

Not Too Young to Run Act of 2018 and Youth Participation in 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria's democratic experience since the 4th republic has seen the occupation of elective positions by political elites who, over the years, have conformed to the iron law of oligarchy by making the positions rotational among themselves. This dangerous trend has almost completely shut the youths out of the elective political space of Nigeria. The herculean task of breaking into this elective space, the quest for vibrancy and the clamour for performance led to the demand for and subsequent enactment of the Not Too Young to Run Act of 2018 by the Federal Government of Nigeria. Previous studies have all looked at other aspects of 2019 general elections and Nigeria's journey to a credible election. None has satisfactorily interrogated the role of the Not Too Young to Run Act of 2018 in youth's participation in 2019 general elections. This study adopted a mixed approach of ex-post facto and survey research designs and the Elite theory was used to analyze data generated through the documentary method and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Consequently, with the aid of content analysis, the paper concludes that the passage of the Not Too Young to Run Act of 2018 did not lead to more youth's occupation of elective position after the 2019 general elections. Hence the study recommends that an Act be enacted by the National Assembly for certain positions in Nigerian political space to be left exclusively for youths to encourage more youth participation in politics.

Keywords: Democratization, Youth Participation, Not Too Young to Run Act of 2018, 2019 General Elections, Elective Positions

Introduction

Historically, Nigeria's leadership experience since independence can be categorized into two major regimes: civilian and military regimes. These regimes in their nature are specifically characterized by achievements, styles, and problems which they present to the people. A cross-sample of majority opinions on these regimes have shown the preference of civilian regimes over military regimes irrespective of the fact that Nigerian military regimes were spearheaded by youths who were 30 years of age or a little above 30 years.

After a long reign of military experience, the quest for the attainment of democracy led to military organized general elections of 1998, which witnessed a military to civilian transition from General Abdulsalami Abubakar to President Olusegun Obasanjo. This transition peculiarly created a new problem which saw the dominance and occupation of elective positions by the elderly people, thereby shutting the youths completely out of the political space. This scenario has raised pertinent questions concerning politics of youth participation. Such questions include: why have the Nigerian Youths been relegated to the background in Nigerian political space? Is it so because the Nigerian youths have been adjudged to be inexperienced? Or is politics no longer a game of number as the Nigerian youth demographically constitute a greater percentage of the voting population?

In line with recent narratives, it is disappointing to know that except for the current governor of Kogi State, Governor Yahaya Bello, no other youth is a member of the Federal Executive Council where policies and the fate of the nation are decided. A check on the reason for this relegation of Nigerian youths reveals that the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is culpable as it pegs the constitutional age for running for the office of the President and Senate at 40 and 35 years respectfully. This is saddening because it is diametrically opposed to the

practice in the developed climes like France and the USA who constitutionally pegged theirs at 18 and 35. It is a truism that these countries may not have produced an 18 or 35-year old president, but it gives the citizens, mostly the youths, a sense of belonging and also the morale boost to participate in politics. More so, evidence has revealed that the higher the age limits, the older the persons occupying elective positions.

Democracy in its ideal practice incorporates majority interests and minority rights. Either way, the interest of the youths and their rights are meant to be incorporated within the political space of the country. The crux of the matter is that the place of the youths in our democracy can never be overemphasized. This is because for Nigeria to attain a meaningful democracy, the place of the youths must be functional, meaningful, and stipulated in the shaping process of the society. This is because our collective wealth, fate and future cannot be placed only in the hands of the aged who represent only their interests in national decision making. Hence, it is non-democratic and apolitical to allow only the elderly people negotiate our fate in terms of war and peace, strength and position of economy, national and foreign policies and representation in the committee of nations.

Figures from past elections indicated that Nigerian youths vote more than every other voting age but occupy much less elective positions. This discrepancy spurred the youths into action to demand the Not Too Young to Run Act, which eventually came to limelight in 2018 with the accent of the President. This Act appears set to upturn the 'sleeping dogs' tag on the Nigerian youths. The 1970s and 1980s politicians have remained the major faces in Nigeria's politics till date, from President Obasanjo to Atiku, Buhari, Tinubu, Ogbe and so on. This dominance, therefore, renders the youths politically and economically incapacitated, such that they could not purchase declaration of interest forms in the political parties they were affiliated to in the build up to the 2019 general elections.

