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Young Women's Struggle for Political Participation in Nigeria:
Examining the 'Not Too Young To Run' Movement

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Acronyms

NTYTR	Not Too Young To Run Movement
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
SDT	Social Dominant Theory
UND	United Nations Development Programme
YIAGA	Youths Initiative for Africa Governance Advocacy

Dedication

This research paper is dedicated to Jehovah God and those young women and girls suffering from different forms of discrimination and marginalization across Nigeria.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

This study explores the experiences of young women struggling for political participation in Nigeria, taking the case study of the pressure by the NTYTR (Not Too Young To Run) movement for the passage of the Age Reduction bill in Nigeria. In 2018, the Bill was successfully passed through the Nigerian Parliament and came into force after two years successful youth led social movement. The age for running for various political offices were reduced, for the House of Representative and State House of Assemblies from 30 years to 25 and President from 40 to 35. Young people across Nigeria collaborate to ensure the Bill was passed, during the 2019 election, more male youth entered politics as a result, but women youth and older women were left behind in the process despite playing a key role in the movement. The study explores how and why this happened and seeks to find a remedy to make lower age provisions work for young women as well as young men. Based on semi-structured interviews, two thirds with young women, one third with young men, and a focus group discussion, as well as observation, the study opened debate with over 40 young people, with a focus on women and gender issues.

Relevance to Development Studies

Women's political participation is still a major challenge because Nigeria still does not have a system that protects and promotes political inclusion of women. One of the targets of the 'Not Too Young To Run' movement is to demystify the whole concept of political inclusion, projecting political inclusion as a norm and as an important part of human development. The leader-ship structure of the NTYTR has a fair representation of men and women in the national strategy team. YIAGA in which I was one of the Project officers that coordinated the Ready to Run phase of NTYTR to project women's leadership as a norm, to inspire young women to run for any public office without fear or intimidation. Women participated in all the activities of the movement to show and inspire other women to aspire for more, and that it is possible to produce a more inclusive form of politics.

Keywords

Chapter 1: 'Not Too Young To Run' Movement and The Gender Imbalance in The Outcome

1.1. Introduction

This study is about struggles young women in Nigeria face in participating in politics as candidates. The reason behind the difficulties faced by female youths in politics in the country can be traced to historical discrimination against both men and women in election processes as voters. These discriminations were deeply enshrined in the Clifford constitution of 1922 (Oguniran, 2015, Quadiri and Thomas, 2018). Under this constitution, only adult males residing in two cities, Lagos and Calabar, could vote, and only if they had a gross annual income of at least equivalent to N100 (a lot of money in those days). In 1946 the Richard Constitution was introduced, and this again reaffirmed the exclusion of women from the electorate but reduced the gross annual income for males allowed to vote to N50, a slight concession after the war. The Macpherson constitution of 1951 then finally removed the monetary and property conditions set by both Clifford and Richard constitutions but reserved the rights to vote for tax-paying adult males only. It was not until the 1979 Constitution, the first constitution since independence that voting rights was accorded to all Nigerian women (Esomchi & Akoji, 2016). When men started voting as early as 1922, it was only 57 years later that women in all parts of the country were able to vote without restrictions (Obasanjo, 2002).

The above evidence clearly shown that women exclusion in electoral politics and decision making is not only because of patriarchal system but one of the colonial heritages to Nigeria. During pre-colonial Nigeria women has equal rights when it comes to communal decision making and electoral processes. Long before the arrival of the British colonial master's Nigerian women was operating at equal level with their male counterparts, they were part of local decision-making, and they were given the same respect as men. Also, some Nigerian women also participate in persecuting tribal wars and safe guarding their communities. Unfortunately, the change from a communal society during British colonialism to a modern society therefore changed the status of Nigerian women till date. The indiscriminate marginalization of Nigeria women in decision making during this period was the major factor behind the historic 'Aba women riot of 1929' (Oke, 2011).

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Most of countries across the world – an estimated three quarters - limit youth from running for public office, even though youths from age 18 are eligible to vote in almost all countries. Most candidates have to wait until they are aged 30 or 40 before they can be eligible to aspire for political office in many countries, particularly in Nigeria (UNDP, 2017). Such benchmarks have produced huge gaps among the political leaders and youth constituency mostly in some countries with large youth populations (UNDP, 2017:36). The consequences of this phenomenon is that "youth votes will not lead towards a higher representation of young people; the lack of trust widens between young people and political institutions; a perception arises and persists that participation is not going to make any difference; and elected leaders have no or only limited accountability towards the youth electorate" (UNDP, 2017:36). Therefore, 73% of countries today still restrict young people from running for office, even when they can vote at the age of 18 (UNDP, 2017).

Historically, Nigeria youths have always been at the forefront of political process and leadership in the country. Nigerian youths between the age 21 and 35 were responsible for Independence from Britain in 1960. In fact, Anthony Enahoro that moved the motion of independence in the 1958 was 21 years old after successful agitation they started as Student Union Activists when in the university to challenged colonial rule (Onyekpe, 2007; Ekanola, 2006; Afolayan, 2018). Even, the truncation of democratic rule in 1966 by the Military did not produced old guards, the Military head of state Yakubu Gowon that emerged as the country leader was 29 years old when he took the mantle of leadership (Afolayan, 2018). However, all these youths are males without a single female youth involved as a leader in the country independent struggle from the British.

The Election of 1979 and 1983 all witnessed massive participation of youths as voters and as contestants because all citizens of Nigeria who are 21 years and above are qualified for election as honourable member of the National House of Representatives; and the age qualification for Senate is 30 years based on the 1979 constitution on age eligibility to run for office. The 1999 election witnessed a decline in youths' participation as the 1999 constitution as amended put age restrictions to youth's participation in running for public office. Age 30 for State House of Assemblies and House of Representatives, and age 40 for president. Since then, the role of youths whom are predominantly males in electoral process has been cannon fodders, thugs and hooligans to foment trouble, disrupt electoral process, and perpetuate

electoral violence (Yahaya and Bello, 2019; Bamgbose, 2012; Inokoba & Maliki, 2011; Nwolise, 2007).

Though, the year 2016 witness the emergence of a revolutionary movement that seek to alter 'section 65 (1) (b), Section 106 (b), and Section 131 (b) of the federal republic of Nigeria' constitution to lower age qualification for the office of the president, membership of the federal House of Representatives and State Assembly (YIAGA, 2018). The movement popularly known as Not Too Young To Run (NTYTR) initiated by YIAGA Africa, a Nigeria based youth organization was later adopted by the United Nations (UN) to make it a world-wide campaign. The drivers of the movement believe that the if youths, both male and female are legally permitted to run for office, the more the young people will be motivated in turning out to register and turn out to votes, which is crucial in the political process of the country. Most especially when one considered that about 52% of registered voters in the 2015 election are young people between the ages 18 – 35 years (YIAGA, 2018). The campaign was a success because the aims and objectives of the movement: to alter the Nigerian constitution, reduce the age for running for public office especially senate, state house of assembly, presidential, and governorship was achieved. Although that of the Governorship and senate wasn't reduced but the other offices were. Asides from altering the Nigerian constitution, the movement has also achieved much in increasing youth participation in the country evidenced in the 2019 elections.

1.2. NTYTR: A Success Story for Male Youths, Let-down For Female Youths

Since Nigeria return to civilian rule, the country has conducted 6 general elections; 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and recently the 2019 general election. The reports from these elections show that young people were massively excluded and marginalized despite their positive contributions during these elections as electoral officers, ad hoc staff, party agents, and party candidates. Things only got better during the 2019 elections because of the passage of the age reduction Bill into law. The unfavourable constitution legal framework contributed to the low representation of youth in public office. To tackle this, the Age Reduction Bill was passed into law to lower the age for running public office. The law effectively lowered the age for contestants to stand in presidential elections from the age of 40 to 35 years. Membership of the National House of Representatives have been reduced from the age of

30 to the age of 25 years. Also, the legislative arm at the level of the regional states was also lowered from 30 years of age to 25 years. With the Bill, there has been an opening of the political participation space for a new breed of young contestants for various political offices in the 2019 general elections (YIAGA, 2019:2).

Figure 1: Number of Young Elected Legislator in the 2019 general election in Nigeria

Youths Candidacy increased from 21% in 2015 to 34% in 2019 (YIAGA, 2019:7) with 46.3% out of the 51.11% of youth's voters turned out to votes (YIAGA, 2019:11). Across the 991 seats in all 36 State Houses of Assembly in Nigeria, 68 members - elect are between the ages of 31 and 35 who will sit and legislate at the state level. This represents only 7% of the members of the State Houses of Assembly. As a result of the age reduction legislation that was passed by both the National Assembly and State Assemblies, and assented to by the President on 31 May 2018, the total number of 22 youth candidates benefitted directly from the Not Too Young To Run Act in the State Houses of Assembly between the ages of 25 – 30 (YIAGA, 2019:9).

Table 1: Youth candidates before and after the reduction of age limitation

Position	2015	2019
Governor	5.3%	9.8%
Deputy Governor	16.1%	22.9%
Senate	10%	13.5%
House of Representative	18%	27.4%
State House of Assembly	29%	41.8%
Overall percentage of Candidacy	21%	34.2%

Source: YIAGA (2019c:9)

While the outcome of the campaign as demonstrated in Figures 1 and 2 and Table 1 is so far a relative success story, what the data and statistics of the outcome as discussed above is that the NTYTR has tackled some main obstacle to youth participation in politics, but not all; especially not gender differences. However, the positive action to close the representation gap between the older generation and the youths as further widen the gender gap between males and females when it comes to representation. The problem with the data above is that, on face value, one might be obliged to celebrate a 13.2% increase in youths' candidacy (from 21% in 2015 to 34.2% in 2019), and an increase in their electoral representation which is a success for the movement. On the other hand, there is little to celebrate as the outcome of the elections still show a gender imbalance. Table 2 below show the gender differences between male and female youths that are direct beneficiaries of the age reduction law championed by the NTYTR movement

Table 2: Disaggregation of NTYTR success story by Gender

Group	Male	Female
Youth candidates for House of Rep (Age 25-29)	206	37
Youth candidates for House of Rep (Age 30-35)	896	123
House of Rep No of Seats Available	360	360
House of Reps No of Seats won	13	0
Elected as Speaker House of Rep	0	0
Youth candidate for House of Assembly	206	37

House Assembly No of Seats	991	991
House of Assembly Seats won	22	0
Elected as Speaker House of Assembly	4	0
Percentage of seat gain in House of Rep due to the reduction age Bill	3.7%	0%
Percentage of seat gain in House of Assembly due to the reduction age Bill	2.2%	0%
Candidacy Ratio by Gender in 2015	69%	20%
Candidacy ratio by Gender after Age Reduction Act in 2019	87%	13%

Source: Adapted from YIAGA Africa NTYTR 2019 Report

Women political participation is still a major challenge because Nigeria still does not have a system that protects and promotes political inclusion of women. One of the targets of the NTYTR is to demystify the whole concept of political inclusion, projecting political inclusion as a norm and as an important part of human development. The leadership structure of the NTYTR has a fair representation of men and women in the national strategy team. YIAGA in which I was one of the Project officers that coordinated the Ready To Run phase of NTYTR to project women leadership as a norm, encourages women to run for any political office without fear and intimidation. Women participated in all the activities of the movement to show or inspire other women to aspire for more, and that it is possible.

