failed to create an enabling environment for economic development and empowerment rather, the system stiffened the space for fair competition.

Hence, the younger generation is struggling and pushing for space to be among the key decision-makers. This, they felt has been achieved through the passage of the NTYTR Act in 2018. The Act created political space for them to contest political positions in the 2019 and 2023 elections where some of them were elected. Egonmwan, (2000), opines that in the process of participation and competition among groups in which interest is the melting point, power is highly fragmented. They see power, interest, and conflict as the main variables in the systematic study of politics. They argue that interest is the primary propelling force and that every action is based upon the sharing of interest. The unifying point of the youths is to fight against bad governance and economic decay which have undermined development. The propelling force of the youths lies in their common interest to oust the old political group from the political scene of Nigeria and occupy it. Thus, the victory of one group over the other is determined not necessarily by the financial resources of the group but by common interest demonstrated through the grand strategy adopted, the amount of skill and competence at maneuvering, and other factors like internal cohesion and organizational strength. It is on this note that group theory was adopted for this study.

Not Too Young to Run and Youth Political Participation in 2019 and 2023 General Elections

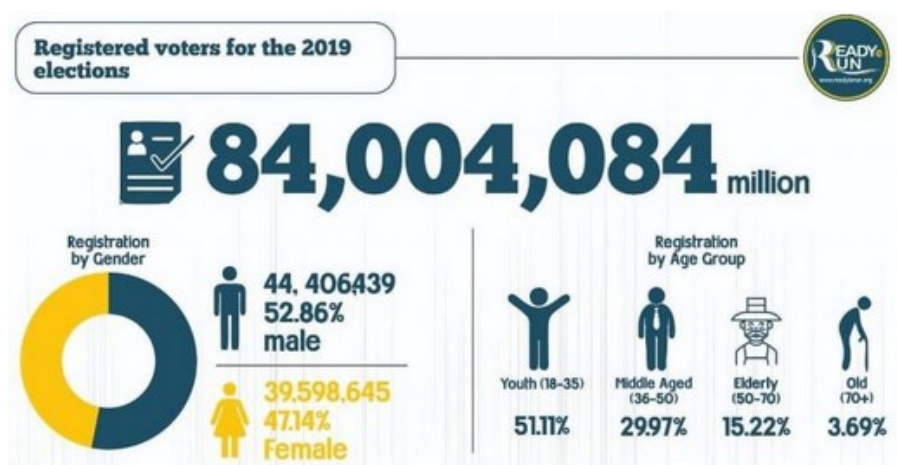
Across the world, there is nothing that widely engages human minds as politics. Neutral as politics may be, it either stimulate affection or discontent in different people of different age range (young and old), sex, educational background, and location. This is because politics involves decision-making over the commonwealth of the nation, requiring the collective will of the people. Uninterestingly, segments of the population that command a reasonable percentage, and who are commonly referred to as leaders of tomorrow, are sidelined in the political space. The Not Too Young to Run Act intended to open up the space by reducing the ages in elective positions as enshrined in the 1999 Constitution.

NTYTR Act Amended Some Sections of the 1999 Constitution and Reduced Age Eligibility for Elective Positions

Before the Not Too Young to Run Act was passed, Nigeria was among the countries operating a constitution with provisions that restrict the right of young persons to seek elective positions on account of age. This is what prompted the campaign for the reduction of the age limit by the various youth groups and civil society organizations in Nigeria. On 31 May 2018, President Muhammadu Buhari signed the Not Too Young to Run Act into law, which expanded the opportunities for young people to participate in Nigeria's governance and politics in elective capacities. A youth is defined as any person between the ages of 18-35 years in Nigeria. However, with the recent amendment as a result of the passage of the Not Too Young To Run Policy in 2018, it includes anybody between the ages of 15-29 years (National Youth Policy, 2019). For instance, the various conceptions of youth globally based on formal definitions by age include the following; Word Health Organization (WHO) 10-29 years, United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 15-24 years, European Commission (EC) 15-29 years, World Bank 16-30 years, Common Wealth 15-29 years, African Charter 15-35 years, and Nigeria 18-35 years, respectively. The bill aimed to ensure a more inclusive political system and the political process in Nigeria. There was a series of civic engagement movements embarked upon by the NTYTR to press for the speedy amendment of the 1999 Constitution by the National Assembly and State Assemblies. At last, it was a huge success that 35/36 State Assemblies endorsed the amendment (Mbamalu, 2018).

