



“NOT TOO YOUNG TO RUN” CAMPAIGN ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND PARTICIPATION OF YOUTHS’ IN ALIMOSHO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA IN THE 2019 ELECTORAL PROCESS

BY

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Abstract

The use of the Social Media in advancing various sector, including bringing about societal change cannot be overemphasized. This is further evident in the “Not too Young to Run” campaign on Instagram and Twitter in the 2019 electoral process, designed to encourage the younger generation involvement in the overall electoral process. Therefore, this study examined the influence of the “Not too Young to Run” campaign on Instagram and Twitter on youths’ participation in the 2019 electoral process in Alimosho Local government area of Lagos State. The survey research design was adopted. 1, 817, 200 youths in Alimosho Local Government formed the population of the study. A total of 399 copies of structured questionnaire were administered to a sample drawn from youths in 3 wards using Multi-stage sampling technique in the Local Government. The findings showed that there was a weak positive significant relationship between the activity of the “Not too Young to Run” campaign on Twitter and Instagram and level of youths participation in 2019 electoral process ($r = 0.282$, $P=0.05$). The study while concluding that the Not too Young to Run” campaign on Instagram & Twitter influenced youths’ participation in the 2019 electoral process, recommended that a stronger positive relationship can be attained if other factors influencing youths’ participation in politics can be considered.

Key words: Social Media, ‘Not too young to run campaign’, Youths Participation, Electoral Process

Word Counts: 204



INTRODUCTION

Increased broadband penetration in accessing the Internet has given individuals and organizations the opportunity to use online platforms as media of communication. To meet this growing demand, social media platforms are on the rise daily to cater for the needs of people to socialize, sell, disseminate information and serve as a means of public discourse. This is noted in the rise of social media users in the past years. Statistics by NCC (2019) and Statistica (2019) shows that 75 percent of Nigeria's Internet population (122,292,079) as at June 2019 are on social media platforms. In addition, social media platforms have become a veritable tool in enhancing online political platforms today thereby allowing Internet users to participate in politics through several public discourses online. Preliminary studies have also shown that social media platforms have become popular among political activists than the traditional media as they find it hard to get through to audiences through the traditional media because of restricted network coverage and its expensive nature. As such, Dutta and Fraser (2008) opine that the ability of social media platforms to reach the mass audiences has attracted the attention of politicians and political activists in facilitating their course.

With the use of social media platforms for political issues, Alao, Alao, Ogunwemimo and Alao (2016) note that the works of political activists have been enhanced as the public can be reached with ease. In addition, Ofori-Parku and Moscato (2018) opine that activists can "expand their reach via message clustering, modification, rebroadcasting, or replying within the context of more extensive conversations" (p 2482). In turn, social media users also have the added advantage of participating in politics actively and air their views openly compared to what has been happening in the past whereby according to Quintelier (2007), only the elderly had the privilege of participating in politics and services of the youths are only required when it comes to hooliganism and thuggery.

In recent years, political activists have been able to use social media platforms to create political awareness. In Nigeria for instance, Social media platforms have been used for political movements such as *#BringBackOurGirls#* campaign which was launched in 2014; this started when the Boko Haram militant group adopted 276 school girls from Borno. The campaign as observed by Ofori-Parku and Moscato (2018) was deemed successful with the release of 82 Chibok girls



after negotiations by the Federal Government with the Boko Haram Sect.

A recent political activist movement in Nigeria and globally is the “Not too Young to Run” campaign on social media platform such as Instagram and Twitter aimed at encouraging youths to vie for electoral offices by reducing the age limits for political offices. The campaign achieved its major goal when the ‘Not Too Young to Run’ bill was signed into law by President Muhammadu Buhari on the 31st of May 2018. Hence, this study seeks to investigate how effective the “Not too Young to Run” campaign on Instagram & Twitter was in spurring youths’ participation in the 2019 electoral process in Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

The rise of social media platforms have brought about a transformation in the delivery and feedback mechanisms in the field of mass communication. It has also become a potential tool in the hands of political activists to bring about the desired change in the political arena. One of such modifications is to have a paradigm shift in the ages of political contestants from not just the elderly but to witness a shift to the younger generation’s participation and involvement in politics. As such, in line with United Nations (2018), the

Office of the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth in partnership with UNDP, OHCHR, the IPU, YIAGA and the European Youth Forum began a movement titled “Not too Young to Run” using the social media platforms in bringing about a change in electoral policy aimed at inspiring youths to participate in electoral exercises.