YIAGA African Initiative also coordinated Initiatives such as "SheWins" that focused on inspiring and providing technical support to young female aspirants running for different political position to run a successful campaign. The initiative also trains media personalities to better tell and project and amplify the stories of young female politicians running for different offices. Free spots were provided on TV and radio stations for young women to promote their campaign under the ReadyToRun program. At the ReadyToRun trainings, women were given a preferential treatment and a lot of our partners provided support to other females running for political offices on how to run a successful campaign, fundraising, how to engage with key stakeholders etc. However, the outcome of the 2019 youth's participation election data as disaggregated in the Table 2 above generate some serious concerns. It incites the need for a critical analysis that will look beyond the political rights of youths to aspire for office in order to partake fully in governance and to focus on the plight of female youths in the country.

The celebrated and highlighted overall success story of NTYTR further pushes young girls that are struggling to take up elective positions further down the ladder of leadership. The situation of the young women appears to have worsened because the reduction of the age limit in the constitution that saw the number of male youth's candidacy significantly increase to about 18%, female youth's candidacy witnessed a 7% reduction as demonstrated above in Table 2. While the lower eligibility ages remove legal barriers standing in the way of young people coming forward, thus enhancing the potential supply of younger candidates (Krook and Nugent, 2018:65), it appears that there are more barriers that are particularly affecting young women to fulfill their potential politically.

1.3. NTYTR and The Global Perspective

The participation of youth in electoral and democratic processes is a fundamental human right recognized in different international and regional legal treaties and conventions (International IDEA, 2015:2). However, it has been the case that the younger people had to endure the message from the ruling elite that they were not yet old enough to run for political office (Trantidis, 2016:154). A typical example can be seen during the presidential campaign debate in Nigeria where Itse Sagay, the 'Presidential Advisory Committee against Corruption' Chair, mentioned in an interview that a young person is not competent enough to be the President of Nigeria, urging youth's to start from the smallest position until they build their expertise with age (Olaniyan 2018: 1). Many evidences of bad leadership by old politicians in Nigeria has shown that leadership has nothing to do with age but continuous learning and practice (Uzor, 2018:2)

When Ghana is considered, a country which is in the same region as Nigeria, there is no similar age limitation in political participation for the youth. The authoritative policy document on youth which is the national youth policy of Ghana articulates the term of youth in its definition as young men and women who fall within the age range of 15 years and 35 years. The minimum age for contesting to parliament in Ghana is 21 years as specified in the article 94, sub section one (a) of the Ghanaian constitution of 1992. As recent as the year 2012, the Ghanaian parliamentary elections produced 44 parliamentarians aged between 21 years to 40 years in that election alone. This was a record number since the return to civilian rule in 1992 (Gyampo, 2015) this was again surpassed in the year 2016 with the increase in the number of young people elected surpassing the 2012 figure. It was in the 2016 general election that Ms. Francisca Mensah who at the time was 25 years of age became the youngest

parliamentarian in Ghana. Furthermore, the Ghanaian electoral policy does not recognize a 'gender quota system' for women as applicable in Nigerian and some African countries.

However, in recent years, the international community has prioritized youth's participation in politics by developing strategies and canvassing for a larger share of young people to be elected into the national parliaments (Krook and Nugent, 2018:60). This has led to reforms in several countries (for example, Uganda, Kenya, Morocco, Rwanda, Tunisia, Kyrgyzstan, Peru Sri Lanka) introducing a different form of quota system to increase youth's participation in the political process (Kuwonu, 2017; UNDP, 2017). For instance, Article 100 of the 2010 Kenya constitution reserved twelve parliamentary seats for youths to be nominated by political parties, 30 reserved seats by the Morocco electoral law, 5 reserved seats in Uganda parliaments, the National Youths Council of Rwanda is entitled to have two elected representatives in the Chamber of Deputies (Kuwonu, 2017:8- 9).

Also, youths have campaigned effortlessly across the globe to promote the political and electoral rights of young people aspiring for different leadership positions and political offices by seeking to reduce the qualification age for political office. Thus, in 2007, a movement called "How Old is Old Enough" which started back in 2003 fought successfully to lower the age requirement for youth candidacy in election in Wales, Scotland, and England from age 21 to 18years which is consistent with the voting age in the UK (Hamitton, 2011; Kenealy et al., 2017; Eichorn, 2018). A similar movement emerged in Turkey where youth pressured their government to amend the Constitution to decrease the eligibility age for parliament candidacy from 30years to 25 years in the year 2006. Also, in 2017 the age was further reduced to 18 years to be eligible to be voted for as a member of parliament (TRT World, 2017:5-7).

In Nigeria, the #NotTooYoungtoRun movement embarked in a similar mission to promote inclusive democracy for all gender by reducing age barrier limiting young people aspiring for the legislative and executive branches and serves as inspiration for the UN global campaign (Onwughalu & Obiorah, 2018). Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa with over 180 million populations which is the focus of this study recently amended the Constitution to reduce the minimum age requirement to run for political office (Onwughalu & Obiorah; 2018; Krook and Nugent, 2018). This was done to encourage youth's participation in the political process because; "most often than not, governments in Africa are reluctant to include youth in the formal political systems" (Mengistu, 2017:1).

Prior to the passage of the NTYTR Bill into law, Nigeria was one of the countries with a constitution that restricted the right of young persons to seek elective positions on account of age prescriptions. The lowest age for political office in the country is 25 years old for councillorship position in the local government county, while the age limit for House of Representative and Houses of Assembly was 30 years as stated in sections 65(5)(a) and Section 106(b) of the 1999 Constitution as amended. sections 65(1) (b) and section 177(b) of the Constitution prescribes age requirements of 35 years for anyone vying for the post of Senate and Governor while President is 40 years (section 131(b).

The restriction of age for an elective post by extension also influenced the political appointment of young people in the country. Section 192(4) of the Nigerian Constitution (1999) also states that "No person shall be appointed as a Commissioner of the Government of a State unless he is qualified for election as a member of the House of Assembly of the State". In the case of the Federal Government, "No person shall be appointed as a Minister of the Government of the Federation unless he is qualified for election as a member of the House of Representatives". The important of the above provisions is that for a person to be appointed a commissioner or minister, he/she must have attained the ages of 30 years and above.

By virtue of the previous, the political space is closed, and the youths who form most of the population remain excluded from leadership and governance (Oyeyipo & James, 2016; Mohammed, 2017; Mengistu, 2017). As Wariboko (2017) accurately observed that the failure to create and sustain inclusive political institutions had affected the psychology of most people as they erroneously perceive leadership and decision making as an exclusive preserve for older adults or the elite. Restriction of participation by age serves to deny the youths the opportunity to contribute to policies and governance and merely restrict them to voting in elections (Onyebukwa, 2018).

1.4. Research objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine the underlying factors responsible for low support for female youth's candidacy from the general public. In particular, the reason behind most of the youths opting to support older candidates or male youths' candidates rather than qualified young female candidates. After all, female youths massively contributed to the

movement that fought for the reduction of age in the Constitution for political office. Furthermore, this study seeks to investigate the experiences of female youths that participated in the 2019 general elections for a better understanding of the obstacles and challenges that hindered their campaigns. Most importantly, the study wants to identify the best approach the NTYTR movement can adopt to solidify the gains of the 2019 election. This includes approaches that will take care of the interest of the female youths that were left behind in the last general election, so that they will be in a better position to compete and represented in future elections.

1.5. Research Questions

Main Question

- Why are young female candidates not elected in Nigeria?

Sub Questions

- What are the factors responsible for the low performance of female youths in the last general elections despite the reduction of age Bill that give youths age 25 and above legal right to run for political office?

- In which ways can the barriers that hindered female youths running for political offices can be address in order to increase the chances of female youths in future elections in the country?

1.6 Methods of Data Collection

Data collection for this study depended mainly on primary qualitative data that was collected in different states of Nigeria through interviews, observation and focus group discussions. The choice of conducting qualitative fieldwork is not based solely on the feasibility of the study and compatibility with the research questions and objectives; the choice was also informed because the research is within my ability and experience as a youth worker that was deeply involved in the mobilization of the NTYTR movement (Age Reduction Bill, Nigeria). My decision is consistent with O'Leary's (2014) position that, before a researcher adopts a research method, the researcher must first consider the feasibility of the study and if the research method is within the ability of the researcher. Most importantly, the research method adopted must be viable in answering the research questions. Besides the qualitative approach of analysis enabled the researcher to play an active role during the data collection that a questionnaire might not guarantee, offer a space for flexibility to adjust the research design on the field as a result of unanticipated situations (O'Leary 2014).

Purposive sampling was employed in selecting the participants for the semi-structured interviews sessions and focus group discussions. YIAGA, my organization, have a compressive list of youth's candidates that subscribed to the movement. I was able to separate from the list those that contested the election and those that aspire but did not get party ticket. I couldn't have selected from the 870 names on the list because it might end up not representative. In order to acquire adequate proof across a wide range of the study sample, I narrow down the sample with criteria's such as age range, gender, region, religion, and ethnicity. All these criteria are important factors in Nigeria political space. The experience of a Muslim female youth in the North West of the country is different from the experiences of the Christian female youth in the South-Eastern part of the country. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the sample selected is representative of the Nigeria demography. The key informants helped in the provision of expert knowledge; relatable information based on their experiences (O'Leary 2014:191).

During the field work, I interviewed three YIAGA officials 20 female youths that run for office (2 won election, 8 lost, 10 withdrew before election) and 10 male youths that run for office: 10 (2 won, 6 lost, and 2 withdrew before election). I also organized two FGD with 10 youths' participants (5 female and 5 male). In total, 33 youths were interviewed for the data collection and 10 participated in FGD making the overall total to be 43. I was not

able to secure interview appointment, with four key informants that hold leadership position from 4 political parties, as well as one representative each from INEC, The Executive Director YIAGA African (the convener of NTYTR) and the EU delegation election observer representative in Nigeria.

