

Influence of the *Not-Too-Young-to-Run* Social Media Campaign on Youth's Political Participation in the 2019 General Election in Enugu State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study is an assessment of the influence of social media campaign on *not-too-young-to-run Act* during the 2019 general election. It adopted survey research method which used questionnaire as instrument for data collection. Four research questions were formulated and analysed in the course of this study. The study was anchored on the agenda setting theory. The mean value statistical analysis was used to analyse the research questions of the study. Finding revealed that majority of the youth in Enugu were aware of the *not-too-young-to-run* social media campaign which increased youth's participation in politics unlike what was obtainable before. It was also discovered that the *not-too-young-to-run* social media campaign was effective in influencing youth to participate in politics. The researchers, therefore, recommended among others, that the youth should be more organised by forming one political party so as to reach a consensus interests and bring about success in any elective post vied for.

Keywords: *Not-too-young-to run*, Social Media, Campaign, Youth, General Election

Introduction

The revolution in the technological industry that started with the launching of the internet in the mid-1990s paved way for social media and micro-blogging sites since the 2000s. The social media and by extension the internet, allows for instantaneous dissemination of news. Sending and receiving information can no longer be limited by space and time, a huge break in the communication barrier that has stood since the beginning of space and time. According to Ayankoya, Calitz & Cullen (2015), the social media concept involves the use of internet-based applications and services for communication, collaboration, creation and exchange of contents by individuals and groups. Social media allow individuals and groups to develop, maintain and stay connected to a network of other individuals and people with common interests (Ayankoya *et al* 2015).

In the 2015 general election, the social media became a more potent tool and even a more lethal weapon. There are releases in the form of videos, voice notes, headlines and broadcasts that made and mar many political parties and individuals. It is worthy to note that Social media platforms have been used for social movements such as #LightUpNigeria and #OccupyNigeria protests. The *not-too-young-to-run* campaign is one of them. The campaign started in support of bills and motions in Nigeria's National Assembly sponsored by Tony Nwulu in the House of Representatives and AbdulAziz Nyako in the Senate (YIAGA, 2017). The global campaign symbolised by the hashtag #Not-Too-Young-To-Run on Instagram and Twitter was aimed at reducing the age of running for elective positions for House of Assembly and House of Representatives from 30 year old to 25 year old, Senate and Governorship from 35 year old to 30

year old and office of the president from 40 to 30 and independent candidature in Nigeria (Adebayo, 2018). It is important to categorically state that irrespective of the NTYTRB that was signed into law before the present political dispensation, the Nigerian youth make-up less than 1% of political positions in the current political administration. As a result, there is a need to investigate if the *not-too-young-to-run* campaign on social media was effective in spurring youth participation in the 2019 elections in Enugu State.

Statement of the Problem

Nearly 70% of Nigeria's population is below the age of 35; it is imperative that young people are represented in the country's political systems. Despite these figures and increasing statistics, it is quite unfortunate to state that youth presence in Nigeria's political Landscape accounts for below 1% of the total political structure in a society with a teeming youth Population (YIAGA, 2020).

In Enugu state for instance, youth political participation is rated abysmally low, with youth political candidacy pegged at 18% in the 2015 general elections.(YIAGA, 2020). Statistics from National Youth Policy Organisation (2020) further shows that 9% of Enugu state youths were voted into power to occupy low ranking political positions such as councilors and LGA Chairman. Majority of the Nigerian youth are basically used as political thugs specialising in ballot box snatching, while wielding their well cocked guns and other related weapons. These unfortunate figures show up, despite the youth making up over 67% of the voting population on the average, which places them on a good advantage in any general elections. This low participation in politics both at the federal and State levels by youth, therefore, calls for questioning as to whether the *not-too-young-to-run* social media campaign can help spur their interest in getting actively involved in the political landscape of Nigeria not just as thugs and campaign crowds but as active key players in political decision making at all levels. The researchers, therefore, sought to conduct this study to ascertain the level and nature of change if any, on the youth political participation within Enugu State.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Were Enugu State youth aware of social media campaign on *not-too-young-to-run* bill during the 2019 election?
2. What were the different social media platforms through which they were exposed to this campaign?
3. Did the *not-too-young-to-run Bill* influence youth's participation during the 2019 elections in Enugu State?
4. What are the factors that contributed to the perceived youth political apathy in the 2019 general election and what ways can they be improved on?