Increased Number of Registered Voters in 2019 and 2023 General Elections

In 2019, the number of registered voters increased from 69,720,350 in 2015 to 84,211,832 which was a result of the call for more political space in Nigeria (Punch Newspaper 7th September 2018). According to the INEC Chairman, a total of 14,551,482 new voters were registered. If this figure is added to the existing register of 69,720,350 voters, the nation's voter population as of then becomes 84,271,832 (Suleima, 2023).



Source: Asadu (2019)

On the other hand, in the 2023 general election youth political space increased whereby more youths were registered during the voters' registration process. According to the figures provided by the INEC Chairman, the total number of eligible voters rose by 9,464,924 or 11.3 percent from the 84,004,084 recorded in the 2019 general elections to 93,469,008 eligible voters in 2023 (Suleima,2023).



Source: Suleiman (2023)

Mr Yakubu added that 37,060,399 or 39.65 percent of voters were between the ages of 18 and 34; while 33,413,591 or 35.75 percent were middle-aged persons between the ages of 35 and 49. The INEC chairman also said 17,700,270 or 18.94 percent of the total registered voters are elderly voters between the ages of 50 and 69, just as the remaining 5,294,748 or 5.66 percent are senior citizens above the age of 70, the breakdown shows that more youth registered for 2023 general elections (2023 State Report).

Youths Contested for the Post of Presidency in the 2019 General Election

Some youths contested for the office of the president with President Buhari, who was then seeking re-election. Among the young presidential candidates were Chike Ukaegbu of the Advanced Allied Party (AAP), who was then 35 years old; Shipi Godia of the All Blending Party (ABP) who was aged 39; Obinna Ikeagwuonu, 38, of the Action Peoples Party (APP); Emmanuel Etim, 38, of the Change Nigeria Party (CNP); Robinson Akpua, 39, of National Democratic Liberty Party (NDLP); Eunice Atuejide, 40, of the National Interest Party (NIP); Ike Keke, 39, of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP); Felix Nicholas, 37, of Peoples Coalition Party (PCP); Nseobong Nsehe, 33, of the Restoration Party of Nigeria (RP) and Ahmed Buhari, 36, of Sustainable National Party (SNP) (Itodo, 2019).

Many other Nigerians aged between 41 and 50 years also latched on to the euphoria generated by the law to vie for the presidency. These included people like Omoyele Sowore,

47, of the African Action Congress (AAC); Fela Durotoye, 47, of the Alliance for New Nigeria (ANN); Nwokeafor Ikechukwu, 42, of the Advanced Congress of Democrats (ACD), Shittu Moshood, 49, of the Alliance National Party (ANP); Tope Fasua, 47, of the Abundant Nigeria Renewal Party (ANRP); Mamman Yusuf, 46, of the Allied Peoples Movement (APM); Lewis Abah, 48, of the Change Advocacy Party (CAP) and John Onwubuya, 47, of the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) (Isuwa, 2019).

The outing was, however, very poor going by the result of the election. Although one of them, Felix Nicholas of PCP was the second runner-up in the election, he garnered only 110,196 votes, representing 0.40 percent of the total votes cast while the first runner-up, Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) got 11, 262, 978 votes, representing 41.22 percent of the total votes cast. President Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC), who won the election, polled 15, 191, 847, representing 55.60 percent of the total votes cast (Asadu, 2019).