Still, I did not find it difficult in accessing the prospective respondents because I was one of the project officers for YIAGA Africa that helped in the implementation of the NTYTR movement and as a result, I have access to all the young people that participated in the NTYTR Movement, access to research materials and those that contested in the 2019 election. Although, my significant challenge here is the limited timeline and money to carry out this research in Nigeria. Ethically, been part of the NTYTR movement before, it was difficult, to ask tough questions, criticize the movement and identify key weaknesses of the movement. But now as a researcher, I was able to overcome these ethical issues during field work before I was able to achieve this result. However, since the NTYTR is an ongoing movement identifying the weakness and my recommendation will only help improve the movement objectives in the future.

Nonetheless, it was more difficult than I envisaged to getting many of the newly elected youth representatives to grant me an interview. Despite sending several emails, WhatsApp text messages, and follow up calls all to no avail. I think this is a wrong signal for the newly elected youth representatives that initially these elected young legislators were easily accessible via email, WhatsApp and call, but after they got elected in political office it became very difficult to reach them. Also, I missed some important interview appointments due to clashing interview appointments and cancellations which affected other interviews. I spend more money than expected travelling to different states for an interview and to conduct focus group discussions. Thus, the grant I got from De Zaaier grant was not enough, I mostly spend from my own money. Due to limited funding I was not able to travel by air, it was not easy travelling across Nigeria by road due to bad roads, the fear of armed robbers and kidnappers in some parts of the country. My research topic is new and currently there is no academic paper yet on the NTYTR movement. Hence, I was only depending on NGO reports, CSO publications, journals, opinion articles, interviews and online publications to write this research paper.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1. Conceptualization of Youth

Social dominant theory, political participation, gender participation are the primary elements of the theoretical framework of this study. It is important to situate youth as a concept in the context of this paper and demonstrate the importance and influence that different understandings of the concept of youth might have on the data analysis of this study. First, there is no single standardized universally accepted definition of the youth, although "youths is traditionally defined as a period of transition from childhood to adulthood" (Odoh et al., 2014:166). This transition between childhood and adulthood is generally determined by age. However, the regularly shifting age limit across all regions in the world makes it difficult to define a universal concept of who exactly is youth and why (Nandigiri, 2012: 114).

While some countries in Africa, such as Mauritius and Botswana for example, aligned with the United Nations classification of youths to be individuals between the age bracket of 15 to 24 years, many other countries in Africa align with the African Charter on Youth classification of age bracket of 15 to 35 years (Odoh et al., 2014). There are others that stretch it beyond the UN and AU classifications as is demonstrated in the national youth policies of various African states. For instance, in South Africa youth is defined in the age bracket of 14 to 35 years, Kenya adopted the age bracket of 15 to 30 years, and Nigeria adopted 18 to 35 years in 2009 (Nandigiri, 2012: 114) but adjusted it in 2019 to 14 to 29 years old. In addition, the African Youths Report (AYR) of 2009 went as far as defining youths as people between 15 and 39 (Odoh et al., 2014:166). These fluctuating classifications of the youth population make it problematic to effectively discuss issues affecting young people in Africa and to compare information across countries. And as suggested by Odoh et al (2014:166), the variety in the definitions of youths is problematic because it is commonly agreed that people in their 30s are adults, and therefore not part of those youths who are in transition to adulthood.

Consequently, the historical background, the political realities and the socio-economic conditions on the ground are determining factors to define youth of a nation (Mengistu, 2017:2). As Nandigiri (2012: 114) posited, "youth are often, depending on context and speaker, described in any number of ways ranging from apathetic to politically conscious

game changers, a demographic dividend to a potentially dangerous youth bulge, from need-ing their innocence protected to wildly promiscuous with no moral compass". From the discussion above, limiting the definition of youths to an age range differs from context to context because youths are not classified or restricted to a point that can be tied to explicit age classification or precise activities (Furlong,2013). For Furlong, "youth is an experience that may shape an individual's level of dependency, which can be marked in various ways according to different cultural perspectives. "Personal experience is marked by cultural norms or traditions, while a youth's level of dependency means the extent to which he still relies on his family emotionally and economically" (Furlong, 2013:2-3).

The implication of Furlong's (2013) argument is that before a person can be regarded as an adult that can be trusted to make inform decisions, such an individual must meet up with certain societal requirements of adulthood. For example, having your own family and a good job is one of the most important factors in the community I came from in Nigeria. Your age doesn't determine your maturity and ability to handle responsibilities. It is this understanding of youths and adulthood that shape the choice of many voters when it comes to election in their decision to measure maturity. Therefore, scholars argue that age-based definitions of young people have not been consistent across cultures or times and that thus it is more accurate to focus on social processes in the transition to adult independence for youth (Tyyskä, 2017: 19-22). This is in line with the sociologists' perspective that youth is just a term which has come into being as a social construction (Bynner et al., 2019; Guerrero, 2017; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016; Giroux & Robbins, 2015). Later, it is not possible to have a single and commonly agreed definition of youths.

Regardless of the different definition of youth, Corsten (1999) argued that "age is a chief 'marker of social differentiation' and a 'structuration concept" (Corsten, 1999: 250). Alt-hough age has been described as a form of a simplification by the state, designed to categorize the people for easy governance (Scott, 1998: 80) to shape human behaviour in line with the do's and don'ts of the society (Li, 2007: 5). Hopkins and Pain (2007) contested the impres-sion that age is a means of classification or merely an individual characteristic because age is not only dynamic but also processual which is produced contextually through relationships with other generations. For example, the accepted age in a society to marry, have sexual relationships, employment, drinking of alcohol, driving of cars, just to mention a few social engagement activities, varies from generation to generation in different societies. And age classification is done by the adult of society in each generation that considered the young

people as a means that is crucial to influence the unknown future (Smith, 2013). This constitutes the primary reason why young people constitute the most governed group of the entire population of a society (Bessant, 2003: 90). The implication of this is that there is a significant power differential that underpins the generational dynamics of social reproduction (Ansel, 2014: 2).

However, when young people challenge the power dynamics of the adult generation's dominance, in Nigeria and other developing countries, the consequences are what many scholars have described as the clash of generations. As was discussed earlier, the adult generation became suspicious of the young generation for a space in leadership as anomaly to the designed structure to govern and dominate the young population in accordance to the lay down norms in the society. And in situations that they want to transfer power to young ones they tend to manipulate the discourse of youth power to perpetuate their hegemony by enthroning youth proxies (Kagwanja, 2005: 84).

2.2 Social Dominance Theory and Capability Approach

Social Dominance Theory (SDT) is a central component in this research that was used in analysing the data that were collected through interviews and focus group discussions to answer the research questions of this study. SDT explains how "human societies tend to organize as group-based on social hierarchies in which at least one group enjoys greater social status and power than other groups" (Pratto et al., 2006: 271). The concept help explain the obstacle and challenges against youth's behavioural participation in the political process in Nigeria, both as active participants as voters and contestants for elective offices. The SDT framework will also discuss the central role of gender in the construction and continuous inequality in political processes in Nigeria.

As postulated by Sidanius & Pratto, (1999), human social groups tend to be structured according to group-based social hierarchies, the societies that produce economic surplus. These hierarchies followed a have a trimorphic structural arrangement based on age, sex, and arbitrary set rules. The age component of the SDT speaks to the narrative of adults having more power and higher status than children in the society while the sex component speaks to the notion of men having more power and higher status than the women in the society. The third component, which is the arbitrary-set, is based on the culturally defined group-

based hierarchies and this varies from society to society. The arbitrary-set pyramids can be based on ethnicity (e.g., Whites over Blacks in the U.S.), nationality, religion, gender and so on.

This is a manifestation of the association of political power with the dominant group of older people as opposed to the subordinate group of younger individuals. To test this proposition, I employ measures adapted from the social dominance orientation literature. Social dominance orientation is a term coined by Pratto et al, (1994) to describe people's degree of preference for inequality among social groups. Accordingly, the theory helps to examine the degree to which perceptions and evaluation of presidential aspirants from different age groups are influenced by the degree of individual voters' subscription to the social norm that older people should dominate younger ones as reflected in the 2019 general election results.

To support the SDT, capability approach as well as the concept of political participation was also used to analyses the data that was collected from the field. Capability approach which can be traced to Amartya Sen is very useful for this study as it helps in understanding the complexity between rights to access and having the ability and capacity to access even when to access it. The focus should be on the capabilities of the person which is instrumental to what the individual can achieve and freedoms that can be expressed. Freedom ensures that the person can go after the aspirations of value to the individual (Sen, 2009: 16). The implication of this for the study is that, youth's participation in political process that was predominantly attached to the legal rights vis-à-vis the reduction of minimum age to run for political office in Nigeria did not reflect the reality that hinder young women's political participation in election and democratic governance in the country.

2.3 Political Participation

According to Chisholm & Kovacheva (2002), the most dominant strands of discussion concerning young women's political participation is basically in three dimensions that includes civic engagement (e.g. voluntary work, community participation, and associative life), protest activities (new social movements and demonstrations) and involvement in institutional politics (membership, campaigns, and elections). This implies that the concept of political participation can be understood in different ways by different youths of a society and across different societies in the same country. Most especially in the post-modern era that political

participation can be done through different forms including "expressive, emotional, aesthetic, casual, virtual and digital participation" (Kovacheva, 2005: 24)

Although virtually every study (see Parry et al. 1992; Verba and Nie, 1972; Kaase and Marsh, 1979) of political participation starts with the assertion that political participation and democracy are inseparable, therefore, the nucleus of democratic state which implies that the level of participation determines the level of democracy. Political participation is engulfed with a barrage of plethora of definitions and interpretation. Van-Deth (2001) is of the opinion that the notion of political participation can be understood as the identified activities of ordinary citizens which is oriented to influencing political decision making. The definitions of political participation have a long history and it varies considerably based on epistemic assumptions. Some of the definitions which have been articulated and have gained wider acceptance contain specific elements. There is the element of private as opposed to the public. Hence Milbreth and Goel (1977:22) as well as Verba and Nie (1972:2) construe it as actions by private citizens. Kaase and Marsh (1979:42) deployed the element of the individual citizen in the construction of the notion of the realm outside governmental authority. The second element is the orientation of political participation. For Verba and Nie (1972:2) it is oriented to the selection of governmental personnel and the actions taken in governmental positions. For Milbreth and Goel (1977:2) it is the set out of actions oriented to influencing or supporting government and the politics. For Parry et al (1992:16) it is aimed at influencing decisions taken by officials who were elected by the people.

