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Youth Leadership in Legislation: Assessing Young Legislators' Performance and Challenges in Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract: The global underrepresentation of youth in formal political arenas is a pressing issue, particularly in Nigeria, where 74.22% of the population is under 35 years old, yet young people have limited access to legislative roles. The 2018 Not Too Young to Run Act sought to address this by lowering the eligibility age for House of Assembly candidates from 30 to 25 years. This study investigates the performance and challenges of young legislators in the Oyo State House of Assembly, focusing on the 9th Assembly, where 13 out of 32 members were aged between 25 and 40, including one of Nigeria's youngest legislators and speakers. The study employs a mixed-methods approach within a case study research design grounded in leadership competence theory. Data were collected on legislative activities such as attendance, sponsored bills and motions, and matters of urgent public importance from June 2019 to August 2021. Findings reveal that young legislators demonstrated leadership competencies and actively contributed to legislative processes but faced significant challenges, including limited experience in lawmaking and cultural dynamics when engaging with older colleagues. The study concludes that while including youth in legislative roles is a positive step, targeted capacity-building initiatives are essential to enhance their legislative effectiveness. It recommends mentorship programmes and training to equip young legislators with the skills to navigate complex legislative and socio-cultural environments.

Keywords: Legislative Performance, Nigeria, Oyo State, Youth Leadership, Young Legislators

Introduction

Youth participation in governance has become a global priority, reflecting calls for greater inclusivity and representation in political leadership. In Nigeria, the passage of the #NotTooYoungToRun Act in 2018 marked a significant milestone, lowering the eligibility age for House of Assembly and House of Representatives candidates from 30 to 25 years. This reform was celebrated as a transformative step toward integrating youth voices into the country's political landscape. The 2019 general elections subsequently witnessed the emergence of 20 young legislators aged 25 to 30 across various State Houses of Assembly, signalling a break from the entrenched gerontocracy that has historically characterised Nigeria's political system (Faruk, 2020; Krook & Nugent, 2018; WFD, 2020).

While this development aligns with a broader global trend advocating for youth inclusion in governance, it also raises questions about the preparedness and effectiveness of young legislators in navigating the complexities of legislative processes. The Nigerian political system is steeped in gerontocratic norms and traditions that privilege seniority and experience, creating a challenging

environment for young legislators (Tade, 2018). These challenges often manifest as marginalisation, difficulty asserting authority in legislative debates, and barriers to fully participating in decision-making. Additionally, cultural expectations that emphasise deference to elders can further erode the confidence and influence of young legislators, especially when their senior colleagues are contemporaries of their parents or grandparents (Erikson & Josefsson, 2019).

Despite these challenges, including young legislators brings opportunities for innovation and modernisation in political institutions. Youth representation can infuse fresh perspectives, challenge outdated norms, and improve the public perception of legislative bodies as progressive and forward-looking (Erikson & Josefsson, 2019). Internationally, efforts such as youth quotas in Sweden's Social Democratic Party demonstrate the potential benefits of actively engaging young politicians in governance. Similarly, in Nigeria, the presence of young legislators can reshape the legislative agenda, particularly in addressing issues

pertinent to the country's predominantly youthful population.

The Oyo State House of Assembly (OYSHA) presents a compelling case for examining the dynamics of youth leadership in legislation. With 13 of its 32 members in the Ninth Assembly aged between 25 and 40, including one of Nigeria's youngest Speakers, the OYSHA reflects a significant demographic shift in representation. This assembly provides a unique opportunity to evaluate how young legislators navigate intergenerational dynamics, assert their leadership competencies, and contribute to legislative processes. It also highlights the cultural and institutional challenges they encounter and their potential to drive reforms in governance.

This study investigates the performance and challenges of young legislators in the OYSHA's Ninth Assembly, focusing on their ability to fulfil their legislative mandates amidst political and cultural constraints. Grounded in leadership competence theory, the research examines their legislative activities, including attendance, sponsored bills, motions, and contributions to matters of public importance. The study aims to bridge the gap in knowledge regarding the effectiveness of young legislators, offering insights into their experiences and the broader

implications for governance and political representation in Nigeria.

By assessing the performance of young legislators in Oyo State, this study contributes to the discourse on youth leadership in legislative bodies. It highlights the interplay of opportunities and obstacles young politicians face in a gerontocratic political system and offers recommendations to enhance their capacity to contribute meaningfully to governance. These findings can potentially inform policies and practices to strengthen youth representation in Nigeria's democratic institutions.

Literature Review

Legislature in Nigeria

The legislature, commonly called Parliament, is a cornerstone of democratic governance, providing a vital link between citizens and the government. As an institution, it embodies the principles of representation, accountability, and oversight, maintaining the quality of democracy. Rooted in Montesquieu's theory of the separation of powers, the legislature operates alongside the executive and judiciary to ensure a system of checks and balances, preventing the concentration of power in any single branch. Within this framework, the legislature

represents the will of the people, enacts laws, and holds the government accountable (IPU, 2011).