The campaign became successful when it was eventually passed into law May 31st 2018 by President Mohammed Buhari and YIAGA Africa (2018) disclosed that the ages of political contestants across varying portfolios were reduced to accommodate the youths to run for political offices while the age limit for senatorial and governorship positions remains at age 35. The president cutoff limit was reduced from 40 to 35 and House of Representatives dropped to 25 years of age. Though it became popular on social media platforms specifically on Instagram and Twitter, it is imperative to investigate youths’ perception of the “Not too young to run” campaign and how successful it was in the actual involvement of youths in the 2019 election exercises in Nigeria. Therefore, this study sought to find out how the “Not too young to run” campaign influenced youths participation in the 2019 electoral exercise in Alimosho local government area of Nigeria.



Objectives of the study

The general objective of the study is to determine the influence of the “Not too Young to Run” campaign on Instagram and Twitter on youths’ participation in the 2019 electoral process in Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Ascertain the attitude of youths in Alimosho local government area to the “Not too Young to Run” campaign on Twitter and Instagram;
2. Evaluate how the “Not Too Young to run” campaign influenced the participation of youths in Alimosho local government area in the 2019 elections; and
3. Explore the relationship between the “Not too Young to Run” activities on Twitter and Instagram and youths participation in the 2019 electoral process.

Research questions

1. What is the attitude of youths in Alimosho local government area to the “Not too Young to Run” campaign on Twitter and Instagram?
2. How has the “Not Too Young to Run” campaign influenced youths’ participation in the 2019 elections?

3. What is the relationship between the “Not too Young to Run” activities on Twitter and Instagram and youths’ participation in the 2019 electoral process?

Theoretical framework

The Uses and Gratification Theory by Katz, Blumler, Gurevitch, and McQuail (2010) gained its popularity in 1974, noted that its existence can be traced down to the 1940s with researchers studying why people listen to specific radio programmes. The theory according to Baran and Davis, (2009) promotes that a specific medium can be preferred to the other based on the gratification that is derived from the medium alongside the effort required to operate the medium and the reward to be attained in using the medium. As such, social media platforms will be easily adopted by political activists for political campaigns because of its innovation and its audience centeredness.

The Uses and gratification theory is relevant to this study as political activists make use of the social media in reaching their set goals. This is so, as social media is more effective in reaching a large and heterogeneous audience compared to the traditional media which is more expensive and restricted by license coverage. This is affirmed by Alao, Alao,



Ogunwemimo and Alao (2016) noting that the social media can be used to achieve a set objective as it is cheap, fast and penetrate where other media cannot reach. This is so, as social media campaign is relatively cheap and cut across social media users regardless of geographical boundaries and network coverage that comes with the use of terrestrial media. With the simplicity of social media, it seems most appropriate for political activists to adopt various platforms in carrying out political discourse. The social media platforms will further enhance the goals of political activists through interactions and immediate feedback from targeted audiences who are youths. Social media will serve as a tool in fulfilling this function as studies have shown that young people are the dominant users of Information and Communication Technologies. The hash tag also enables political activists to follow public discourse while the audience on the other hand can indicate their alliance and satisfaction with the campaign through the “#” tag. The media content must however be such that will interest the audience as this will determine their participation and level of involvement.

Literature Review

Social media and political participation

The use of social media platforms in recent years have changed the political landscape compared to what it was in the past whereby the public solely depended on the traditional media for political news and participation. However, with rise in Internet penetration, the public including political activists have shifted online with the aid of social media platforms for a more robust political discourse. André-Michel (2017) argues that social media has improved governance in Nigeria, by providing a platform through which people can discuss about the government and at the same time interact with political activists and government officials. This is evident in politicians’ constant use of the social media in enhancing their activities and the successful passing of the “not too young to run” bill into law. This trend became popular as revealed in literature in the 2008 US presidential elections with the campaigns of Barak Obama. Kasenally and Awatar (2014) note that this strategy by the then President Obama set the stage for the utilization of social media in political mobilization. Thus, Mhlomi, and Osunkunle (2017) in their study in South Africa found that these political campaigns on social media ultimately have a positive influence on youths’ actual engagement in election processes. Kasenally and Awatar (2014) discourse on social media, elections and political



engagement in Mauritius concluded that there was a large turnout of citizens who participated in the election exercises due to political campaigns deployed on the social media.