From the foregoing, political participation is a product from the private realm. It is what unelected citizens do. It is political as it is an exercise of power. This type of power is called influence. The participation also emanates from the voluntary and uncontrolled volitions of the private citizens. It is not the citizens acting as pawns in the hands of those who are on governmental authority or the elite in society. Political participation is not delimited to an area of governmental activities or policy. It is unbounded in the sense that whatever and wherever government operates is the scope for political participation (Van Deth, 2001: 5). According to INEC registered voters list for 2019 elections put the total percent of registered youth electorates at 51.11% and young women are half of the number (YIAGA, 2019). This concept clearly explains why young women in Nigeria still come out in mass to register to vote, aspire for different political positions, partake in civil society and electoral activities despite all the cultural and structural barriers militating against them.

2.4 Gender Analysis and Gender Labelling

Gender can be defined as a man-made social creation of roles between women and men in human society, as regards, normative roles, positions, tasks, and functions ascribed or assigned to men and women in private and public life in the society (Miller and Razavi,1998; Lindsey 2015). Before the 1970's, development was generally perceived to be gender neutral and of equal advantage to both male and female gender (Rao 1991; Karl, 1995). A record number of failed development projects and policies have been attributed to the neglect and lack of knowledge of differing roles between men and women in a development context and the positive contributions of women (Karl 1995).

Scott (1986), sees gender as the beginning of social relationships of power based on alleged differences between male and female, and as basic way of explaining power relations between sexes. "Changes in the organization of social relationships always correspond to changes in representations of power, but the direction of change is not necessarily one way" (Scott, 1986:12). This involves four interconnected elements which cannot function without each other's. Which also highlights the gender "constructs politics" existing today and fortified by social institutions, religion, society and cultural norms. Foucault work on power also explains that power dictates social relations and interactions between male and women in everyday relationship of people in all society today (Parpart 2002).

Derogatory and sexual labelling is one potent weapon that mitigates against women's participation in politics, and it is a global phenomenon. In Southern Africa, women in politics are habitually labeled as loose women (Geisler, 1995), as whores in Nigeria (Nwabunkeonye, 2014), as prostitutes in Ghana (Madsen, 2019). The developed democracies are not immune to the problem. For example, Rachel Hundley running for congress seat in California, US, was subjected to slut-shaming by her opponent's supporters, calling her character into question just for posting her picture in bikini and swimming suit on social media (Telford, 2018). Similar treatment was accorded to Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, the President of Croatia, prior to her election in 2015 when her bikini pictures were splatted all over the front page of Croatian tabloids and the internet (Krook & Sanín, 2019). Also, a female Philippines Senator, Leila de Lima, was labeled as an adulterer and immoral by the Philippines President, Rodrigo Duterte because she announced her intention to run for presidency (Sherwell 2016). This is what Krook and Sanin (2019:5) described as semiotic violence. It is a form of violence that is executed through demeaning imageries, sexist, and other forms of highly negative gendered

language to portray female politicians and their behaviors (Krook & Sanín, 2019:5).To be a young woman in Nigerian political context, means to be inferior, second class or subordinate to their male counterpart and male youth to be favoured for political positions (Born to rule). (Eagly and Karau, 2002).

2.5 Conclusion

The SDT is crucial to the understanding of youth's behavioural participation in the political process because Nigeria's gerontocratic culture casts older adults as a dominant social group and younger adults as the subordinate group. Therefore, the SDT was used in analysing the general public perception, that the younger male and female aspirants as 'not old or experienced enough to lead. In this research, gender is very key for the understanding what it means to be a young woman, single mother, married and unmarried woman politician in Nigerian politics. However, going by the various understanding of political participation, the conceptualization of political participation will help make sense of the perspective of the youths that participated in the data collection for this study.

Chapter 3: Barriers to Youth Political Participation in Politics

3.1. Introduction

Various sources suggest that the NTYTR movement did inspire many youths to come forward to run for public office for a record time in the history of Nigeria during the 2019 general elections. What made this possible was the age reduction bill which was passed into law in 2018 and became effective from May that year. Unfortunately, the Age Reduction Act, which was also known as constitutional amendment, did not remove those structural, religious and cultural barriers affecting young women's political participation in Nigeria. These obstacles, from the young women's own perspectives, will be discussed in the rest of this chapter, including derogatory labelling, insecurity and sexual harassment, culture and religion. As was discussed in Chapter 1, the reason for paying attention to these obstacles, is to understand and improve on the disappointing performance of female youths in the recent general election in Nigeria.

3.2. Culture and Religion Factor

For years now, many scholars have offered different explanations for the low percentage of women in Nigerian politics including: resistance by traditional and religious leaders, gender-based inequalities, deep rooted cultural norms, the harsh political terrains, money politics, Godfatherism, patriarchal mindset and the refusal of national government to abide by her international commitments to provide level playing ground for all genders. Culture and religion are among the major factors affecting women political participation in Nigeria. Galtung (1990) explains three forms of violence as direct, cultural, and structural violence, while direct violence involves physical attack and thuggery, cultural includes justification of harmful traditional values and cultural norms and the latter is deeply rooted in culture and social norms.

Galtung defines structural violence as invisible and indirect form of oppression and discrimination. While cultural violence are those parts of culture that legitimize and favour structural direct violence to an extend of making it look good, even feel right or acceptable.

(Galtung, 1990: 291-305). This point was mentioned by 10 young women who participated in one of the focus group discussion as one major reason that affected them during the election. Culturally, Nigeria has a patriarchal society, women are to be seen and not to be heard. During his official visit to Germany, the current Nigeria President Mohammed Buhari during referred to his wife as 'belonging to the kitchen and the other room' when he was asked about his response to his wife Aisha Buhari criticism of his administration in a BBC interview (BBC, 2016). This goes to show that supporting a female candidate requires convincing the men on why they need to support such candidate.

One of the young participants from the Northern part of the country said:

> "During my campaign few people in my community accepted me and while many did not accept me due to my religion, culture and gender. In my culture, they do not allow women to rule, women destiny is only to get married, have enough kids and be obedient housewife. When I met the traditional leaders, they told me that they will never allow me to lead them because I am a lady, even my family did not even support my candidacy. However, some groups that agreed to support you have already set their mind to vote men in major political parties" (Amina, 30, contested for House of Assembly, FGD, September 2019).

In Nigeria, politicians (male and female) contend with numerous challenges during campaigns, but young women are three times as more likely to be concern about violence and discrimination because of their gender, and twice as likely to worried not being taken seriously in comparison with their male counterparts (Rosenbluth et al., 2015). Another participant with her eyes full of tears said:

> "I was betrayed by my immediate family, the National Electoral Commission, Security forces and judiciary. My family was the first group of people, followed by my pastor in the church who told me not to run, reason was because I am a young woman, despite that my family has be in politics over a decade now" (Evelyn, 35, contested for House of Assembly, interview, August 2019).

Prevailing social norms and "cultural attitudes discourage girls' and young women's political activism, which in turn limits their willingness and agency to take political action" (NDI, 2017:6). Culturally, men are more economically stable then women. Campaigns cost a lot of money at various stages of the electoral process. A young woman needs a lot of finances to run for office. This is a huge barrier as the men expect her to come to them to request for funding. In the Southern Nigeria, women are more educated than their Northern counterparts. Yet, they need to beg for political offices. Most Nigerian men will not want a

woman to represent then in an office. They feel it is the man's birthright. Young women struggle a lot to be accepted in the Nigerian political terrain unless they have a god father who has a strong influence on the 'king makers. In the last general election, no female won elections in both the state and federal elective offices in Zamfara State.

Nigerian Christians see politics as a dirty game. Some religious sects discourage members from running for political offices. The Christian faith requires that women are submissive to their husbands, by extension all men. The Islamic faith expects a woman to behave in an order. Young women are commonly perceived as further incapable of political participation due to discriminatory gender norms (NDI, 2017:6). Unmarried women are supposed to stay in 'Purdah' thereby restricting their movement. This does not in any way support political associations. It is a bit lenient to married women than single ladies. For the married young woman, she only enjoins freedom of association based on the extent her husband grants her permission. The role of a woman is often restricted to the kitchen. Most of the political meetings take place late in the night. A married woman is not expected to leave her family at that time of the night to attend such meetings. For the unmarried young woman, she is expected to use such time of the night to be praying to God to give her a husband and not attending a political meeting.

During campaigns, while visiting the palaces to seek traditional rulers support, a young woman in the north is meant to kneel and greet the men. She is expected to cover her hair and remove her footwear. Doing all these is not a guarantee to be accepted to run for office nor win. In some cases, she must be accompanied by a man to gain audience with the king. In some places in the southern Nigeria, she is not permitted near the palace because it is believed that she might be having her menstruation therefore she should not be around the king.

3.3. The Use of Derogatory Labelling

What is known as 'slut-shaming', and other forms of derogatory labeling, are one of the major reasons identified by all female youths that participated in the study as a factor responsible for the low turnout of female youths, as (successful) candidates in the elections. This is despite grabbing their party's tickets; they feel annihilated by the negative characterization of female politicians. According to Nwabunkeonye, (2014), "…in Nigeria, women who are participating in politics are seen and treated as free women (prostitutes/wayward) of easy virtues,

stubborn people, whores, too domineering, cultural rebellions, etc" (Nwabunkeonye, 2014: 288). When it comes to seeking an elective post that entails party politics, women (and those that are single) were labeled as 'Ashawo meaning prostitutes', 'runs girls', 'whores' and 'sluts' by some people in their communities. An example is Happiness Odochi, a 31-year-old House of Representative Contestant, who lost to a male candidate in the 2019 general election. She shared her bitter experience on how she and other female youths seeking to engage in politics were deliberately targeted to discourage them from being in politics. As she explained:

"Getting the tickets, the process of winning the primaries was not easy at all. I did not really get support from my political party; it almost seemed I was an independent candidate. I was insulted, intimidated, and humiliated, in the field. Some people said you are supposed to be looking for a husband not running for a position. Some said in to my face that young ladies in politics are "Ashawo" meaning prostitutes in Nigerian Pidgin, and even accused me of wearing body-fitted clothes to attract party leaders. Some even said that I manage to win the party ticket because I have slept with all the party leaders because no woman has ever run for elective position in our constituency except by appointment" (Happiness Odochi, age 31, Contestant for House of Rep, Interview, September 2019).