Conceptual Review, Review of Related Literature and Theoretical Framework

Social media is a phenomenon that has influenced and transformed the interaction and communication of individuals throughout the world (Edosomwan *et al* 2011). Empirical evidence show that social media has become an indispensable platform in social mobilisation. Akinlade (2016) sought to find out the influence of social media on Nigerian youth's voting behaviour in the 2015 electoral process. The findings showed that Nigerian youth resident in the south eastern region were very active on social media and that social media has had a positive influence on their voting

behaviour. Okoro & Santas (2017) observed that the choice of presidential candidates during the 2011 presidential election was influenced by the use of social media

Social media are interactive web-based media platforms that offer citizens opportunity and place to connect, share opinions, experiences, views, contacts, knowledge, expertise, as well as other things like job and career tips. They belong to a new genre of media that focuses on social networking, allowing users to express themselves, interact with friends and share information with greater freedom as well as publish their views on issues on the World Wide Web (Okoro & Nwafor, 2013). Scholars in political communication generally agree that both traditional and online media affect how people learn about and engage in the political process (Dimitrova & Bystrom, 2013). Social media has taken media democratic function further by allowing both synchronous and asynchronous interactions and serving as platform for collective action. By serving as a two-way communication route, social media allows political organisations and aspirants to communicate and connect with the electorates and the constituents while taking feedback instantaneously or at a later time. It is, therefore, not uncommon these days for political aspirants to maintain profiles on social network sites and other mobile social media like Twitter (Mustapha, Gbonegun & Mustapha, 2016).

Not-too-young-to-run is an act of parliament which sought to reduce the age bracket prospective political office aspirants into elective offices in Nigeria. The campaign started in support of bills and motions in Nigeria's National Assembly sponsored by the Tony Nwulu in the House of Representatives and AbdulAziz Nyako in the Senate. The NTYTRA alters the following sections of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria, as amended in 2011: Section 65 (1); Section 106 (B); Section 131 (B); Section 171 (B). Before the passing into law of the bill, it was stipulated that the age qualification for the President, Governor, Senator, House of Representative Member and State House of Assembly were 40, 35, 35, 30 and 30 respectively. Interestingly, the NTYTRA gives room for persons below the aforementioned age ranges to contest for elective positions in the Country. In the face of these whole efforts towards youth inclusion in the political atmosphere in Nigeria, the question that keeps reoccurring is, will the youths maximise this opportunity and clinch what belongs to them or will they continue to lurk around the corridors of power as bag carriers and political bodyguards and thugs? The political environment in the country as presently constituted emasculates the youths and debar their incursion into politics.

According to Baran (2010), the internet is characterised by freedom and self governance, which are also the hallmarks of true democracy. It is no surprise then that computer technology is often trumpeted as the newest and best tool for increased democratic involvement and participation. Obama's utilisation of social media for campaigning proved to be very popular not only among the youth, grassroots and minorities but also among the majority of Whites in America. According to Twitaholic.com Obama has about 9 million followers on Twitter, while he has got about 22 million 'friends' on Instagram. Back home in Nigeria, politicians, including Ex-President Good luck Jonathan, have joined the social media bandwagon for political purposes. As if seemingly taking a cue from President Obama's successful use of the internet to win his election, Ex-President Jonathan also made aggressive use of social media to connect with millions of electorates on both Instagram and Twitter. With this recent trend in the use of social media as a veritable political outreach platform in reaching the greater number of the population, it has become imminent in the face of the increased quest for maximum audience attention for different organisations to put it to good use.

This work is anchored on the social judgement theory. The theory propounded by Muzafer Sherif describes the method by which people ascribe judgement to incoming information. Along

with Carolyn W. Sherif and Carl I. Hovland, Sherif created the theory in 1961 as a means to understand the process by which communicators categorise and develop attitudes toward information. The theory has particular applicability in moral facets of life, such as religion, philosophy and politics (Liam, 2019). The central tenet of social judgment theory is that attitude change is mediated by judgemental processes and effects; that is, messages produce attitude change through judgmental processes and effects. More specifically, the claim is that the effect of a persuasive communication depends upon the way in which the receiver evaluates the position it advocates; hence, attitude change is seen as a two-step process: First, the receiver makes an assessment of what position is being advocated by the message; change occurs after this judgment, with the amount and direction of change dependent on that judgement. This theory is relevant to this study in the sense that it helps in explaining the power of the media in determining what level of attitudinal changes that will occur in a media content consumer base on the consumers' perceived judgement a result of media persuasion through repeated broadcast using various media. It is believed that the NTYTR act gained massive exposures as well as acceptance as a result of the level of relevance that the media placed on it while employing diverse persuasive messages within the campaign as catch words. This in turn is believed to have resulted in certain degree of change in attitude and perception towards political participation not just in Enugu State but Nigeria at large.