To further drive this paper, a plethora of definitions on the concept of youths may not be given as we do not perceive youths in view of the United Nations declaration as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 or the African Youth Charter which defines a youth as young person between the ages of 15 and 35. This paper operationalized within its peculiarity will adopt the Nigerian context of youths as young productive adults within the ages of 18 and 45. In line with the foregoing, this paper interrogated the Not Too Young to Run Act of 2018 and youth's participation in 2019 general elections. Specifically, it investigated the role of the Not Too Young to Run Act (NTYTRA) in aiding youths' occupation of elective positions following the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Election and Political Participation

Elections and political participation are the aspects of politics that concern most citizens in any country. They reflect largely the impact of the governed on governance. Election and participation in politics enable the ruled to make things better through the voting of popular government into power and participating in every activity that affects their lives or to make things worse through apathy which, most times, breeds unpopular government. Traditionally, elections are mechanisms through which citizens exercise their franchise by participating directly or indirectly in deciding who governs them or not, in advanced democracies where votes count. Elections are largely instruments of 'stuck taking' because they serve as performance measurement, sources of vote of confidence or not on the incumbent powers, and offer political parties and politicians the channels to test their popularity and relevance in the political space. Unfortunately, elections have become instruments in the hands of the ruling elite to perpetuate themselves in power in some developing countries. In this atmosphere, votes hardly count. This is the situation in most countries of the African continent, Nigeria inclusive. Hence, the outcome of the 2019 general elections has stimulated major discussions on vote counting, youth participation, and the significance of Not Too Young to Run Act in Nigeria. This discourse is one of the most trending topics in Nigeria. Elections and political participation are broad concepts that dwell on the interwoven issues of democracy and governance. Both concepts are useful in politics because they touch the keys challenges of statecraft, governance, and development in society. Despite this relationship, elections and political participation are conceptually distinct with different theoretical and philosophical underpinnings. To Heywood (2015), elections are mostly at the heart

of the political process. In fact, there is no question in politics that is as important as the one that border on elections of politicians who govern and the conditions under which these elections take place. The author perceives elections as means through which the people control their government. Ultimately, election is nothing but democracy in practice. Gneh (2018) sees elections as the processes of choosing individuals, through balloting, to man political positions. Harrop and Miller (1987) conceive it as mechanisms that enable politicians to be called to account and forced to initiate policies that reflect public opinions. To Arora (2013), it is difficult to imagine democracies without elections because elections provide the electorate opportunities to recruit their leadership, government and the means which provide representation. The author maintained that elections confer authorization to rule upon individuals who are chosen to represent the electorate. According to Roskini, Cord, Medeiros, and Jones (2010), elections in theory offer the citizens the opportunity to choose and guide their government, but in practice, elections are heavily manipulated by the twin factors of personality and mass media, therefore distorting the conventional connotations which make elections instrument in the hands of electorate to control the ruling class and politicians.

On the other hand, political participation comprises political activities which the citizens engage in voluntarily and aimed at influencing the actions, policy-orientation of the government as well as the political process. These activities may be undertaken by individuals or groups in the society. The political process may be the ways, directions and methods of governance or the outputs and/or outcomes of the system. The political activities that citizens participate in include selection of leaders, influencing decisions-making processes of government and the process of governance (Okafor and Okeke, 2002). Orji and Okafor (2000) conceived political participation as actions of citizens through which they seek to influence or support government or politics. According to Ikelegbe (1995), political participation denotes every activity that is political which citizens carry out either as individuals or groups, that are intended or designed to influence the political process. The author further stated that it is the real involvement of the people to influence directly or indirectly the ways, directions and methods of governance, or more particularly the output or outcomes of the political process. Thus, political participation, to him, is a political activity. The author concluded that political participation is the voluntary activities by which members of a political community partake in policy formulation and leadership selection. He also posited that participation can be forced or compelled as it was in the defunct communist and one-party states or in states where voting is compulsory such as Australia. We do not subscribe to the position that participation can be forced because the tenets of democracy reject any action that violates the fundamental human rights, which the aforementioned is not in tandem with (McClosky, 1968). Dowse and Hughes (1983), cited in Mbah (2007), see political participation as voluntary activities by which citizens take part in electing rulers directly or indirectly and in the formation of policy. Mbah (2007) opines that political participation when stretched, involves casual political conversation and intense activity of the members of political parties that bring about healthy democracy. We concur with Mbah (2007) that citizens' participation in political activities is not only a civic duty but adds colour to democracy. Roskin, et.al (2010), posits that participation connotes engaging in politics primarily to influence public policy.