Other participants in the FGD and those that I interviewed attest to the fact they have witnessed and experienced two or more of the various labels and derogatory statements that Happiness mentioned in her statement. These derogatory labels and stigma are meant to control the gender representation of all girls and women in society. They will be sanctioned if they fail to demonstrate femininity reasonably (Tanenbaum, 1999; Eder et al. 1995). This suggests that stigmatizing terms are beyond the narrative of private sexual practices regulation, it is more about the public gender performance regulation (West and Zimmerman 1987; Eder et al. 1995; Tanenbaum 1999). Hon. Christiana (34), who won her election into House of Assembly, shared her experience on how she was insulted and abused during the party nomination contest until she started going to party meeting with her husband.

"Because I am a woman, during the election campaign, my husband always accompanies me to avoid people saying rubbish about my personality that is capable of making me unelectable in my constituency. As a young woman, I dress smartly and only wear what I am comfortable in. Then I started hearing gossips that I dress seductively with the intention to show my curves to entice the party leaders for favors. It was until my husband confronted the gossipers during one of the late-night meetings the nonsense talks about me stopped. You can imagine what other young girls aspiring for elective positions without a husband to defend their dignity pass

through" (Hon Christiana, Age 34, Member of State House of Assembly, Interview, September 2019).

However, some of the female youths that participated in the study maintained that the effect of derogatory labels and abuse suffered from male youths or older males was less hurtful than the abuse directed at them by fellow women. They expressed how older female politicians that they looked up to, even attempted to destroy their ambitions through derogatory characterization of their personality as a woman. Judith, a 29-year-old contestant for House of Assembly, was forced out of the party she has been a member of for five years. She had a good chance of being elected, given the popularity of the party in her area. To her dismay, the people that led the abusive campaign against her were mainly the older women in the party. They promoted the narrative that she was 'loose' and a 'whore', claiming that this was shown by her having a child without being married. The older women said she should not be considered for a party ticket because she was not a good female role model. Judith explained:

> "if a man slut-shames you, call you prostitutes to devalue you for political reasons, you should expect that fellow women will defend you and normally, you can insult him back that his mother is also a prostitute. However, when a woman labels you as a slut or whore because of your marital status or the way you look and dress, it is a validation for the men that have been looking for a way to justify your exclusion from the selection process. They will say, is it not her fellow woman that condemned her character that she is not worthy. Many young girls don't have the mental capacity to withstand this gender betrayal; therefore, they will rather quit or not show interest until probably they are married if their husband supports them to aspire" (Judith, age 29, Contestant for House of Assembly, FGD, September 2019)

In general, the participants of the study agreed to the fact that the 'slut-shaming' and derogatory labeling is not limited to young unmarried women. It is also applicable to older women that are divorced because they are being viewed through the same lens by society. Even though Ringrose & Renold (2012) argue that the internalization of oppression by women makes them participate in horizontal abuse, this tends to reinforce men and established disadvantageous sexual double standards. Armstrong et al. (2014:101), conversely, maintain that women that engage so enthusiastically in attacking their fellow women, do so because they have something to gain by mobilizing against fellow younger women. For Armstrong et al., such action does not necessarily connote internalization of gender oppression set by men, but a way to assert power and class advantage (Armstrong et al., 2014:101).

Some would suggest that this is an example of the 'Queen Bee' phenomenon or syndrome where older women instead of showing solidarity and support to younger women, the few privileged women already senior in politics rather than challenging gender hierarchy in the system, try to keep themselves isolated from other women as possible. Staines, (1974) Suggests "that women who oppose Women's Liberation are often those who have successfully found a place in a man's world. They are highly rewarded for their ability to look feminine but to think like a man, and they may fear competition from other women". Hence, there are 3 major ways by which women do this: (1) by distancing themselves from other women, (2) by supporting, endorsing and legitimizing the current gender pyramid and (3) by portraying themselves more like men (Derks, 2016:2). This was the reality of 20 young females who ran and lost their elections during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria as documented by (YIAGA, 2019).

3.4. Insecurity and Violence: Physical and Sexual Harassment

Most Nigerian politicians, when they reach a certain level, or position, are protected by the Nigerian police from attacks. This is for all senior politicians, male or female. Junior politicians are less likely to have police protection. The involvement of hired armed 'security', who can behave as thugs and with impunity, is common throughout the electioneering process (before, during, and after elections). This situation can discourage young Nigerian women from entering politics (Kolawal et al., 2012; Ngara et al., 2013). It is unlikely that young politicians, male or female, have the resource to hire their own 'thugs', who other pay to beat up opponents, destroy opponents' properties, and in some cases even kill or attack political rivals to pave the way for winning party tickets. Sandra Achieje (27) withdrew from the House of Assembly race when she witnessed how sponsored thugs and hoodlums bombarded her state party primary to cause mayhem, shooting two people dead. Nobody was arrested. Her illustration of the electoral violence she experienced during the Nigeria 2019 general election is a representation of what female aspirants go through in their attempt to participate in politics. Sandra narrated that:

> "During the party primary, my party ward chairman and a party member were shot dead; all the women and most of the men took to their heels. Many people were injured from the stampede; I sprained my ankle when I was jumping the fence to escape, I was scared that I am not going to make it out alive; only men who came prepared for the violence were the ones that continued the selection process to pick the various winners. The incident was all

over the news, my Dad and other family members were worried because I couldn't go home directly, I had to get myself treated first" (Sandra, Age 27, Interview, August 2019).

All respondents, both female and male, said that since male contestants could be intimidated with death threats to drop their ambitions, this was more likely to be the case for female contestants who were threatened in this way. John Oiku (31), a contestant for House of Representatives said that even though he supports the idea of encouraging female youths and women, in general, to contest in an election, he could not approve or support his wife, sister, or daughter to take part in Nigerian politics for security reasons.

"Anybody can say what they like; I can never allow or support any female in my family to participate in Nigeria politics. Are you not aware that a sitting House of Representatives member, Hon. Sugar, was assassinated on election day, somebody with a police escort for that matter? You are only safe if you don't stand a chance of winning. The more your chance of winning continues to increase, the more you move up the ladder of assassination target" (John Oiku, age 31, Interview, August 2019).

Many of the female respondents also identified sexual harassment as a reason single female youths do not run for political office. Abiodun (29) that contested in the last election but lost said that

"I experienced sexual harassment and violence. Some would ask me to meet them at the hotel. Some asked me to sleep with them, and when they win, they would give me a big position. On the day of elections, I saw two party members who were supposed to be campaigning for me, collecting bribes (to vote for other candidates) in a queue. When I confronted them, one of them replied, you think your body is special that we cannot have our way with you, go ahead and win and let us see. I lost the election because I did not sleep with those assigned to me by the party to mobilize for me" (Abiodun, Age 29, Interview, August 2019)

Nigerian women have, over the years, become targets of violence of diverse forms based on their positions in promoting transformative politics (Agblajaobi, 2010). The political terrain in Nigeria is extremely dangerous for both men and women. It is a "do-or-die affair fraught with violence" (Nwabunkeonye, 2014:287). It is a political atmosphere where assassination, blackmail, intimidation, threats, humiliation, and sort of violence is the order of the day and as a result, scare women away from active participation in Nigerian politics (Agblajaobi, 2010; Luka, 2011; Kolawal et al., 2012; Ngara et al., 2013).

3.5. Conclusion

Religion and culture, physical violence against women, sexual harassment, 'slut-shaming,' and other forms of derogatory labeling, are one of the primary reasons identified by all-female youths that participated in the study as a factor responsible for the low turnout of female youths, as (successful) candidates in the elections. The involvement of hired armed 'security' and government backed armed forces, who can behave as thugs with impunity scared a lot of female youths away from partaking in the electioneering process.

Chapter 4: Prioritizing Young Women in NTYTR

4.1. Introduction.

Against the background of the analysis of the problems that hindered female youths' participation in the electoral process despite the constitutional reduction of age championed by the NTYTR movement in the previous chapter. The focus of this chapter is the discussion of the possible solutions to the problem, as suggested by the respondents that participated in the interviews and focus group discussions. The themes that emanated from the data analysis are mainly, legislative reforms, concerted social engagement of the public, and intensive collaboration with religious institutions.

The chapter is organized into four sections arranged along the lines of each of the identified themes. The first section discusses the legislative reform that will enact in the constitution, gender quota system for all elective and cabinets positions. In the second section, the social engagement discussion focuses on the suggestion of "Operation Catch Them Young" targeted at the secondary schools' girls as well as female students in tertiary institutions, relentless voters' education, and epitomizing young women as role model. The role of religious institutions is central in the third section of this chapter, while the last section provides a summary of the analysis.

4.2. Gender Quota System: 35% Affirmative Action Advocacy

Affirmative action can be understood as deliberate policy action targeted at members of a deprived group that has previously suffered marginalization and discrimination in different sectors of the society such as housing, education, employment, et cetera. To put it is a simple way, it is a policy action promoted by the United Nations to be adopted by members states to bridge inequalities in the society to redress apparent past wrongs, harms, or hindrances (Sunhee & Seoyong, 2014). While the implementation of affirmative action policies differs from country to country, some countries adopt a quota system, whereby a certain percentage of school vacancies, political positions, government jobs, political positions as law are reserved for members of a certain group (Kurtulus, 2012). There was a consensus by the respondents that participated in the interviews and focus group discussions on the need for

the NTYTR to prioritize the mobilization of the young people to force the hand of the National Assembly to pass the law that will make the 35% gender affirmation action as stated in the National Gender Policy (NGP) of 2006 a constitutional matter.

The NGP offers 35% representation of women in elective and appointed positions in all sectors of the government (Okoronkwo-Chukwu, 2013; Abubakar & Ahmad, 2014; Ifemeje, 2019:102). However, "it is a mere paperwork which have no constitutional relevance, with the implication that any other leader or party can jettison without legal context" (Chinwokwu & Arop, 2018:44). The position of Chinwokwu and Arop (2018) was corroborated by many of the respondents. An example is Yemisi (28), a female that contested her party ticket and lost the election to a male opponent that is equally a youth. She explained that without a legal quota system that guarantees women representation in political office, the NTYTR movement gains will continue to be harvested by the young men leaving the young women that are equal partners in the campaign behind. Her testimony further reinforces the necessity for a legal quota system for women:

> "When I came out to contest the party ticket with the hope that we will succeed with the age reduction Act, all the guys were making jest of me that I am running after the impossibility. The moment the Bill was passed, my party leaders told me that they were going to give me the ticket because the party needs the youth voters. Suddenly, they changed their decisions and gave the ticket to a 30 years old guy. I protested but did not get enough support because everybody was saying after all the ticket was given to youth. I knew about 30 other cases like that, where leading young female aspirants were short-changed for a young male when submitting the names of party candidates in the last election to INEC" (Yetunde, 28 Years Old, House of Assembly Aspirants, Focus Group Discussion, September 2019).