Nigeria is not left out in incorporating the use of social media platforms in mobilizing citizens for political participation. Chinedu-Okeke and Obi (2016) observed the progression of social media integration in elections since its debut in 2011 elections. This trend progressed into the 2015 general elections and recently in the 2019 electoral exercise in Nigeria. The study of Dungse, Opeyemi and Chedioze (2018) reported that while majority of the tweets 33 percent were regarded as hate speech, not too young to run was the second largest among Twitter users in Nigeria. This further indicates how social media platforms are used successfully to involve social media users in political participation. Similarly, Aliyu (2019) further found in the study conducted that 57.3 percent of the respondents believe that more youths have been given the opportunity to contest for political offices while another 72 percent indicated that the Act has awakened the political consciousness in them. As such, Etim and Duke (2019); Onwughalu and Obiorah (2018) surmise that the “not too young to run”

act is to further enhance democracy and to bring about several opportunities for the youths in national development.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey research method. The multi-stage sampling was adopted. Alimosho Local government area was purposively selected due to its metropolitan nature and also the largest local government area in Lagos state with highest number of registered voters (City Population, 2019). The total projected population of Alimosho local government as at 2016 according to City population (2017) is 1,817,200. Furthermore, according to Media Nigeria (2019), there are eleven wards in the local government, out of these, 3 wards were randomly selected using the fishbowl simple random sampling technique. Using Taro Yamane formula, a sample size of 399 youths served as study participants. In addition, the 399 copies of questionnaire were self-administered with the aid of 3 research assistants to youths in the 3 selected wards. The selected wards are Ayobo/Ijon Village (camp David) with 17 polling booths, Igando/Egan ward with 25 polling booths and Idimu/Isheri Olofin with 52 polling booths. Furthermore polling units were selected proportionately in each of the wards.



For instance, Ayobo/Ijon Village=

$$\frac{17}{94} \times 100 = 18\%$$

$$\frac{18}{100} \times 17 = 3 \text{ polling units}$$

Igando/Egan

$$\frac{25}{94} \times 100 = 26.5\%$$

$$\frac{26.5}{100} \times 25 = 6 \text{ polling units}$$

Idimu/Isherri Olofin

$$\frac{52}{94} \times 100 = 55\%$$

$$\frac{55}{100} \times 52 = 28 \text{ polling units}$$

Table 1: Selected wards and their polling units

Ayobo/ijon Village (camp David)	Igando/Egan	Idimu/isheri Olofin
Salvation Army School Ayobo iii	Ilebu/Badore Junction	Egbeda Ogunlola Junction I & iii
Owonikoko street Ayoba i	Agric road Ara junction	Front of Mobile Barracks
Ijon Town hall	Local Govt pry school Egan	Akinbolade/Gani street
	Open Space Igando Market 3	6 Mamadu str, Isherri
	Old Onigando palace road	Isherri Olofin Town hall
	Community high sch, Igando	Local Govt pry school I and Idimu
		Within Arida settlement I & ii
		Williams/Alaje Junction
		Opp. 6A pipeline rd I and ii
		Ondo Olorunfunmijunction 1 and 11
		Jaiyeoba/aunt Mary str
		Oke-Idimu and Agbogunlerin
		10 Ayodele Amusa & Liasu Council i and ii
		Alafia Junction & Ejigbo Rd
		Isherri townhall i and ii
		Ifelodun Junction I and ii
		Within Ogbomoso village i and ii

Source: (Researcher, 2019)



The selected polling units were visited during the election exercises and youths were purposively selected with the criteria that they had either Instagram or Twitter accounts and within the ages of 18 and 35 years of age.