Methodology

Survey research design was adopted for this study while the questionnaire was be used as the research instrument. According to Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekharefo & Okpanachi (2012), survey research is suitable for studying a very large population. For the purpose of this study, youth resident in Enugu state made up the population of the study. The estimated population figure of this study was projected at 4,183,116. This population figure was projected from 2006 population (provided by the National Bureau of Statistics) to 2021 using United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) formula. The UNDP population projection formula states thus:

$(3.2/100 \times n/1)$ at assumed growth rate of 3.2% per annum
Therefore, $\frac{3.2 \times n}{100 \times 1}$ note: "n" represents the population.

$$\frac{3.2 \times n}{100 \times 1} = \frac{3.2 \times 2,134,236}{100 \times 1} = 68,296$$

68,296 × 15 years (2006-2021)
= 1,024,440

Projected at 3.2 growth rate = 2,134,236 + 1,024,440
2,134,226 (population of youths in Enugu in 2006)
1,024,440 (population of youth in 2021)
3,158,676 + 1,024,440 = 4,183,116

Thus: 4,183,116 is the projected population.

The impracticality of studying the entire population, therefore, necessitates the need to select a sample size that is representative of the population. It is important that the sample size, regardless of its size, is representative of the population if the results must be generalised to the population. To arrive at a sample for the study, the Australian Online Sample Size Calculator, developed by the National Statistical Service of Australia will be used to determine the sample size which is as follows:

Please Note: This calculator should be used for simple random samples only

Determine Sample Size

Confidence Level: [i](#)

Population Size: [i](#)

Proportion: [i](#)

Confidence Interval: [i](#)

Upper

Lower

Standard Error [i](#)

Relative Standard Error [i](#)

Sample Size: [i](#)

How do I use it?

1. Select the Confidence Level you want to work at.
2. If you are sampling from a finite population (one that isn't very large), enter the Population Size.
3. If you already know the estimate Proportion, or want to check the Relative Standard Error of an existing estimate, fill in the Proportion. If left blank it will be assumed to be 0.5.
4. You must fill in one of the Confidence Interval, Standard Error, Relative Standard Error or Sample Size. Make sure the bullet point corresponding to the one you wish to specify is selected.
5. Press **Calculate** to perform the calculation, or **Clear** to start again.

[Sample Size Calculator Help](#)

[Sample Size Calculator Definitions](#)

[Sample Size Calculator Examples](#)

[Sample Size Calculator Stratification Examples](#)

Feedback

Deriving from the output of the Australian calculator, a sample size of 385 respondents was selected to represent the population of this study. The researchers adopted a multi-stage sampling technique in arriving at the sample to study. The first stage, the youths in Enugu state were purposively selected. These are people between the ages of 18years to 35 years of age. The voting age is considered based on the youth's definition given by the National Youth Policy Organisation.

To ensure proper representation, one university was purposively chosen from three senatorial zones in Enugu which are: Enugu North, Enugu East and Enugu West to ensure that each zone was represented in the study and that the results obtained were adequately generalised. In the second stage, one university from each of the three zones was selected using simple random sampling technique and this gave a total of three universities. Also, proportionate stratification was used at this stage to determine the number of questionnaire to be allotted to each state to ensure proper representation. The third stage was the selection of individual respondent from the selected universities using purposive sampling technique. At this stage, copies of the questionnaire were distributed to individuals who were between the ages of 18-35years.

Data Presentation and Analysis

In order to elicit the necessary data to answer the questions of this research, three hundred and eighty-five (385) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the same number of respondents.

However, three-hundred-and-sixty-five (365) copies were returned, while 20 copies of the questionnaire were lost; hence, 365 copies (96%) of the filled questionnaire constituted a dependable data to work with.

Table 1: Responses on the Regularity of using Social Media

Respondents	No of respondents	Percentage
Never	33	9%
Rarely	0	0%
Often	0	0%
Very Often	332	90.95%
Total	365	100

From the table above, It can be seen that majority of the youth visit and make use of social media platforms quite often. With the data above, it can be said that social media poses to be the most efficient medium to be used for campaigns targeting the youth population.