Theoretical Perspective

Elite theory is one of the foremost classical theories of political science. The theory originally propounded by Vilfredo Pareto (1915), Gaetano Mosca (1939) and Roberto Michels (1962) was extrapolated in Shama (1984), cited in Ekwonna (2016). Pareto defines the elite as consisting of those who rise to the top in every occupation and stratum of the society. Therefore, there are elite lawyers, Mechanics, and even thieves. In the same vein, Mosca sees it as an organized minority obeying a single impulse that holds domination over the unorganized majority. Michels, broadening the concept in a fluid dimension, sees it as those persons who can control the apathetic, indolent and slavish people who are susceptible to flattering and obsequious in the presence of strength. Wright Mills, cited in Ekwonna (2016, p.208), corroborated the above definition by defining the concept as "those who hold the leading positions in the strategic hierarchies."

The basic tenets and assumptions of the elite theory include:

-) That in every society, democratic or otherwise, there exists a minority that dominates every facet of public space.

- J The method and strategy of attaining the leadership position differ from place to place.
- J The minority cannot be dominated or controlled because it possesses the mass mind of indolence.
- J The minority also rules and control because of its organizing abilities.
- J The Elites have a high level of solidarity and self-consciousness which provides cohesion and conspirational goals.
- J They see and apply power as both currency and commodity which must be sought after to gain more power (Ekwonna (2016, p.208).

In application, this theory appropriately explains the pathetic scenario of the Nigerian political space that has been dominated by the political elite since the return to civilian and democratic rule in 1999. This stratification has classified the political space into the rulers (elite) and the ruled (Masses). The worst-hit among the masses are the youths who make up a greater percentage of the voting populations.

Logically, since politics is a game of number, it would not be out of place to think that the youths are meant to occupy virtually all elective positions in the country. However, the situation becomes pathetic as these youths, over the years, have been relegated to the background. This is made possible through the use of political, economic and state powers to perpetuate the will of the elite. One may tend to ask; why have the elites grown so strong that they dominate the youth majority in the society? Why have the youths failed to realize themselves and the potency of their voting power? Are the Nigerian youths truly lazy as claimed by President Mohammadu Buhari? The answers are not farfetched. Just like the theory stated, in every democratic society, there must exist a dominance of a small minority who controls the affairs of the large majority. The Nigerian elite have grown so strong over the years, because they control all shades and forms of power within the country and they are so organized to the extent of conforming to oligarchic tendencies of allowing powers rotate only among the selected minority and their descendants. Secondly, the youths have failed to realize themselves because the elitist power of control does not just affect the physical but also control the minds. According to popular belief, the northern elite who are better placed and also well educated than the youth majority make them believe they are born of blue blood and present themselves as saviours who can only give money and food items only enough for the youths to reproduce themselves. This ideological position by the elite has suppressed the consciousness of the youths and, at the same time, stolen the potency of their voting power, thereby depriving them of opportunities of vying for and consequently occupying elective positions in Nigeria.

The elite created a constitution that almost barred the youths from contesting for elective positions by stipulating age brackets for certain positions. This age attachment for certain elective positions led to the clamour for vibrancy and subsequent demand for the passage of the Not Too Young to Run Act of 2018, which clamped down on the age bracket and gave room for more youth participation in the 2019 general elections. It is also pertinent to state that, despite the passage of the Act, the youths were still barred economically as many who had the intention could not purchase the declaration of interest forms in leading political parties, due to the exorbitant costs of the forms.