Table 2: List of Presidential Candidates that Contested in 2019 General Elections and their Ages

S/N	Name	Present Age	Present/Previous Held Position
1	Mohammadu Buhari	75 years	Former Military Head of State and President 2015-2023
2	Atiku Abubakar	71 years	Former Vice President 1999-2007
3	Ibrahim Dankwambo	56years	Former Governor of Gombe State
4	Sule Lamido	69years	Former Governor of Jigawa State
5	Ahmed Makarfi	61years	Former PDP Caretaker Chairman
6	Taminu Turaki	65years	Former Minister of Special Duties
7	Ayo Fayose	57years	Former Governor of Ekiti State
8	Donald Duke	57years	Former Governor of Cross River State
9	Kingsley Moghalu	55years	Former Deputy Governor of CBN
10	Olufunmilayo Adesanya Davies	56years	Lecturer
11	Remi Sonaiya	63years	Lecturer
12	Adesanya Fegbenro-Bryon	59years	Chairman/CEO Mothergold Ltd
13	Rabiu Musa Kwamkwaso	61years	1 time Senator and Former Governor of Kano State
14	Ali Modu Sheriff	62years	1 time Senator and Former Governor of Borno State

Source: Compiled by the Researcher (2023)

Table 2 shows that youths were not considered during most party primaries and the 2019 presidential election in Nigeria. However, Kingsley Moghalu of the Young Progressive Party

(YPP) who was 55 years of age was the youngest popular candidate that contested in the presidential election. It is imperative to note that other younger candidates contested, like Omoyele Sowore who contested at the age of 48 on the platform of the African Action Congress (AAC). The foregoing analysis shows that the NTYTRA has not yet fulfilled its purpose or that the youths lack the disposition (political awareness, material resources, and leadership potential) to embrace the golden opportunity of becoming the President of Nigeria.

Table 3: List of Presidential Candidates that Contested in 2023 General Elections and their Ages

S/N	Name	Party	Position	Age	Gender
1	Imumolen Irene Christopher	A	President	38	M
2	Bello Bala Maru	A	Vice President	59	M
3	Almustapha Hamza	AA	President	62	M
4	Johnson Emmanuel Chukwuka	AA	Vice President	45	M
5	Sowore Omoyele Stephen	AAC	Presidential	51	M
6	Magashi Haruna Garba	AAC	Vice Presidential	45	M
7	Kachikwu Dumebi	ADC	Presidential	48	M
8	Buhari Muhammed Ahmed	ADC	Vice Presidential	40	M
9	Sani Yabagi Yusuf	ADP	Presidential	68	M
10	Udo Okey Okoro	ADP	Vice Presidential	50	M
11	Tinubu Bola Ahmed	APC	Presidential	70	M
12	Shettima Kashim	APC	Vice Presidential	55	M
13	Umeadi Peter Nnanna Chukwudi	APGA	Presidential	67	M
14	Mohammed Abdullahi Koli	APGA	Vice Presidential	65	M
15	Ojei Princess Chichi	APM	Presidential	44	F
16	Ibrahim Mohammed	APM	Vice Presidential	47	M
17	Nnadi Charles Osita	APP	Presidential	49	M
18	Hamisu Isah	APP	Vice Presidential	45	F
19	Adenuga Sunday Oluwafemi	BP	Presidential	48	M

20	Mustapha Usman Turaki	BP	Vice Presidential	36	M
21	Obi Peter Gregory	LP	Presidential	61	M
22	Baba Ahmed Yusuf Datti	LP	Vice Presidential	53	M
23	Musa Mohammed Rabiu Kwankwaso	NNDP	Presidential	66	M
24	Odori Idahosa, Isaac	NNDP	Vice Presidential	57	M
25	Osakwe Felix Johnson	NRM	Presidential	57	M
26	Kyabo Yahaya Muhammad	NRM	Vice Presidential	72	M
27	Abubakar Atiku	PDP	Presidential	75	M
28	Okowa Arthur Ifeanyi	PDP	Vice Presidential	63	M
29	Abiola Latifu Kolawole	PRP	Presidential	60	M
30	Zego Haro Haruna	PRP	Vice Presidential	49	M
31	Adebayo Adewole Ebenezer	SDP	Presidential	50	M
32	Buhari Yusuf	SDP	Vice Presidential	50	M
33	Ado-Ibrahim Abdulmalik	YPP	Presidential	58	M
34	Enyinna Michael Kasarachi	YPP	Vice Presidential	44	M
35	Nwanyanwu Daniel Daberechukwu	ZLP	Presidential	62	M
36	Abubakar Jibrin Ibrahim Ramalan	ZLP	Vice Presidential	55	M