Table 2: Responses on the Extent of Exposed to the *Not-too-Young-to-Run* Campaign on Social Media

Variables	No of Respondents	Percentage
Very high	278	76%
High	77	21%
Undecided	0	0%
Low	10	2.7%
Very low	0	0%
Total	365	100%

It can be seen from the above table that majority of the youth were exposed to the *not-too-young-to-run* campaign on social media. The implications of this is that media content creators whose target audience were the youth, should resort to the use of social media as a far reaching platform with both that can deliver both reach and content in real time.

Table 3: Responses on the Effectiveness of *Not-too-Young-to-Run* Social Media Campaign

Variables	No of respondents	Percentage
Very effective	196	53.69%
Effective	97	26.6%
Undecided	72	20%
Less effective	0	0%
Total	365	100%

As shown in the table above, there is a sharp distinction and difference in the impact ratio on respondents. By Implications, a high percentage of the respondents agreed that the campaign was effective in driving home its message to the preferred media content consumers.

Table 4: Responses on the Actions taken as a Result Exposure to the *Not-too-Young-to-Run* Social Media Campaign

Variables	No of respondents	Percentage
It made me get a voter's card	111	30%
It made me join political party	55	15%

NTYTR media campaign made me to contest for position	45	12%
It made me to support a candidate	154	43%
Total	365	100

The table above shows that the NTYTR social media campaign influenced the youth greatly which resulted to actionable behavioural and attitude change. These changes are predominantly positive which is expected to ideally lead to a decline in political apathy.

Table 5: Factors that Contributed to Youth Political Apathy during the 2019 Elections

Variables	No of Respondents	Percentage
Rigging of election	123	36%
Lack of credible candidate	62	15%
Lack of trust in governance	115	31%
Campaign violence	64	18%
Total	365	100

The data presented above show that a lot of factors contributed to the political apathy witnessed prior to the floating of the *not-too-young-to-run*. Top on the list were lack of trust on the side of the government and rigging. The implication is that there has to be change to the way government is run and elections conducted. This when done, will improve the confidence level on the system and encourage more political players to join the scene.

Discussion of Findings

From the data generated, it was discovered that majority of the youth visited and made use of social media platforms quite often. The researchers also found that the respondents are aware of the *not-too-young-to-run-act* through the social media platform they operate. This agrees with the findings of Baglari, Sharma, Marimuthu & Suma (2020) who noted that a large of youth share information dominantly through the social media.

The findings further showed that the *not-too-young-to-run* act was very effective in influencing youth to participate in the 2019 general elections. Results showed that different social media platforms played an integral role in influencing the youth by exposing them to the campaign. This agrees with the findings of Baglari *et al* (2020) that Whatsapp and Instagram were the most used social media among youth and rightly advised that such should be used for information dissemination that concerns the youth demography. The findings revealed that majority of the respondents got influenced into taking action; these actions are predominantly positive and political in nature. Some of the actions include getting a voter's card due to the influence NTYTR social media campaign, which also made them partook in the 2019 general elections. The researchers also found that the NTYTR social media campaign had a huge influence on the respondents in selecting their candidates and it also has its own influence on the candidates. This aligns with the tenet of the social judgement theory which explains the power of the media in determining the level of attitudinal changes that will occur in a media content base on the consumers' perceived judgement as a result of media persuasion through repeated broadcast using various media channels.

The findings also showed that the *not-too-young-to-run* act made the respondents increase their participation in the 2019 general elections. The rigging of election, lack of credible candidate, lack of trust in governance, campaign violence and others were some of the factors that contributed to the perceived youth political apathy prior to the 2019 general elections. This is in complete consonance with the findings of Olawale (2018) who noted that the causes of political

apathy in Nigeria include election rigging; lack of trust in governance, campaign violence and lack of credible candidate.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The *not-too-young-to-run* bill has impacted positively on the political behaviour of Nigeria's teeming youth, especially in Enugu State Nigeria. Data collected from this study revealed that the continued agitation by the sponsors of this bill has directly birthed new perspectives in the minds of the youth on the need to actively get involved in politics not just as political thugs, but as political office aspirants. This has in turn led to an increase clamour for a change in governance and the nature of the leaders that govern. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are hereby given:

1. Youth should leverage their preferred social media outlets to be more organised by forming one political party so as to reach a consensus interest and bring about success in any elective post vied for.
2. Representatives should give an enabling environment for the youth of their various constituencies to participate in politics by appointing the youth into offices as well as electoral offices.
3. Electoral processes should be more inclusive of youth's involvement and it should be made as honest as possible and without violence.
4. The electoral act should mandate certain percentage of youth aspirants from all registered political parties as INEC should regulate the cost of Nomination forms within the registered political parties.

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