The Not Too Young to Run Act of 2018 and Youth Participation in the 2019 General Elections

Prior to the passage of the Not Too Young to Run Act of 2018, the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) stipulated the age limits for eligibility to contest for elective positions. Section 65 (1); Section 106 (B); Section 131 (B) and Section 171 (B) of the Nigerian Constitution provide the age limits for qualification for the offices of President, Governor, Senator, House of Representative member, and membership of State House of Assembly as 40, 35, 35, 30 and 30 years, respectively.

The NTYTRA alters the constitutional provision and gives room for persons below the aforementioned age brackets to contest for elective positions in the country. Today, the new law allows persons from age 30 to contest in the presidential election, while people from the age range of 30, 30, 25 and 25 can contest for the Governorship, Senate, House of Representatives and House of Assembly positions, respectively (Okogba, 2018a). The NTYTRA is expected to expand the field for more potential candidates, promote democracy, and promote youth development

and empowerment, as promised by the 8th National Assembly (Daily post, 2018). It is supposed to serve as an opportunity for the youth to decide the future of the country and agenda for paradigm shift, especially in the introduction of young suitable and qualified Nigerians, in their numbers, into administrative, leadership and governance positions in the country (Okogba, 2018b), and enable youths to contribute to nation-building through public service.

The signing of the NTYTR bill into law on 31st of May, 2018 by the President raised hopes and aspirations of citizens. In line with this, Amadi (2018) posits that it is a victory for democracy, a historic event and opportunity for the youths to decide the future of the Country. However, the results of the general elections did not make any difference from what was obtainable before the enactment of the Act. This is because the presidential flag bearers of most political parties that contested 2019 general elections in Nigeria were not youth. One begins to wonder the essence of the NTYTRA since it failed to incorporate and increase youth involvement in the electoral process, with regard to party primaries and the actual election.

We anchored our analyses on 3 basic elective positions to show the number of youths occupying elective positions. The 3 elective offices include (i) Office of the President (ii) Senate and (iii) Governors.

Table 1: Selected list of popular Presidential candidates that contested in 2019 general elections and their ages

S/N	Name	(Present Age)	Present/Previously Held Position
1	Mohammedu Buhari	75 Years	1. Military Head of State 2. President 2015 – date
2	Atiku Abubakar	71 Years	1. Former Custom Boss 2. Former Vice President
3	Ibrahim Dankwambo	56 years	Governor of Gombe State
4	Sule Lamido	69 Years	Former Jigawa State Governor
5	Ahmad Makarfi	61 Years	Former PDP Caretaker Chairman
6	Taminu Turaki	65 Years	Former Minister of Special Duties
7	Ayo Fayose	57 Years	Governor of Ekiti State
8	Donald Duke	57 Years	Former Governor of Cross River State
9	Kingsley Moghalu	55 Years	Former Deputy Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria
10	Olufunmilayo Adesanya-Davies	56 Years	Lecturer
11	Remi Sonaiya	63 Years	Lecturer
12	Adesanya Fegbenro-Bryon	59 Years	Chairman/CEO of Mothergold Limited
13	Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso	61 Years	1 Senator 2. Former Governor of Kano State
14	Ali Modu Sheriff	62 Years	1 Former Senator 2. Former Governor of Borno State

Source: Etim and Duke (2019) A Critical Assessment of the “Not Too Young to Run Act and Democracy in Nigeria

Table 1 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 is 55 years of age was the youngest popular candidate that contested in the presidential election. It is imperative to note that there were other younger candidates that contested, like Omoyele Sowore who contested at the age of 48 on the platform of African Action Congress (AAC), but the study concentrated more on those who are popular in the political arena. The foregoing analysis shows that the NTYTRA has not yet fulfilled its purpose or that the youth lack the disposition (political awareness, material resources, and leadership potentials) to embrace the golden opportunity of becoming the President of Nigeria.