Yetunde's story was supported by virtually all the female respondents that also shared their experiences during the 2019 general election. They believed women are already at a disadvantaged position due to various barriers, as highlighted in the previous chapter, and only a deliberate action backed by the constitution, just like the Age Reduction Act, can increase women's participation in politics. Hauwa (27), a female master student in one of the universities in the northern part of the country, gives an example of her own experience during her undergraduate days to support the importance of legal backing for a national gender quota system for gender representation in a leadership position. Hauwa, who was the first female president of her students' union six years ago, a position that she claimed prepared her to

run for State House of Assembly in the last Nigerian general elections, put emphasis on affirmative actions based on her experience. According to her:

"…in the 20 years' history of my university before my emergence as the president as the student union government, no female student has considered running for the office of the president, let alone winning it. This is because the men have always dominated 100% of the ten executive members and the leadership of the student parliament. During my second year, there was agitation by female students that the constitution of the union should be amended to reserve certain positions to the female students only. This led to the positions of Vice-President, Assistant General Secretary, and Welfare Director to be reserved for female students in the newly amended constitution and in turn, led to massive turn out of female students in the election that follows where I emerged as the Vice-President. The following year, I ran for the office of the president and defeated all the male opponents, which means the number of female students in the executive for the year increased to four". (Hauwa, Age 27, Candidate for State House of Assembly, Interview, September 2019)

The examples of Yetunde and Hauwa underscore the argument of Pande and Ford, (2012) that a well-designed and proper implementation of quotas is not only useful on a short term to increase women's representation in leadership but also on the long term can lead to a stage where a gender balance in political leadership can be accomplished and sustained (Pande and Ford, 2012). The quota system can be modified to suit a variety of political contexts and structures, albeit not in all situations that the quota system will work (Di Tommaso, 2015). Considering the political system and structure of Nigeria, many people might think it is impossible to apply such an idea to Nigeria. The respondents debunked the idea that it might not work in Nigeria. After all, the Federal Character on employment works to ensure that no region or ethnic group is left behind in the federal government jobs appointment. However, the Federal Character is an act enshrined in the constitution, which makes it illegal to make a lopsided appointment in the civil servants and the military that did not represent the principle of Federal Character Act. There have been strong criticism and campaign calling for the abolition of the Federal Character Act because of its prioritized ethnicity over competency. In the context of gender balance in a leadership position, quotas can be predominantly decisive within electoral systems that are not conducive to equal participation (Dahlerup, 2005). This is because the adoption of quotas in most cases address institutional

barriers — whether in private sector, at a national level, and within political parties — and preferably, instead of placing the responsibility to succeed on individual women, it ensures that power-holders and institutional actors take actions to address the problems of discrimination (Ballington & Karam, 2005). However, some of the participants in the focus group discussion were sceptical about the quota system helping female youths if the NTYTR movement set it as the priority in advocacy for the legislative reforms. Amaka (29) who is a campaign coordinator for a female youth House of Representatives candidate in the last election argued that the NTYTR movement must be selfish and specific in the message of the campaign for gender quota so that the gains of the campaign will not be reaped exclusively by the older women. She was firm in her assertion;

> "…the truth must be told; we cannot be working, and others will be reaping the gains. That is how we put all efforts to ensure that age to contest the election was reduced. We are left to compete in a biased society against the men, both the old and the youths. This time around, we should be very careful not to draw a blanket or open campaign shouting quota for women, one should not be surprised that after we achieve the gender quota, the party tickets will be given to women in their 50s and 60s. Do not forget that women organizations have been campaigning for 35% affirmative action, and they never prioritize the youths. My advice for the NTYTR movement is to be specific about the percentage that must go to female youths in the gender quota so that we can be sure that there will be more young women in a leadership position" (Amaka, Age 29, Campaign Coordinator, Focus Group Discussion, August 2019)

From the available evidence from the discussion with different youths backed with empirical studies, it is evident that the verbal commitment during campaign promising implementation of 35% affirmative action by different political parties has been a ruse and fallacy over the years Okoronkwo-Chukwu (2013). Policies not backed by legislation in Nigeria do not work (Chinwokwu & Arop, 2018:44). Before the National Gender Policy of 2006 that offers 35% affirmative action at the National level and 20% at the state level, there was a Nigeria National Women Policy (2000), which provided for the 30% Affirmative Action. Yet the Nigeria Senate voted against the Gender and Equality Opportunities bill in a bid to alter the constitution to provide 35 per cent affirmative action for women at the federal level and 20 per cent at the state level among other women rights in 2016 (Oshi, 2016; Payton, 2016; Chinwokwu & Arop, 2018; Ifemeje, 2019). This is even though Nigeria ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Unfortu-

nately, "38 years after this ratification of CEDAW by Nigeria, the Nigerian legislators for the third time in 2016, rejected the passage of the Gender and Equality Opportunities bill that gives Nigerian women a concrete gender-based legal framework to protect their rights into law (Ifemeje, 2019:102).

Regardless of the challenges that the old men in the Senate might have created, what can be deduced from the analysis so far is that the NTYTR movement needs to adopt a similar approach to the age reduction of the gender quota legislation before Nigeria can witness increase in young women just like that of the young men in leadership position after the Age Reduction Act. Empirical studies (Dahlerup, 2005; Pande & Ford, 2012; O'brien & Rickne, 2016) demonstration that the gender quota system increased women's representation in leadership positions in Latin America. Also, a two-thirds gender rule enshrined in the Kenyan Constitution under Article 81 (b), which states, "Not more than two-thirds of the members of elective public bodies shall be of the same gender". The women in parliament report of 2017, shows that women representation in parliament in 46 countries that have quotas for women is far better (women won 30% of the seats in parliament) than the countries with no quotas (women won 15.4% of seats in parliament) for gender representation (IPU, 2018:7). These countries have quotas given weight to women representation either through reserved seats or legislative candidate quotas (IPU, 2018:6).

4.3. Operation Catch Them Young; Shifting Attention to Secondary School Girls Reorientation

Nurturing secondary school girls for future political leadership (Archard, 2013 and 2012) is one of the approaches that was suggested by the respondents during both the FGD and interview sessions. Archad (2012) maintained that "mentoring and role modeling may help female students in developing the knowledge and skills required for leadership as well as assisting in an understanding of gender barriers in relation to leadership roles". The respondents believed that if the leaders of the NTYTR movement would have any reasonable chance to alter the gender bias against women taking up political leadership, then they need to shift their attention to the school environment. This is because "school environments are sometimes the "only source of formal leadership experiences and programming to which students

are exposed" (Fulton et al., 2019:4). Catherine, a youth worker that participated in the last election as one the certified election monitoring observes, said that no amount of laws for women equal participation could change the mentality of women running for political office if the women themselves do not believe in their capability to lead. For Catherine, the future aspiration of women in Nigeria has been shaped to follow a certain path since the time they started going to school. She said that:

> "We all pass through secondary school, and I know you will agree with me that boys are given more leadership responsibilities than the girls by the teachers and the school administrators. There are more male than female prefects, and even in schools that have prefects' positions for both male and female, the males command more respect and power than the female in the same school prefect positions. For example, in my school, the senior prefect boy is the number one in ranking while the senior prefect girl is considered subordinate. Only in girls-only schools, that such things do not happen, unfortunately, the girls only schools are not many. For me, if the NTYTR movement want to make any impact on female youths' participation in politics, they need to start orientation from secondary school level because that is where most young people's future is shaped" (Catherine, age 30, FGD, August 2019).

The school environment has been identified as one of the most important agents of gender socialization (Fulton, 2017) because children are taught both the academic content and gender role expectation (Shapiro et al., 2015).Therefore, schools are the ideal environment where the status quo of gender bias against women can be challenged by engaging the teachers and counsellors to be partners in the advocacy for girls' leadership development in operation catch them young. Students mostly look up to their school counsellors and teachers when they encounter difficulties in making important decisions, for example, career aspirations pathway (Shapiro et al., 2015). Nicholas, one of the male youths that participated in the FGD during the field data collection, supported Catherine's position on the need to shift attention to young girls in secondary school. He said that the leadership of the NTYTR movement needs to engage the National Association of Nigeria Teachers as well the school counsellors' body as partners in promoting girls' leadership in politics because the teachers and the counsellors are in the position to assess and encourage girls leadership in schools since they are the ones that attend to these students daily. He explained further that:

"If we want more young female youths in politics, then we need to start from the grassroots, have NTYTR movement clubs in all the secondary schools in the country with a focus on girl's leadership training. Let me give you an analogy; nobody can wake up one day at age 28 and say I want to try out for the national football team without kicking football before; you must have been playing since you are young. Even if they allow everybody to try out, you will not be successful compared to somebody that has been training since he was 12 years old. The same thing goes to political leadership, the mind set of most girls in Nigeria have been socially constructed against leadership positions, and the schools that ought to deconstruct such narrative are reinforcing it by epitomizing the boys as a leader mentality. Even if we have quota for girls in the constitution, girls that have never been exposed to leadership training all their lives will not consider running for office". (Nicholas, Age 31, FGD, August 2019)

The football analogy given by Nicholas is applicable to both females and males in the real world. However, his connection with the analogy is that female youths are at a disadvantage because their minds and thinking have been socially constructed to see boys as the leader at a very young age, and the school environment that ought to change the narrative does not pay attention to the gender bias. The girl's leadership clubs across all secondary schools in the country, as suggested by Nicholas and other respondents, can go a long way to prepare more girls for elective political leadership in the future. Studies have documented how gender expectations limit teens and girls in middle and high schools from making choices which in turn have a significant influence on their career paths (Brannon, 2008; Swanson & Fouad, 2010; Bian, Leslie, & Cimpian, 2017; Shapiro et al., 2015). In many cultures, the female gender has been stereotypically associated with communal personalities such as expressive and nurturing, while the male gender is associated with agentic traits such as being rational and competitive (Brannon, 2008).