Instagram and Twitter were selected because of their popularity among the youths. In NaijaTechGuide (2019) report, Instagram has 800 million monthly users with an average Instagram user spending 53 minutes per day on it. Social media stat (2019) further ranked Twitter 2nd highest as part of the media platforms majorly used by the youths because of its flexibility and ability to tweet views and opinions.

A pilot study was conducted on 30 youths in the Sagamu area of Ikenne local government area of Ogun state. Reports from the pilot study thus led to the development of questionnaire items which dealt with (1) respondents attitude to the “Not too Young to Run” campaign (2) The influence of the “Not too Young to Run” campaign on Instagram &

Twitter on youths’ participation in the 2019 electoral process in Nigeria and (3) focused on finding out the relationship between the activity of the “Not too Young to Run” campaign on Twitter and Instagram and the level of youths participation in the 2019 electoral process. The instrument was further subjected to a reliability test; result (0.881) showed that the instrument was reliable.

The statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) 21 was used to analyse and interpret the data. Descriptive data was presented in charts, frequency tables and mean. The analysis further made use of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis to measure the relationship between the activity of the “Not too Young to Run” campaign on Twitter and Instagram and the level of youths participation in the 2019 electoral process.

Results

Out of the 399 copies of questionnaire that were administered, 393 copies were retrieved giving 98.5 per cent response rate.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	18-20	44.5
	21-25	24.9
	26-30	18.3
	31-35	12.2
Total	393	100.0



Gender	Male	193	49.1
	Female	200	50.9
Total		393	100.0

From Table 2, majority of the study participants were young, this is because most were between the ages of 18 to 30 (87.7%). In addition, the study had almost equal

representation of gender (Male = 49.1%, Female = 50.9%). This implies that the study had participants that were young and almost equally represented by gender.

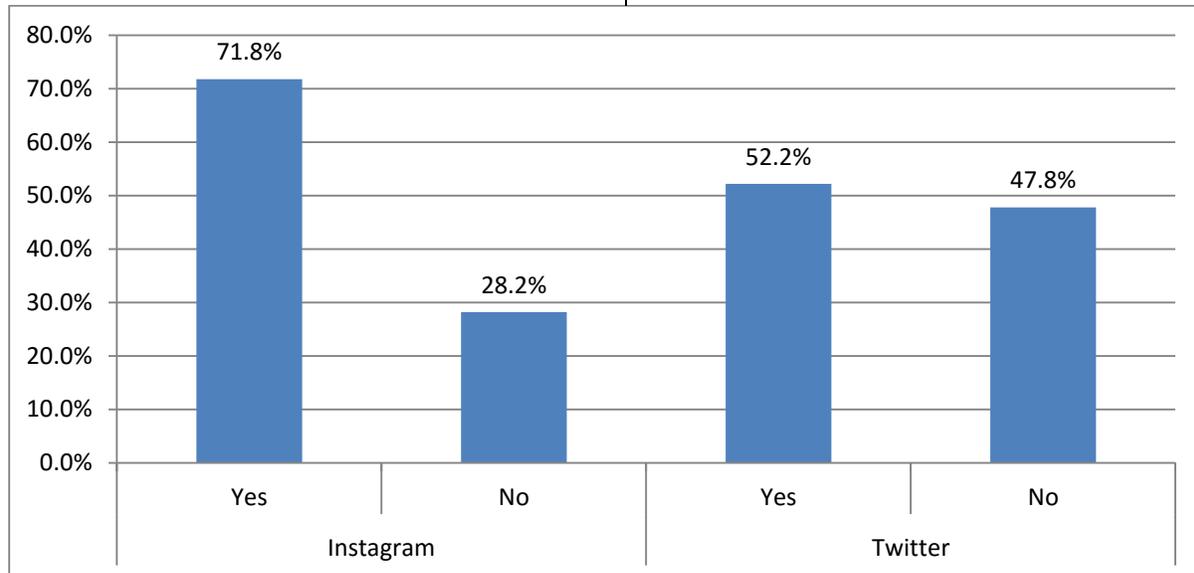


Fig. 1: Social Media Accounts of Participants

From Fig. 1, majority of the participants indicated that they had Instagram accounts (71%), while 52.2 percent indicated they had Twitter accounts. This suggests that

participants who had Instagram accounts were more in this study than Twitter users. Participants either have Instagram or Twitter account.