Table 2: Nigeria's 109 senators and their ages

State	S/N	District	Candidate	Gender	Party	Age	DOB
Abia	1	North	Kalu Orji Uzor	M	APC	59 years	1960
	2	Central	Orji Theodore Ahamefule	M	PDP	69 years	1950
	3	South	Enyinnaya H. Abaribe	M	PDP	64 years	1955
Adamawa	4	North	Ishaku Elisha Cliff	M	PDP	41 years	1978
	5	South	Yaroe Binos Dauda	M	PDP	63 years	1956
	6	Central	Dahiru Aishatu Ahmed	F	APC	47 years	1952
Akwa Ibom	7	North East	Akpan Bassey Albert	M	PDP	45 years	1974
	8	North West	Christopher Stephen Ekpenyong	M	PDP	64 years	1955
	9	South	Eyakenyi Akon Etim	M	PDP	58 years	1961
Anambra	10	North	Oduah Stella Adaeze Princess	F	PDP	56 years	1963
	11	Central	Uche Lilian Ekwunife	F	PDP	47 years	1972
	12	South	Patrick Ifeanyi Ubah	M	YPP	47 years	1972
Bauchi	13	South	Lawal Yahaya Gumau	M	APC	51 years	1968
	14	Central	Jika Dauda Haluru	M	APC	42 years	1977
	15	North	Bulkachuwa Adamu muhammad	M	APC	78 years	1941
Bayelsa	16	East	Degi Eremenyo Biobaraku Wangagra	M	APC	59 years	1960
	17	Central	Diri Douye	M	PDP	59 years	1960
	18	West	Ewhrudjakpo Lawrence O.	M	PDP	58 years	1969
Benue	19	North East	Gabriel Torwua Suswam	M	PDP	53 years	1966
	20	North West	Emmanuel Yisa Orker-jev	M	PDP	55 years	1964
	21	South	Patrick Abba Moro	M	PDP	60 years	1960
Borno	22	North	Kyari Abubakar Shaib	M	APC	55 years	1964
	23	Central	Shettima Kashim	M	APC	52 years	1967
	24	South	Ndume Mohammed Ali	M	APC	59 years	1960
Cross River	25	North	Oko Rose Okoji	F	PDP	62 years	1957
	26	Central	Onor Sandy Ojang	M	PDP	52 years	1967
	27	South	Bassey Gershom Henry	M	PDP	56 years	1963
Delta	28	Central	Omo-Agege Ovie Augustine	M	APC	55 years	1964
	29	North	Nwaoboshi Peter Onyeluka	M	PDP	61 years	1958
	30	South	Manager James Ebiowou	M	PDP	58 years	1961
Ebonyi	31	North	Egwu Samuel Ominyi	M	PDP	64 years	1955
	32	Central	Ogba Joseph Obinna	M	PDP	58 years	1961
	33	South	Micheal Ama Nnachi	M	PDP	50 years	1969
Edo	34	Central	Ordia Akhimienmona Clifford	M	PDP	58 years	1961
	35	North	Alimikhena Francis Asekhame	M	APC	71 years	1948
	36	South	Urhoghide Matthew Aisagbonriodion	M	PDP	63 years	1956
Ekiti	37	North	Adetunmbi Olubunmi Ayodeji	M	APC	63 years	1956
	38	Central	Bamiddle Micheal Opeyemi	M	APC	55 years	1964
	39	South	Adeyeye Clement Adebayo	M	APC	61 years	1958
Enugu	40	East	Nnamani Chimaroke Ogbonnia	M	PDP	59 years	1960
	41	West	Ekweremadu Ike	M	PDP	56 years	1963
	42	North	Utazi Godfrey Chukwuka	M	PDP	57 years	1962
Gombe	43	Central	Goje Mohammed Danjuma	M	APC	66 years	1953
	44	South	Amos Bulus Kilawangs	M	APC	59 years	1960
	45	North	Alkali Saidu Ahmed	M	APC	48 years	1971
Imo	46	East	Onyewuchi Ezenwa Francis	M	PDP	50 years	1969
	47		Rochas Okorocho	M	APC	57 years	1962
	48	North	Benjamin Uwajumogu	M	APC	51 years	1968
Jigawa	49	South West	Mohammed Sabo	M	APC	58 years	1961
	50	North East	Hassan Ibrahim Hadeua	M	APC	52 years	1967
	51	North West	Sankara Danladi Abdullahi	M	APC	64 years	1955
Kaduna	52	North	Kwari Suleiman Abou	M	APC	56 years	1963