Source: Compiled by the Researcher (2023)

In 2023, there were 18 candidates for the Presidential election with an average age of 57.4 and their median age was 59. While the average age of their running mates was 51.7. Table 4 above, shows the list of Presidential Candidates in the 2023 General Election. Despite the number that registered for the election, how many positions did the youths contest? And, what were the chances of the youth occupying elective positions in Nigeria? What were the chances of the youth being elected as President? This puzzle guided the thought because; the two leading political parties; the All Progressives Congress (APC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) have the oldest Presidential Candidates. Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the APC was 70 and the PDP's Atiku Abubakar was 75. So, there's a strong possibility that Nigeria could elect a septuagenarian as President in 2023, as it did in 2015 and 2019. The

other candidates with a chance of winning the Presidential position were 61-year-old Peter Obi of the Labour Party and 66-year-old Rabiun Kwankwaso of the New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP).

In 2019, Ten (10) youths within the age bracket of 35 – 40 contested for the Presidency while seven (7) others within the age bracket of 41-50 were also in the race. This was possible because of the political parties registered by INEC (about 91 political parties). But, in 2023 only one candidate in the person of Imumolen Irene Christopher (Accord Party) aged 38 contested for the Presidency while the other candidate Mustapha Usman Turaki of Better Party (BP) aged 36 contested for Vice President.

Youth Contested in National Assembly Elections (Upper and Lower Chamber) in 2019 and 2023

Nigeria still has a long way to go even with youths constituting the highest population but, is not equitably represented in government. In 2019, the youth constituted 51 percent of 84 million registered voters while in 2023, the population increased but their presence was slightly felt.



Source: Asadu (2019)

According to Asadu (2019) out of 1,904 candidates contesting for various seats at the Senate, only 253 of them representing just 13 percent are youths (18 to 35) in 2019. While, 4,680 candidates contested for seats in the House of Representatives of which 1,262 were youth candidates, representing 27.4% of the total number of aspirants for seats in the House of Representatives (YIAGA Africa Report, 2020). Figures from the House of Representatives elections show an increase in the level of youth representation from the 8th Assembly. The data received from the Independent National Electoral Commission showed that 12 members elected in the 9th Assembly were under the age of 35 at the time of the election. The All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) had one youth representative;

the All Progressives Congress had 10 youth representatives while the Social Democratic Party (SDP) had one youth representative (YIAGA Africa Report, 2020).

It is worth noting that, there are far fewer parties on the ballot for the 2023 general election unlike in 2019. In 2019, 73 political parties fielded candidates for the presidency, and only 18, parties contested in the 2023 Presidential election. Thus, delisting 74 political parties for their poor show in the 2019 elections will make collation of elections easier and faster. The delisting of some political parties reduced the senatorial and House of Representatives seats in the 2023 general election. According to Okpi (2023), there were more Senate and House of Representatives candidates in 2019 than in 2023 as recorded by INEC. For instance, for Senatorial seats in 2019, Political Parties fielded 1,860 candidates for the 109 seats while in 2023 just 1,100 will be on the ballot paper; which means that we had more Senate and House of Representatives Candidates in 2019 than in 2023 (Okpi, 2023). Also, House of Representatives in the 2023 general elections, there are 3,122 candidates for 360 Federal Constituencies. Of the 3,122 candidates, 1,181 are aged 40 or under; this is about 38%.

National Assembly Elections and Elected Members in the 2023 General Election

The table below shows the elected members at the upper chamber during the 2023 National Assembly Election.