Table 3: Frequency of Twitter and Instagram Usage

Social Media Platforms	\bar{x}	SD
Frequency of Twitter usage	3.14	1.13
Frequency of Instagram usage	2.90	1.15



***Decision Rule if mean is ≤ 1.49 =Not at all; 1.5 to 2.49 = Very Low; 2.5 to 3.49 = Low; 3.5 to 4.49= High; 4.5 to 5= Very High

Table 3 depicts that on the average, the frequency of Twitter usage among study

participants though low (\bar{x} =3.14) is still higher than Instagram usage (\bar{x} =2.90).

Research Question One: What is the attitude of youths in Alimosho local government towards the “Not too Young to Run” campaign on Twitter and Instagram?

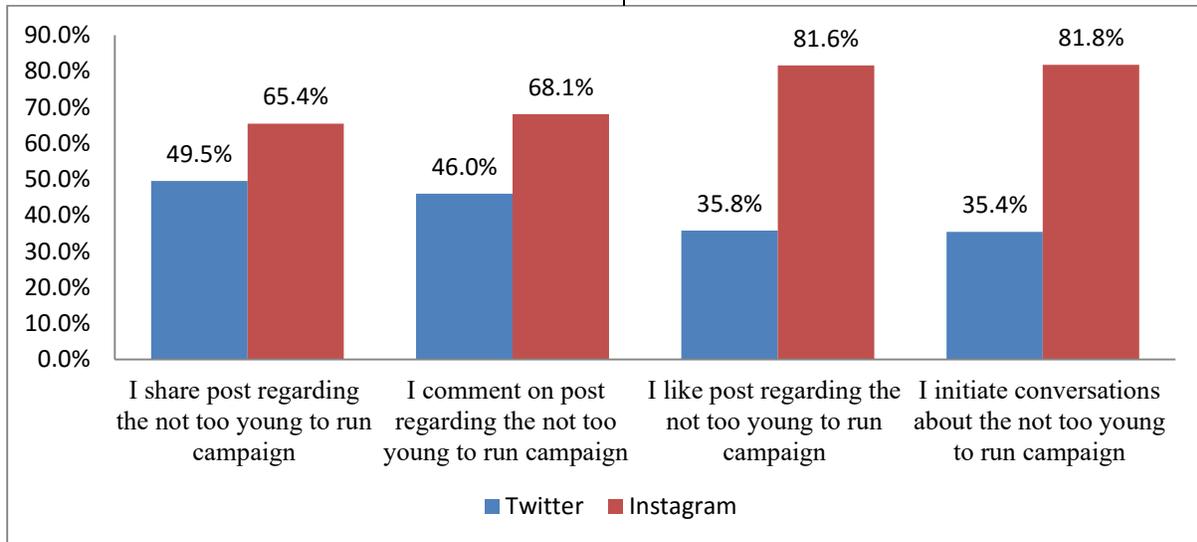


Fig. 2: Attitude of Youths towards the “Not too Young to Run” Campaign on Twitter and Instagram

From Fig. 2, participants had better attitude towards the “Not too Young to Run” campaign on Instagram than Twitter. Majority (65.4%) of the respondents stated that they shared posts regarding the campaign on Instagram while close to half of the respondents (49.5%) shared posts on Twitter. Furthermore more than two

third (68.1%) commented on the campaign on Instagram while 46 percent did likewise on Twitter. Finally, almost all the respondents (81.8%) initiated conversations about the “Not too Young to Run” campaign on Instagram; while 35.4 percent did so on Twitter.

Research Question Two: To what extent has the “Not Too Young to Run” campaign influenced youths’ participation for the 2019 elections?