	53	Central	Sani Uba	M	APC	47 years	1972
	54	South	Laah Danjuma Tella	M	PDP	58 years	1961
Kano	55	Central	Shekarau Ibrahim	M	APC	63 years	1956
	56	North	Barau Jibrin L.	M	APC	59 years	1960
	57	South	Gaya Ibrahim Kabiru	M	APC	66 years	1953
Katsina	58	North	Babba Ahmad Kaita	M	APC	50 years	1960
	59	South	Mandiya Bello	M	APC	54 years	1965
	60	Central	Abdullahi Kabir	M	APC	58 years	1961
Kebbi	61	North	Aboullahi Abubakar Yahaya	M	APC	68 years	1951
	62	Central	Adamu Mainasara Aliero Muhammad	M	APC	62 years	1957
	63	South	Na Allah Bala Ibn	M	APC	56 years	1963
Kogi	64	Central	Yakubu Oseni	M	APC	43 years	1976
	65	East	Isah Jibrin	M	APC	45 years	1974
	66	West	Smart Adeyemi	M	APC	59 years	1960
Kwara	67	North	Umar Suleiman Sadiq	M	APC	48 years	1978
	68	Central	Oloriegbe Yahaya Ibrahim	M	APC	57 years	1962
	69	South	Ashiru Oyelola Yisa	M	APC	63 years	1956
Lagos	70	Central	Tinubu Olurem Shade	F	APC	58 years	1961
	71	East	Osinowo Siriru Adebayo	M	APC	62 years	1957
	72	West	Adeola Solomon Olamilekan	M	APC	49 years	1970
Nasarwa	73	North	Akwashiki Godiya	M	APC	48 years	1971
	74	West	Aboullahi Adamu	M	APC	72 years	1947
	75	South	Al-Makura Umaru Tanko	M	APC	65 years	1954
Niger	76	East	Mohammed Sani Musa	M	APC	54 years	1965
	77	North	Abdullahi Aliyu Sabi	M	APC	51 years	1958
	78	South	Bima Muhammad Enagi	M	APC	59 years	1960
Ogun	79	Central	Amosun Ibikunle Omolaja	M	APC	60 years	1959
	80	East	Mustapha Ramoni Olalekan	M	APC	58 years	1961
	81	West	Odebiyi tolulope Akinremi	M	APC	54 years	1965
Ondo	82	North	Boroface Robert Ajayi	M	APC	69 years	1950
	83	Central	Akinyelure Patrick Ayo	M	PDP	62 years	1957
	84	South	Nicholas Tofowomo	M	PDP	59 years	1960
Osun	85	Central	Surajudeen Ajibola Basiru	M	APC	46 years	1973
	86	East	Fadahunsi Francis Adenigba	M	PDP	66 years	1953
	87	West	Oriolowo Adelere Adeyemi	M	APC	62 years	1957
Oyo	88	Central	Folarin Teslim Kolawole	M	APC	54 years	1965
	89	North	Buhari Abdulfatai	M	APC	54 years	1965
	90	South	Kola Ademola Balogun	M	PDP	62 years	1957
Plateau	91	South	Ignatus Longjan	M	APC	72 years	1947
	92	Central	Dimka Hezekiah	M	APC	66 years	1953
	93	North	Gyang Istifanus Dung	M	PDP	55 years	1964
Rivers	94	East	George Sekibo	M	PDP	61 years	1958
	95	South East	Mpigi Barinada	M	PDP	57 years	1962
	96	West	Betty Apiafi	F	PDP	49 years	1970
Sokoto	97	East	Gobir Ibrahim Abdullahi	M	APC	65 years	1954
	98	North	Wamako Aliyu Magatakarda	M	APC	65 years	1954
	98	South	Ibrahim Dambaha	M	PDP	66 years	1953
Taraba	100	South	Bwacha Emmanuel	M	PDP	56 years	1963
	101	Central	Yusuf Abubakar Yusuf	M	APC	62 years	1957
	102	North	Isa Shuaibu Lau	M	PDP	63 years	1956
Yobe	103	East	Gaidam Ibrahim Alhaji	M	APC	62 years	1957
	104	North	Ibrahim Ahmad Lawal	M	APC	59 years	1960
	105	South	Bomai Ibrahim Mohammed	M	APC	58 years	1961
Zamfara	106	North	Ya'U Sahabi	M	PDP	63 years	1956
	107	Central	Muhammed Hassan	M	PDP	59 years	1960
	108	West	Lawal Hassan Anka	M	PDP	69 years	1950