Table 4: Elected Members of 10th National Assembly, 2023 Election

State	S/N	District	Candidate	Party	Age	Gender
Abia	1	North	Kalu Orji Uzor	APC	62	M
	2	Central	Darlington Nwokocho	LP		M
	3	South	Abaribe Enyinnaya Harcourt	APGA	67	M
Adamawa	4	North	Ishaku Elisha Cliff	APC	42	M
	5	South	Yaroe Binos Dauda	PDP	67	M
	6	Central	Aminu Iya Abbas	PDP	49	M
Akwa Ibom	7	North East	Bassey Aniekan Etim	PDP	43	M
	8	North West	Akpabio Godwill Obot	APC	59	M
	9	South	Akpan Ekong Sampson	PDP	55	M
Anambra	10	Central	Umeh Victor Chukwunonyelu	LP	60	M
	11	North	Nwoye Tony Okechikwu	LP	47	M
	12	South	Ubah Patrick Ifeanyi	YPP	50	M
Bauchi	13	South	Umar Shehu Buba	APC	45	M
	14	Central	Ahmed Abdul Ningi	PDP	62	M
	15	North	Samaila Dahuwa Kaila	PDP	60	M

Bayelsa	16	East	Agadaga Benson Sunday	PDP	66	M
	17	Central	Benson Friday Konbowei	PDP	60	M
	18	West	Dickson Henry Seriake	PDP	56	M
Benue	19	North East	Udende Memsu Emmanuel	APC	61	M
	20	North West	Zam Titus Tartenger	APC	53	M
	21	South	Moro Abba Patrick	PDP	64	M
Borno	22	North	Monguno Mohammed Tahir	APC	56	M
	23	Central	Lawan Kaka Shehu	APC	47	M
	24	South	Ndume Mohammed Ali	APC	62	M
Cross River	25	North	Arigbe Agom Jarigbe	PDP	51	M
	26	Central	Williams Eteng Jonah	APC	52	M
	27	South	Ekpenyong Asuquo	PDP	37	M
Delta	28	Central	Dafinone Ede Omueya	APC	60	M
	29	North	Nwoko Chinedu Munir	PDP	61	M
	30	South	Joel-Onowakpo Thomas Ewomazino	APC	55	M
Ebonyi	31	North	Nwebonyi Onyeka Peter	APC	41	M
	32	Central	Eze Kenneth Emeka	APC	52	M
	33	South	Nweze David Umahi	APC	59	M
Edo	34	Central	Okpebholo Monday	APC	52	M
	35	North	Oshiomhole Adams Aliyu	APC	70	M
	36	South	Imasuen Neda Bernards	LP	65	M
Ekiti	37	North	Fasuyi Cyril Oluwole Olusegun	APC	57	M
	38	Central	Bamidele Michael Opeyemi	APC	59	M
	39	South	Adaramodu Adeyemi Raphael	APC	58	M
Enugu	40	East	Kelvin Chukwu	LP		M
	41	West	Ngwu Osita	PDP	44	M
	42	North	Ezea Okechukwu	LP	58	M
Gombe	43	Central	Goje Mohammed Danjuma	APC	69	M
	44	South	Yaro Anthony Siyako	PDP	59	M
	45	North	Dankwambo Ibrahim Hassan	PDP	60	M