As a result of all these stereotypes, one should not be surprised that many girls in secondary schools in Nigeria choose career path that represents the societal female gender stereotype (Salami, 2004). Considering all these biases against the female gender, Fulton et al, argued that "it is important that girls are not only exposed to leadership development opportunities and career options, but that intentional effort is made to create programs that overcome these barriers" (Fulton et al., 2019:6). Other respondents also suggested that the girl's leadership clubs should not be limited to secondary schools, but it should be extended to all tertiary institutions. The idea of expanding to tertiary institutions was suggested to serve

as a continuity platform for the training offered to the girls in the secondary schools. Ifunada, a community youth leader in her constituency, said that it would be a waste of time and resources if the knowledge acquired by girls in secondary school is not put into use in the tertiary institutions. According to her:

> "Whether secondary or tertiary, they are all school environments that have young girls below the age of 18 that cannot vote in the national election. If we train girls in secondary school to believe in themselves and they enter the university with no support mechanism on the ground, they can be bullied from seeking elective positions in the students' union. In my experience, I am positive that I would have emerged as the students' union president when I was in university if there were girls' leadership clubs in my school. If you go to the universities, you will see various male social-political groups that many freshers join to aspire for leadership office" (Ifunada, Age 28. FGD, August 2019).

While the development of leadership skills "can occur across the lifespan, it may be important for schools to intervene early to mitigate the impact of gender socialization" (Fulton, 2019:5). The bias against female gender on leadership is not something that starts when they are adults; it starts at a young age (Lawless & Fox, 2013; Weissbourd et al., 2015). Therefore, biased perceptions about leadership affects the girls to belief in their abilities, which in turn shape their perception of what constitutes a leader (Haber-Curran & Sulpizio, 2017), the talents they cultivate and careers to pursue (Shapiro et al., 2015), as well as their political aspirations (Lawless & Fox, 2013). However, the school is not the only environment that female gender stereotype can be challenged, it is important that NTYTR movement look at other sector of the society to promote the message of young girls' capability to lead.

4.4. Collaboration with Progressive Religious Leaders.

The fact that suggestions for the need to collaborate with progressive religious leaders are not surprising considering that religion has been used to suppress women's ambition for a leadership position in Nigeria's political sphere, as discussed in the previous chapter. The consensus of the respondents during the FGD is that the NTYTR movement needs to engage both old and young religious scholars as a partner to promote positive texts in both the Bible and the Quran that show women's capability as leaders with examples of Muslim women leaders in the world. Amina who aspired to run for a House of Assembly seat in her

conservative Muslim dominated constituency said that she was able to get a lot of young men to support her political aspiration when her mosque imam, a respected man in the community, called all the men that were opposing her candidature on religious ground intervened. The imam used different verses in the Quran to highlight great women which led men into battle and conquered enemies, who are men. Amina maintained that imams and pastors' influence on people's decisions should be maximized by the NTYTR movement in a positive way for the social deconstruction of the bias against the female gender.

> "I would have lost the opportunity to contest if not for a progressive imam that used the right interpretation of the Quran to champion my course. The truth is that people respect their imam and pastors in this country more than their parents because the parents are also looking up to them for guidance. The problem is that most of these progressive religious leaders don't have the resources to champion for advocacy. This is where the NTYTR movement needs to come in and carry them along in the campaign than using musicians and celebrities" (Amina, age 26, Interview, September 2019).

The power of religious leaders to shape followers' decisions during elections is widely documented by an array of studies (Layman, 2001; Campbell &Monson,2003; Guth et al., 2006; Green, 2007; Liddle & Mujani, 2007; Nteta & Wallsten, 2012). For example, the majority of Mormons in America will support and vote for candidates their leaders suggested (Campbell & Monson, 2003), just like most voters in Nigeria will follow the direction of their Pastors and Imams (Ayantayo, 2009). This explains why politician seeks for approval of religious leaders during their campaigns because of their extensive networks and communications channels they use to shape public opinion. Ekeng, a 26 years old female youth, said that she decided to register to collect her voters' card because of her pastor's sermon in church on a Sunday morning service. She elucidated further that the power that religious leaders hold to change people's mind can never be quantified and the NTYTR and INEC need to tap into such power and collaborate with them to promote young girls running for elective political positions in the country. She gave an example of how her pastor influenced her decision and other church members:

> "INEC has been campaigning for months asking people to register to vote, and those that have registered should collect their Permanent Voters Card (PVC), but the turnout was shallow. It was not until INEC engaged prominent religious leaders in the country, and they instructed their members to ensure that they all collect their PVC that the number increase. My

pastor mandated church members to come to church the following Sunday with the PVC as a confirmation that we obeyed the instruction from the Pulpit, and he backed it up with Bible verses to support his direction. I can tell you that if the NTYTR movement can convince 50 prominent religious leaders in the country to join in promoting young girls' participation in politics by giving examples of women in both religions that were leaders in the scripture, you will see a massive change in 2023 election" (Ekeng, Age 26, FGD, August 2019).

Florence, a contestant in the last election, was critical about the NTYTR movement by prioritizing engagement with celebrities, motivational speakers, and successful young Nigerians rather than religious leaders. She believed Nigeria political system is divided along ethnic and religion line, but religion hold sway over ethnicity. From her perspective;

"The movement to me wasted many resources to engage celebrities and motivational speakers in the last election, the reality is when it comes to politics and whom to support, millions of Nigeria will obey the religious leaders' directives. I am not saying that celebrities are not important. However, I believe that working with religious leaders is critical to changing social norms on gender in Nigeria because: They are considered to embody moral values, which enables them to influence personal and family domains and attitudes and behaviours. The centrality of religion in Nigeria enables religious leaders and institutions to exercise considerable influence" (Florence, Age 28, Interview, September 2019).

From the expression of the respondents, it was apparent that the NTYTR needs to engage religious leaders in spreading stories of current and past Muslim and Christian women leaders in predominantly Muslim and Christian countries to counter the myth that women cannot be a leader. To negate the negative narrative of a country with a woman shall not prosper as propounded by some Muslim clerics. Singapore is a prosperous Muslim country, and the current President, Halimah Yacob, is a woman elected in 2017. Also, the president of Indonesia since 2001, Megawati Sukarnoputri, is a Muslim woman in a Muslim dominated country. Women are not suitable as a leader myth can also be challenged with examples that include Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan (Prime Minister between 1988-1990 and 1993-1996), Tansu Ciller of Turkey (Prime Minister 1993-1995), Khaleda Zia of Bangladesh (Prime Minister 1991–96 and 2001–06). In Africa, we have Ameenah Gurib of Mauritius (President 2015-2018), and Cissé Mariam Kaïdama Sidibé of Mali (Prime Minister 2011-12) are all Muslim women. And when it comes to Christians dominated countries, there are plethora of example of Female Heads of States, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner of Argentina (President

2007-2015), Dilma Rousseff of Brazil (President 011-2016), Michelle Bachelet of Chile (President 2006-2010 and 2014-2018), Laura Chinchilla Miranda of Costa Rica (President 2010-2014) and in Europe, Angela Merkel Chancellor of Germany since 2005 till date. In Africa, we example of Joyce Banda of Malawi (President 2012-2014) and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia (President 2006-2018). The story of successful women leaders needs to pass across to the public, but it will have more impact if the message is coming from people with authority, which are predominantly male.

4.5. Conclusion

While the NTYTR have increased the presence of Nigerian youths in leadership positions, this chapter has offered practical approaches and strategies that can make the movement address the failure of female youths to capitalize on the gains of the movement. Advocacy for legalizing the gender quota is one of the critical steps that needs to be taken to ensure that more female youths are represented in leadership positions at national, state, and local government levels. However, successful advocacy for gender quota to be enacted in the Nigeria constitution is not a given that more female youths will be represented in a leadership position. Reorientation of girls that have been socially constructed to respect stereotypical gender roles at a young age is crucial because, with the quota, many girls might still believe that it is the boy's gender role to lead. Therefore, it is essential to engage secondary school girls in leadership training to boost their self-confidence by establishing girl's leadership clubs across the nation. To support the impact of advocacy for quota system and reorientations of secondary schools' girls the NTYTR movement must prioritize collaboration with progressive religious leaders to help deconstruct the myth that a woman cannot be a leader which many people in the society have used to discourage and bully ambitious young girls out of politics.

CHAPTER 5. Theoretical Reflections on the Findings

5.1. Introduction

The primary purpose of this chapter is the reflect on the findings using the theories and concepts adopted for this study and how the theories helps explain the findings that were presented in the two previous chapters. The Social Dominant Theory (SDT) and gender explanation of the barriers, as identified by the findings, occupy the first and the second part of the chapter. In the third and fourth part, the concepts of the capability approach and political participation are used to explain both the challenges and the best approaches that can be adopted to advance female youths' representation in elective leadership positions.

5.2. Age and Gender as a Peculiar Barriers to Female Youths

The findings of the study, as discussed in the previous two chapters, show that "human societies tend to organize as group-based on social hierarchies in which at least one group enjoys greater privilege and power than other groups" (Pratto et al., 2006: 271). SDT was used to bring out the structural and individual factors that contributed to several forms of group-based domination that the Nigeria female youths were subjected to in the last general elections. As Sidanius et al. (2004: 846) posited, "SDT views all of the familiar forms of group-based oppression (e.g., group-based discrimination, racism, ethnocentrism, classism, sexism) as special cases of a more general tendency for humans to form and maintain group-based hierarchy" Only racism from the examples that was stated by Sidanius et al. (2004) that did not contribute to the social oppression of the Nigeria female youths from harvesting from the gains of NTYTR movement in the last general election. While class and ethnocentrisms affected both male and female genders, sexism and gender-based discrimination helped promote the male youths over the female youths that aspired for the same political positions.

The findings of this study show that the male youths "holds disproportionate power and enjoy special privileges," as suggested by Prattto & Stewart (2012: 1) over the female youths. Even though both male and female youths have equal opportunities to compete for party tickets, many of the political parties that considered the youths for party tickets preferred to

give it to male youths. This shut down any protest from the female youths because the primary aim of NTYTR was consideration of youths' and not by gender. The findings show that the use of violence (verbal and physical) against women during the election was deployed to dominate the female youths, which in turn discouraged them from running for office or reduced their efforts to organize a serious campaign. This is because stable "inequality among groups is maintained in part through the use of disproportionate force against subordinate groups" (Prattto & Stewart, 2012: 2). The use of force at times comes in a disguise of persuasive cultural ideologies, which Pratto and Stewart describe as "legitimizing myths" to discriminate against the dominated group. This was evident in the findings through the stereotypes promoting the idea that women cannot lead, or it is against the culture that women should be a leader.