FCT	109	FCT	Tanimu Philip Aduda	M	PDP	50 years	1969
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Sources: INEC (2019) and Iroanusi (2019)

Table 2 presents a list of senators who contested and won senatorial seats. The lists as presented reveals that youths though present are not fully represented in the House of Senate. The ratio in terms of youth to Adults/Elders representation is 5:109 which almost insignificant. This also gives the average age of the senators 5.9.6 approximately 60 years still far above the stipulated youth limits in Nigeria of 45 years. The point to be made here is that the NTYTRA of 2018 made no impact in terms of youth occupation of senatorial seats because even the few senators that falls within the age bracket of youths have occupied the seats before the passage of the law.

Table 3: Showing list of Governors after the 2019 general elections and their age

S/n	State	Names of Governors	Political Party	DOB	Age
1	Abia	Okezie Ikpeazu	PDP	1964	55
2	Adamawa	Ahmadu Umaru Fintri	APC	1967	52
3	Akwaibom	Udom Gabriel Emmanuel	PDP	1966	53
4	Anambra	Willie Obiano	APGA	1955	64
5	Bauchi	Bala Mohammed	PDP	1958	61
6	Bayelsa	Siriake Henry Dickson	PDP	1966	53
7	Benue	Samuel Ortom	PDP	1961	58
8	Borno	Babagana Umaru	APC	1969	50
9	Cross River	Benedict Ayade	PDP	1968	51
10	Delta	Ifeanyi Okowa	PDP	1959	60
11	Ebonyi	Dave Umahi	PDP	1963	56
12	Edo	Godwin Obaseke	APC	1959	60
13	Ekiti	Kayode Fayemi	APC	1965	54
14	Enugu	Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi	PDP	1964	55
15	Gombe	Mohammed Inuwa Yahaya	APC	1961	58
16	Imo	Ihedioha Chukwuemeka	PDP	1965	54
17	Jigawa	Mohammed Badaru Abubakar	APC	1962	57
18	Kaduna	Nasiru el-Rufai	APC	1960	59
19	Kano	Umar Ganduje	APC	1949	70
20	Katsina	Aminu Bello Masari	APC	1950	69
21	Kebbi	Abubakar Atiku Bagudu	APC	1961	58
22	Kogi	Yahaya Bello	APC	1975	44
23	Kwara	AbdulRahman AbdulRasaq	APC	1960	59
24	Lagos	Babajide Sanwo-Olu	APC	1965	54
25	Nassarawa	Abdullahi Sule	APC	1959	60
26	Niger	Abubakar Sani Bello	APC	1967	51
27	Ogun	Dapo Abiodun	APC	1960	59
28	Ondo	Oluwarotimi Akeredolu	APC	1956	63
29	Osun	Adegboyega Oyetola	APC	1954	65
30	Oyo	Oluwaseyi Makinde	APC	1967	52
31	Plateau	Simon Lalong	APC	1963	56
32	Rivers	Ezenwo Nyesom Wike	APC	1963	56
33	Sokoto	Aminu Waziri Tambuwal	APC	1966	53
34	Taraba	Darius Ishaku	PDP	1954	65
35	Yobe	Mai Mala Buni	APC	1967	52
36	Zamfara	Bello Matawalle	PDP	1969	50
37	FCT	Mohammed Bello	APC	1959	60

Source: INEC, (2019)

The table above showing the List of governors and their ages also corroborates tables 2 and 1 to show youths less occupation of elective positions. From the table, it is evident that the youngest of the Governors is Yahaya Bello of Kogi State, who came into office in 2015 at the age of 40. He holds the records for the youngest governor

within the age bracket. It is important to note that Yahaya Bello benefited from the sudden death of Prince Abubakar Audu who was leading in the inconclusive Kogi State gubernatorial election of November, 2015. In fact, Yahaya Bello came second in the APC gubernatorial primary election in 2015 which had foreclosed his chances of becoming a governor. The oldest, on the other hand, is Governor Umar Ganduje of Kano State who is 70 years of age. The ratio here is even on a decline as we have 1:36/37 as the case may be. This number is infinitesimal as it puts the average age at 57 which is also far above the youth age limit of 45. It is also glaring here that the NTYTRA did not lead to youth take-over of gubernatorial seats.