Imo	46	East	Onyewuchi Ezenwa Francis	LP	54	M
	47	West	Izunaso Osita Bonaventure	APC	55	M
	48	North	Ndubueze Patrick Chiwuba	APC	59	M
Jigawa	49	South West	Khabeeb Mustapha	PDP	72	M
	50	North East	Abdulhamid Mallammadori Ahmed	APC	56	M
	51	North West	Hussaini Babangida Uba	APC	58	M
Kaduna	52	North	Khalid Ibrahim Mustapha	PDP	57	M
	53	Central	Usman Lawal Adamu	PDP	47	M
	54	South	Katung Sunday Marshall	PDP	61	M
Kano	55	Central	Shekarau Ibrahim	NNPP	66	M
	56	North	Barau, Kano I. Jibril	APC	63	M
	57	South	Kawu Suleiman Abdurrahaman	NNPP	54	M
Katsina	58	North	Sani Zangon Daura Nasiru	APC	54	M
	59	South	Dandutse Muntari Mohammed	APC	55	M
	60	Central	Yar'adua Abdulaziz Musa	APC	58	M
Kebbi	61	North	Dr Yahyah Abudullahi	PDP	71	M
	62	Central	Adamu Mohammed Mainasara Aliero		65	M
	63	South	Musa Garba	PDP	61	M
Kogi	64	Central	Ohere Sadiku Abubakar	APC	56	M
	65	East	Isah Jibrin	APC	62	M
	66	West	Karimi Sunday Steve	APC	60	M
Kwara	67	North	Umar Sadiq Suleiman	APC	52	M
	68	Central	Mustapha Saliu	APC	49	M
	69	South	Ashiru Oyelola Yisa	APC	67	M
Lagos	70	Central	Sanni Wasiu Eshilokun	APC	61	M
	71	East	Abiru Mukhail Adetokunbo	APC	58	M
	72	West	Adebule Idiat Oluranti	APC	51	M
Nasarawa	73	North	Akwashika Godiya	SDP	49	M
	74	West	Aliyu Wadada Ahmed	SDP	57	M

	75	South	Onawo Mohammed Ogoshi	PDP	70	M
Niger	76	East	Musa Mohammed Sani	APC	57	M
	77	North	Sani Bello Abubakar	APC	54	M
	79	South	Jiya Peter Ndalikali	PDP	64	M
Ogun	80	Central	Salisu Shuaib Afolabi	APC	58	M
	81	East	Daniel Justus Olugbenga	APC	66	M
	82	West	Adeola Solomon Olamilekan	APC	52	M
Ondo	83	North	Pinsagba Emmanuel Olajide	APC	58	M
	84	Central	Adegbonmire Adeniyi Ayodele	APC	54	M
	85	South	Jimoh Ibrahim Folorunsho	APC	55	M
Osun	86	Central	Fadeyi Oluwole Olubiyi	PDP	53	M
	87	East	Fadahunsi Adenigba Francis	PDP	70	M
	88	West	Oyewumi Kamorudeen Olalere	PDP	62	M
Oyo	89	Central	Akintunde Yunusa Abiodu	APC	60	M
	90	North	Buhari Abdulfatai	APC	57	M
	91	South	Alli Sharafadeen Abiodun	APC	59	M
Plateau	92	South	Bali Binkap Napoleon	PDP	58	M
	93	Central	Mr Golkuna Yohanna Gotom	PDP	48	M
	94	North	Mwadkwon Simon Davou	PDP	54	M
Rivers	95	East	Onyesoh Allwell Heacho	PDP	61	M
	96	South East	Mpigi Barinada	PDP	61	M
	97	West	Banigo Ipalibo Harry	PDP	69	F
Sokoto	98	East	Ibrahim Lamido	APC	42	M
	99	North	Aliyu Wamakko	APC	69	M
	100	South	Aminu Waziri Tambuwal	PDP	56	M
Taraba	101	South		APC		
	102	Central	Manu Haruna	PDP	48	M
	103	North	Isa Shuaibu Lau	PDP	61	M

Yobe	104	East	Gaidam Ibrahim	APC	65	M
	105	North		APC		M
	106	South	Bomai Ibrahim Mohammed	APC	62	M
Zamfara	107	North	Ya'u Sahabi Alhaji	APC	66	
	108	Central	Aliyu Ikra Bilbis	APC	65	M
	109	West	Abubakar Abdul'aziz Yari	APC	53	M
FCT	110	FCT	Kingibe Ireti Heebah	LP	68	F

Source: Compiled by the researcher (2023)

The table indicated that one person between the ages of 30-40 years was elected in the 2023 general elections in the upper chamber from Rivers is 37 years of age. The election produced more people between the ages of 40 and 49 are 13, 50-59 is 46 in number while the rest of the members are from 60 and above. According to Itodo (2022), 43.2% of youth candidates in the 2023 election are direct beneficiaries of the NTYRR Act. In his statement "of the 15,336 candidates on the ballot in the 2023 election, 4,398 are youth candidates. 1,899 of these figures are between 25-30 years". However, youth candidacy records declined from 34% in the 2019 election to 28.6% in the 2023 elections. For instance, youth candidacy for the House of Representatives plunged from 27.4% in 2019 to 21.6% in 2023 (Isuwa 2023 Leadership News).