Table 4: Extent the “Not too Young to Run” campaign Influenced Youths for the 2019 Elections

Items	VHE F (%)	HE F (%)	LE F (%)	VLE F (%)	NA F (%)	\bar{x}	SD
I actively participated in political campaigns on the social media platform because of “Not Too Young to Run” campaign.	230 (58.5)	71 (18.1)	-	92 (23.4)	-	4.12	1.23
The reduction of age in the “Not Too Young to Run” influenced youths to contest for a political position	123 (31.3)	182 (46.3)	45 (11.5)	43 (10.9)		3.98	0.93
The publicity of the “Not Too Young to Run” campaign on social media encouraged youths to run for political seat.	168 (42.7)	74 (18.8)	60 (15.3)	91 (23.2)	-	3.81	1.21
The reduction of candidates form purchase encouraged youths to contest for political seats	121 (30.8)	122 (31)	92 (23.4)	58 (14.8)		3.78	1.04
The “Not Too Young to Run” campaign influenced the increased participation of youths in political activities	170 (43.3)	72 (18.3)	151 (38.4)	-	-	3.66	1.36

Average Mean **3.87 1.16**

KEY: VHE=Very High Extent, HE=High Extent, LE= Low Extent, VLE=Very Low Extent, NA=Not at all, *Decision Rule if mean is ≤ 1.49 =Not at all; 1.5 to 2.49 = Very Low Extent; 2.5 to 3.49 = Low Extent; 3.5 to 4.49= High Extent; 4.5 to 5= Very High Extent**

Table 4 indicates that the Not too Young to Run campaign influenced the youths in the 2019 elections to a high extent (\bar{x} =3.87). Some of the items showed that participants to

a high extent actively engaged in political campaigns on the social media platform because of the not too young to run campaign (\bar{x} =4.12). The publicity of the “Not Too Young to Run” campaign on social media to a high extent encouraged participants to run for political seat (\bar{x} =3.81) and that the not too young to run campaign influenced the increased participation of youths in political activities (\bar{x} =3.66).

Research Question Three: What is the relationship between the activity of the “Not



too Young to Run” campaign on Twitter and Instagram and the level of youths participation in the 2019 electoral process?

Table 5: Relationship between Activities of the “Not too Young to Run” Campaign on Twitter and Instagram and the Level of Youths Participation in the 2019 Elections

Variables	Level of Youths Participation in 2019 Elections
	Pearson Correlation
	0.282**
	Sig. (2-tailed)
	0.000
	N
	393

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 shows that there was a weak positive significant relationship between the activity of the “Not too Young to Run” campaign on Twitter and Instagram and the level of youths

participation in the 2019 electoral process ($r = 0.282$). This suggests that as the activities of the “Not too Young to Run” campaign on Twitter and Instagram increased, the level of youths participation in the 2019 electoral process increased.

Table 6: Factors that Inhibited Youths from Participating in the Electoral Process

Items	SA F (%)	A F (%)	D F (%)	SD F (%)	U F (%)	\bar{x}	SD
Cost of acquiring forms and running for electoral seats hinders me from running for an electoral seat	238 (60.6)	-	109 (27.7)	46 (11.7)	-	4.09	1.16
Electoral violence inhibits my participation in the election	148 (37.7)	123 (31.3)	96 (24.4)	26 (6.6)	-	4.00	0.94
Rigorous process of obtaining permanent voter’s card.	135 (34.4)	164 (41.7)	48 (12.2)	46 (11.7)	-	3.99	0.97
The lack of commitment in any candidate was a barrier for me from participating in the elections.	185 (47.1)	27 (6.9)	135 (34.4)	46 (11.7)	-	3.89	1.13
My lack of trust in the electoral body inhibits me from participating in the electoral process	25 (6.4)	300 (76.3)	-	44 (11.2)	24 (6.1)	3.66	0.97



KEY: SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree, U=Undecided*Decision Rule if mean is ≤ 1.49 Undecided; 1.5 to 2.49 = Strongly Disagree; 2.5 to 3.49 =Disagree; 3.5 to 4.49= Agree; 4.5 to 5= Strongly Agree**

Table 6 indicates that the most predominant factors that inhibited youth from participating

in the electoral processes were: the cost of acquiring forms and running for electoral seats hindered me from running for an electoral seat (\bar{x} =4.09), electoral violence (\bar{x} =4.00), rigorous process of obtaining permanent voter's card (\bar{x} = 3.99), lack of commitment in any candidate (\bar{x} = 3.89) and lack of trust in the electoral body (\bar{x} = 3.66).