What does this analysis present? This simply means that the Act as presented by the National assembly and signed by the President is encumbered with lots of impediments and lacunas that prevented its impact on the occupation of elective positions by the youths of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Some of these impediments include that the Act cannot fully function if the youths cannot purchase declaration of interest forms in major political parties as a result of the high cost of interest forms and control of party structures by “Strong Men” sitting on weak party Institutions.

A focused group discussion (FGD) consisting of a 5-member panel selected across the faculties and departments of Renaissance University was carried out to interrogate the Not Too Young to Run Act and youth participation in the 2019 general elections. A random sampling was adopted to select discussants that were knowledgeable in the topic. Five open-ended questions were posed to elicit the views of the participants:

- J Are you aware that there is a Not Too Young to Run Act?
- J How Knowledgeable are you about it?
- J In your opinion, do you think the Act has enhanced youth participation in the 2019 general elections?
- J What were the challenges the youths faced in getting party nominations and subsequently elected into elective position in the 2019 general elections?
- J What can be done to increase youth participation in subsequent elections?

All the discussants answered in the affirmative on their awareness of the Not Too young to Run Act. On their level knowledge about the Act, 4 of the discussants claimed high knowledge of the Act by stating when it was passed into law and the basic content of the Act, while one of them claimed little knowledge of the Act as he had only heard of it but could not tell its basic contents.

All the discussants but one stated that the NTYTRA did not increase youth participation in the 2019 general elections. Majority opinion indicated that the Act might have increased awareness and interest in the youths but did not translate to more youth occupation of elective positions. One of the discussants varied as he cited cases of the 2019 general election where a youth from Nnewi South constituency challenged the sitting member of the House of Representatives and won the position.

The group also identified some of the challenges of the youths in getting nomination forms in their political parties and failure to subsequently win elective positions to include: High cost of nomination forms for mega political parties, poor finance and high rate of poverty among the youths, political godfatherism and issue of anointed candidates, elitist campaign contents, improper timing, lack of political strategies, lack of political orientation and endemic corruption.

The discussants suggested the way forward for the youths in subsequent elections to include; increased publicity to increase awareness of the Act, creation of level playground to reduce political bottlenecks, increased government efforts towards value reorientation to change youths’ perception of politics, political party prioritization and formation of strong party structures by the youths.

Finally, most of the discussants noted that the Act made impact but the impact was insignificant in terms of youths’ occupation of elective positions. Nevertheless, they also stated that the 2019 general elections may not be a

yardstick to judge the performance of the Act as the Act was a few months old before the 2019 general elections. They also agreed that, with creation of more awareness and proper political value reorientation, the Act may enhance youths' participation in subsequent elections.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The 2019 general elections have come and gone, amidst petitions challenging the conduct of the elections. A critical assessment of the Act reveals that the Act was a mere political gimmick played to the gallery to gain public attention and commendation, without any intention of making it a reality. Reducing the constitutional age by signing the Act is on one hand while allowing the youths into the political space to compete favourably is on the other.

Modern democracies all over the world have gone beyond Elitism, Aristocratic and Oligarchic tendencies to give credence to equal chance and opportunities for youths to contest elections and occupy elective positions. It is a pity that elections in Africa and Nigeria in particular have remained expensive just to perpetuate chauvinistic interest among the elite class.

However, we may not be making excuses for the youths for their inability to take over the political space, because one may also argue that political power is to be taken, not given. We strongly posit that the Not Too Young to Run Act of 2018 did not lead to more youth occupation of elective positions. Hence, the enactment of the Act is good but not good enough, because other legal, economic and social considerations must be made to make the Act a reality.

It is with the forgoing that the paper recommends that a provision be made in the Act to exclusively reserve specific elective positions for the youth and political parties; drastically reduce the cost of declaration of interest forms to accommodate the interest of the youths.

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