A woman cannot lead is a myth because, historically, in Nigeria, before the arrival of the colonial masters, we have Great Ruler Queen Amina of the Zazzau of Zaria in the predominant Muslim Northern part of the country (Mack, 1991; Janis,2008). Also, the famous 1929 Aba riot known as the "Women War" led by thousands of Igbo women to demand women representation in the Native Courts and in decision making processes (Van Allen, 1975) is another example that shows that the cultural and religious narrative is a myth in the Nigerian context. The success of the Aba riot is enough to disprove the myth that women's leadership is un-cultural and against religion. Unfortunately, "legitimizing myths are widely known within a society and are linked to the basic cultural cosmology in ways that make them seem self - apparently true" (Pratto and Stewart, 2012:2). As a result, many Nigerian, including the female youths, also see women as undeserving because of this cultural myth that a woman is not fit to run for political office as a leader of the community.

Another aspect of the SDT that was evident in the findings is the preference for inequality among social groups (Pratto et al., 1994), which was evident from how the older women were preferred to the female youths for leadership positions. Thus, the NTYTR movement failed to identify the social dominance hierarchy that can occur within the same gender based on age where older women dominated the female youths when the opportunity arises for women to be considered by their various political parties.

Without a doubt, the SDT has brought out several gender discriminations strands from the findings. However, it was the gender analysis that epitomized the reason behind the performance of female youths in the last election as candidates or aspirants. The findings

show that 'derogatory label' and 'slut-shaming' discouraged a lot of young females from pursuing their political campaign. Women are burdened with the expectations of the social norms and attitudes steeped in culture, which limits the activities of Girls and young women from political activities. These cultural "roadblocks" discourage women from political participation.

Historically, in Nigeria, gender roles and sex discrimination are traditionally rooted in cultures, languages, and social norms and promoted by the patriarchal system (Okin, 1989: 6, 7). This was evident from the finding as many of the female youths' women that were interviewed identified their struggle even to convince family members to support their decision to aspire for the political position. The discrimination against female youths' candidates based on their single or divorced marital status, which did not fall within the accepted standard of the expectation for the female gender within the context of the society, is a primary herculean task they must overcome.

5.4. The Right to Contest Does Not Translate To Equal Representation

The capability approach was used in this study to look beyond the narrative of equal access to opportunity and resources (Tikly & Barrett, 2011:7). The findings show that because youths (male and female) between the age of 25 and 35 now have the constitutional rights to run for political office that they were previously restricted from contesting does not necessarily mean that they will be able to run for such office or win elections even if they run. The fact that male youths won 22 and 13 seats in the State Houses of Assembly and Federal House Representatives respectively while no single female youths were elected in the last general election despite equal opportunity given to both genders speaks to the differences in capability and functioning argument of Sen, (1999). According to Walker (2006), "the difference between a capability and functioning is like one between an opportunity to achieve and the actual achievement, potential and outcome" (2006: 165).

The NTYTR movement gives both male and female youths the opportunity to achieve their political aspiration, but only the male youths recorded the achievements both in the increase in the number of candidacy and seats won at the National and State assemblies. As

a result, the findings on nurturing secondary school girls for political leadership show that Saito's (2003) position that child freedom is much more related to developing suitable capabilities that are pertinent for adulthood might be the best way forward to increase female youths' representation in political leadership.

As demonstrated by the findings that Nigerian female youths enter politics with little or no knowledge of politics and lack the essential leadership skills required. It is a common practice to indoctrinate girls to follow the social constructed gender roles and expectations from a very young age. Therefore, lacking in capabilities that are necessary for entering politics in the future. The capability approach helped in understanding the complexity between rights to access and having the ability and capacity to access such desired rights.

5.5. Political Participation is Beyond Running For Office

The findings show that political participation is beyond running for office because, from the views of female youths' that did not contest in the 2019 election, it was clear there are other ways in which female youths can be involved in the electoral process. Almost all the female youths that did not contest election have roles; either they are campaign managers for a candidate or as independent election monitoring observers. It was evident that all the female youths involved in the study considered themselves politically active even if they did not contest. As demonstrated in the discussion of the findings in the two previous chapters, youths' political participation is beyond running for office; it encompasses a wide range of factors and narratives which might have a significant influence on the outcome of the NTYTR movement in promoting female youths in their future agenda for the 2023 election. The need to remove barriers and ensure that there is gender reorientation of young girls in the secondary schools and tertiary institutions as well as ensuring that negative text from the religious books that painted the idea of women cannot lead is countered with the positive test from the same religious text.

5.6. Conclusion

From the onset the chapter presented the findings obtained from the field work in with respect to challenges and obstacles faced by young Nigerian women to claim a stake in political arena in the country. The evidence presented above demonstrate that despite the passage of the Age Reduction Act in 2018, which was supposed to lead an improvement or increase in the number of young women in political positions across Nigeria, results from 2019 general election demonstrated the contrary. 22 young male between 25 to 30 got elected into different State Assemblies due to the passage of the Age Reduction Act which made it legally possible for them to run, but none for young women within the same age bracket. Given, this revelation the bill has been inconsequential to improving the state of young women electoral participation within this age. Reasons, for the inability of the bill to led to an increase in the target population's participation in electoral politics can be traced to age long patriarchy, money politics, sexual harassment, violence and harmful traditional practices, which are all consistent with Gender Analysis Framework, SDT and Capability Approach employed in this research.

The SDT and Gender concept is an eye opener to the fact that the male gender, regardless of the age, still occupied a superior ranking over the female gender and within the same gender, age is a significant barrier for younger female compared to the male aspirants. It has also been established that increasing political participation of female youths in political and electoral process is beyond running for office. It is a long process that involves building the capability of young female that have never been socialized politically like the males from childhood. The capability approach is crucial in the understanding of the necessity for preparing the young girls for future leadership position as early as secondary school stage.

Chapter 6. Conclusion and Summary

This study examined the underlying factors responsible for low support for female youth's candidacy from the general public. I studied the reasons why most of the youths are opting to support older candidates or male youths' candidates rather than qualified young female candidates. To answer the main research question: why young female candidates are not elected in Nigeria? Two sub-questions were proposed: What are the factors responsible for the low performance of female youths in the last general elections despite the Age Reduction Act that gives youths age 25 and above legal rights to run for political office? In which ways can the barriers that hindered female youths running for political offices be addressed in order to increase the chances of female youths in future elections in the country? Data collected through focus group discussion and semi-structured interviews were analyzed through the theoretical lens of dominant social theory, capability approach, the concept of gender and political participation.

In answering the main research questions why young females' candidates were not elected, I analyzed some data in Chapter 3, which primarily focus on the barriers or the reason behind the low acceptance of female youths' candidacy in Nigeria. What is known as 'slut-shaming,' and other forms of derogatory labeling, and sexual harassment are one of the primary reasons identified by all-female youths that participated in the study as a factor responsible for the low turnout of female youths, as (successful) candidates in the elections. This is despite grabbing their party's tickets; they feel annihilated by the negative characterization of female politicians. It was also revealed that culture and religion contributed to why young female candidates were not elected into political office. Some religious sects discourage members from running for political offices. The Christian faith requires that women are submissive to men, while the interpretation of Islam that forbids female leadership is predominantly propagated in the country by Islamic scholars. In addition, the involvement of hired armed 'security', who can behave as thugs and with impunity, is common throughout the election process (before, during, and after elections) was identified as a barrier. This scared a lot of female youths away from partaking the election process, and those that summon courage to contest end up not executing a robust campaign because their movements are limited due to the fear of being attacked.

In the fourth chapter, practical approaches and strategies can make the NTYTR movement address the failure of female youths in the last general election for future purposes were discussed as regards the second research question. It was revealed that the advocacy for legalizing the gender quota in political leadership representation, reorientation of girls that have been socially constructed to respect stereotypical gender roles at a young age, as well as collaboration with the progressive religious and traditional leader to help promote positive religious texts and cultural folklore that support female leadership will go a long way in advancing the their future wellbeing.

The theories and concepts that were explored in this study is crucial to the understanding of female youths' behavioral participation in the political process because Nigeria's gerontocratic culture casts older female adults as a dominant social group and younger female adults as the subordinate group. Also, how it casts the male gender as a dominant group over the female gender in the political and leadership space, which was evident from the findings of this study. I discussed how gender expectations from the societal perspective considered that female youths are aspiring for a political position as an aberration to culture and religious beliefs.

However, agitating for equal opportunity to run for office is not enough to mobilize female youths to aspire for political leadership or win elections when they run for office. This is because there are various factors such as gender, religion, cultural norms among others that are peculiar obstacles to female youths that needed to be addressed before female youths can realized their dreams just like their male counterparts. Therefore, the NTYTR must, as a matter of necessity, focus on building the capability and capacity of young secondary school girls to prepare them for future political leadership, engaged religious and traditional institutions as equal partners and collaborators to in the advocacy for female youths' representation in leadership positions.

Appendixes

Appendix 1: Interview guide

Data collection for this study will depend mainly on primary qualitative data that was collected in different states of Nigeria through semi-structured open-ended interviews, observation, documented evidence and focus group discussions. Purposive sampling was employed in selecting the participants for the semi-structured interviews sessions and focus group discussions because it is a method that enables acquiring satisfactory evidence across a wide range of the study sample.

During, the field work exercise in Nigeria I interviewed the following, YIAGA officials: 3, female youths that run for office. 20 (2 won election, 8 lost, 10 withdrew before election); male youths that run for office: 10 (2 won, 6 lost, and 2 withdrew before election); Youths that did not run for office: 10 youth's participants in FGD. In total, 33 youths were interviewed for the data collection and 10 participated in FGD making the overall total to be 43. I was not able to secure interview appointment, with four key informants that hold leadership position from 4 political parties, as well as one representative each from INEC (the National electoral body of Nigeria), The Executive Director YIAGA African Initiative (the convener of NTYTR) and the EU delegation election observer representative in Nigeria.

Interview Questions

- What are the obstacles and challenges that affects young women political participation despite the constitutional clearance to run for office in Nigeria?
- What was the motivation behind the NotTooYoungToRun? The influence on Women Political Participation in Nigeria?
- What are the barriers and opportunities to young women participation in governance and democratic processes in Nigeria?
- How best can Nigerian women build on the achievement of the NTYTR Movement to translate the rights to run in the electoral process into capacity to lead.
- What was the impacts of the NTYTRN campaign on the political participation of young women during 2019 election?
- What was the role of young women and people living with disability (PLWDs) in the NotTooYoungToRun movement in Nigeria?
- To What extent does the Not Too Young To Run Movement Influence young women Participation in the 2019 General Election?
- As young woman what are the challenges or obstacles you face running for political office in Nigeria?
- Did the NTYTR Movement influence your decision to participate or vote for youth candidates during the 2019 general election in Nigeria?

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