Discussion of Findings

Not too Young to Run” campaign and Youths’ participation in the 2019 election process

Findings from this study show that there were more participants who had Instagram accounts than Twitter (Fig. 1). This affirms reports and studies from Literature point of view which reveals Instagram as the 2nd largest media platform among social media users. Digital Information World (2019); Statistica (2019) Business Insider (2018) reports ranked Instagram second as the most preferred among youths in the US with 43.3 million users. However, the frequency of usage was higher in Twitter than Instagram as depicted in Table 3. This suggests that a particular medium is preferred because of what the user stands to gain and benefits and thus supports the tenets of uses and gratification theory. While

Instagram is the second leading social platform across globe among the youths, participants spend more time on Twitter due to its ability to offer users what they want. According to Lifewire (2019), Twitter is a popular social medium and most suitable for engagement because of its distinctness in tweeting; ability to track hundreds of tweeter users and reading their contents at a glance.

From the analysis in Figure 1, it can be deduced that youths on Instagram had a better disposition towards the not too young to run campaign. This is in line with the study of Dungse, Opeyemi and Chedioze (2018) which reported that though majority of the not too young campaign tweets (33%) were regarded as hate speech, not too young to run had the second largest tweet among Twitter users in Nigeria. This suggests that while the not too



young to run campaign was viral among Tweeter users, the popularity was more as a result of their negative disposition as reported by Dungse, Opeyemi and Chedioze (2018). Hence, majority of youths generally on both Instagram and Twitter actively participated in the campaign through their likes or dislikes, comments, sharing of posts and initiation of conversations centered on the not too young to run law. It further shows that many of the youths on Instagram supported and believed in the campaign and what it stood for. Participants' involvement in the campaign on Instagram and Twitter is connected to the fact that 52 percent of Nigerian voters are youths ages 18 to 35 as observed by INEC (2019). The findings of Aliyu (2019) indicated that 57.3 percent of the respondents are of the belief that more youths have been given the opportunity to contest for political offices while another 72 percent indicated the Act has awakened the political consciousness in them which further conforms with the findings of this study (Table 4)

The positive attitude of youths to this campaign majorly on Instagram might have further led to increased participation in the 2019 electoral process. This is indicated in Table 4 as the campaign geared the youths towards participating in the election; with a

weak positive relationship ($r = 0.282$). The implication of this is that while the not too young to run campaign has awakened political consciousness among the youths and motivated them to participate in electoral processes, there are other factors that will encourage them to contest for electoral positions. The major factor as depicted in Table 6 is the cost of running for an electoral seat which is often a huge amount of money. This discovery supports the fears of some scholars who are of the view that the act is not sufficient to bring the youths into the political arena, Mhlomi, and Osunkunle (2017); Kasenally and Awatar (2014); Etim and Duke (2019); Onwughalu and Obiorah (2018). An example is the study of Common Wealth Observer group, (2019) whose position affirms that political seats belongs to the elderly caucus also. Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, IDEA (2019) highlighted political corruption and cost of running for a political seat as a barrier to youths participation in elections. Subsequently, it might also account for the negative disposition of some youths towards the act, as a lot of money is involved in contesting for elections starting with purchasing of forms, god-fatherism syndrome and the cost of running campaigns. The last minute "postponement of the presidential and National Assembly



elections on the morning of Feb. 16, and delays in opening some polling units and other administrative challenges on Feb. 23”

according to IRI/NDI (2019, p.6) report of further undermined public confidence leading to lack of trust in the electoral body.

Conclusion

The role of the social media in shaping the political landscape cannot be over emphasized. Over the years, it has become a veritable tool among political activists and politicians alike in bringing about political awakening through individuals active involvement in politics. One of which is the popular “not too young to run” campaign on social media platforms to bring about political consciousness among the youths through their active participation in politics. Thus, the study investigated the success of this campaign on Youths’ participation in the 2019 electoral process. The findings showed that the “Not too Young to

Run” campaign on Instagram & Twitter had a weak positive relationship with youths’ engagement in the 2019 electoral process. It was recommended that the electioneering process should be flexible and affordable in other for youths to be fully involved in veering for political offices. Hence, it can be concluded that while the not too young to run campaign encouraged youths participation in politics, there is the need to consider other factors inhibiting youths participation in politics before this act can be fully embraced by the youths.



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