Findings and Conclusion

The paper revealed that the NTYTR Act brought about the increased number of youth who participated during the 2019 and 2023 general elections but few were elected into elective positions. In 2019, the number of registered voters increased from 69,720,350 in 2015 to 84,211,832 which was a result of a call for more political space in Nigeria. Out of this number that registered in 2019, those within the age bracket of 18-35 were 51.11%, and middle age 36-50 was 29.97%. On the other hand, in 2023 total number of eligible voters moved from the 84,004,084 recorded in the 2019 general elections to 93,469,008 (Suleima,2023). Out of these eligible registered voters, 37,060,399 or 39.65% of voters were between the ages of 18 and 34; while 33,413,591 or 35.75% were middle-aged persons between the ages of 35 and 49 (2023 State Report). Also, during the election in 2019, ten (10) youths within the age bracket of 35-40 and eight within the age of 41-50 contested for the post of President. In 2019, 1,904 contested for Senate, but only 253 were youths. Also, in the House of Representatives, 4,680 contested for the position, but 1,262 were youths (Asadu, 2018). On the other hand, in the 2023 general election out of 18 registered political parties, only two youths contested for Presidency; one as President aged 38, and the other aged 36 as Vice President. For the Senate, Only 224 of the 1,101 Senatorial candidates, all from the APC and PDP, the two dominant parties, were aged 40 or younger. However, one person from Rivers State aged 37 was elected into the upper chamber. The election produced 13

people within the ages of 40-49, 46 from 50-59; while the rest of the members were from 60 and above. This indication shows that youths were visible more in 2019 than 2023 general election. The reason is that INEC registered more political parties in 2019, some of these political parties were de-registered before the 2023 general election.

In conclusion, the age reduction for elective positions in Nigeria is a welcome development as the youths have been sidelined in active political participation for decades. The NTYTR Act understanding the implication of equal and fair participation as a democratic society reignited the burning desire for youth inclusiveness in politics. Since, its passage in 2018, youths have participated in the existing structure to make their impact felt in Nigeria, through an increased number of registered voters. Also, some have attempted contesting for elective positions both at the general and gubernatorial elections in Nigeria within the 2019 and 2023 elections.

Despite, the population of the youths and their innovative capability the youths are yet to clinch to the highest political position in Nigeria. Rather, the youths have continued to be the spectators in politics; helping in mobilization and campaigns for political gladiators that control the political and economic power of the state. Age reduction for elective positions has not translated into youth inclusiveness in decision-making regarding policy making and implementation in Nigeria. In the 2019 general elections, the youths were visible by contesting for some elective positions due to the number of political parties in Nigeria. But, in the 2023 general elections, the youths were not seen as the reason that some parties that participated in the 2019 elections were de-registered during the 2023 general elections by INEC. Also, political parties hiked the prices for their nomination forms and expressions of interest. This action negatively affected the youth looking at the economic reality of Nigerians, especially youths.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the paper made the following recommendations:

1. The youth should organize themselves within their parties to push for affirmative action, such as reserving a percentage of party leadership positions and appointive seats in government for youths. This will tremendously increase their exposure, experience, and chances to make a successful run for office.
2. The youth need to improve their capacity as politicians in terms of building networks, influence, leadership skills, fundraising ability, and effectiveness. This is crucial to counteract the ageist perspective that fails to view their potential as capable and influential leaders and also tends to raise the bar for them compared to older people.
3. The youth should be economically empowered by creating an enabling socio-economic environment for businesses to thrive in Nigeria.

4. The issues of poverty and unemployment among the youth should be declared a state of emergency because it has negative implication for the activities of youth in Nigeria

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