The legislature's responsibilities span a broad spectrum of functions, as outlined by the National Assembly's Parliamentary Reform Project (PARP, 2011). These include legislation, representation, oversight, political recruitment, leadership development, conflict resolution, and quasi-judicial duties. Among these, legislation, representation, and oversight are recognised as its core functions, forming the foundation of its mandate. Furthermore, Barkan (2009) highlights constituency service as a critical function, emphasising legislators' role in addressing their constituents' needs and concerns. The legislature's capacity to effectively fulfil these functions hinges on its members being elected representatives with the authority to enact laws and oversee governmental actions. Through these roles, the legislature safeguards citizens' rights and freedoms, reinforces national security, and enhances democratic governance.

In a democratic system, the legislature's strength and competence are central to its success. Barkan (2009) asserts that a robust and capable legislature is indispensable for a thriving democracy, while Fish (2006) identifies a powerful

legislature as a hallmark of democratisation, contributing positively to governance. Simbine (2000) underscores the legislature's critical role in expressing the collective will of the people and crafting laws that guide the executive and judiciary. Similarly, Döring (2001) emphasises the legislature's influence over a nation's social, political, and economic life, highlighting its multifaceted contributions to governance. These perspectives underscore the legislature's role as the driving force behind democratic practices, facilitating representation, policymaking, and executive oversight.

The effectiveness of the legislature in democratic societies extends beyond its institutional mandates to its role as a bridge between citizens and their government. An effective legislature fulfils its tripartite mandate, legislation, representation, and oversight, ensuring that the government remains accountable to the people. This model of a modern legislature forms the standard for evaluating legislative performance globally.

In the Nigerian context, the legislature's origins trace back to British colonial rule. Over time, it has evolved into a key institution within the country's democratic

framework. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria vests legislative authority in the National Assembly at the federal level and the House of Assembly at the state level. This dual-level system allows the legislature to address both national and state-specific issues. However, challenges remain in ensuring that legislative bodies operate effectively and uphold democratic principles, especially in navigating Nigeria's governance system's complex political and institutional dynamics.

The State House of Assembly

The House of Assembly, akin to the federal legislature, serves as the legislative body at the state level. Its primary function involves the formulation of legislation that establishes the parameters of governance within a state. One of its key responsibilities lies in the examination of state budgets. The state legislature assumes a critical role in shaping government policies and initiatives. By its proximity to the populace, the state legislature effectively articulates the needs and aspirations of the citizens. The existence of 36 state Houses of Assembly, similar to their federal counterpart, is marked by comparable tenure provisions. Nevertheless, the temporal alignment of these state Houses of Assembly differs owing to each state's unique political advancement characteristics.

Section 90 and 91 under Part II of the Constitution states, among other things:

“There shall be a House of Assembly for each of the States of the Federation.”

“Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, a House of Assembly of a State shall consist of three or four times the number of seats which that State has in the House of Representatives divided in a way to reflect, as far as possible, nearly equal population: Provided that a House of Assembly of a State shall consist of not less than twenty-four and not more than forty members.”

Legislation as a Core Mandate of a Legislator

At its core, legislators have a fundamental mandate for lawmaking. However, this responsibility can sometimes be reduced to a rubber-stamping activity, mainly when the executive heavily influences legislative decisions. Ideally, legislators are expected to represent the interests and concerns of their constituencies, bringing to the legislative floor issues that require governmental attention. Legislation translates citizens' views, opinions, and preferences into actionable laws.

The legislative process is inherently complex, requiring careful

deliberation and adherence to established procedures. According to Sanyaolu, Sanyaolu, and Segun (2017), lawmaking is often time-intensive, involving multiple formalities to ensure quality and accommodate diverse interests. The legislative process encompasses a series of steps through which a bill or motion is formulated, debated, revised, and ultimately approved by competent legislative bodies, including staff and members of parliament, before being enacted into law (PARP, 2011).

Any legislature member can introduce motions and formal proposals. Similarly, bills, an essential legislative action tool, can be privately or publicly sponsored. Private bills originate from individual legislators or groups within the legislature, while the executive branch initiates public bills. In Nigeria, the legislative process for bills includes five distinct stages: introduction, second reading, committee stage, report stage, and third reading. At the national level, where a bicameral system operates, a joint conference committee of the two chambers often reviews the bill for concurrence before it is forwarded to the president for assent.

The rigorous nature of the legislative process is intentional and designed to ensure thorough scrutiny, inclusivity,

and alignment with the public interest. By navigating these procedures, legislators fulfil their role as custodians of democracy, balancing the need for efficiency with the imperative of representation. As envisioned by the framers of the Constitution, the legislative process is intentionally structured to be slow and thorough, ensuring comprehensive scrutiny and minimising errors, whether negligent or deliberate. The procedure follows a series of well-defined stages, each designed to foster deliberation and uphold legislative integrity.

1. First Reading: At this initial stage, a bill, regardless of its origin, is formally introduced on the House floor by a legislator. The purpose at this juncture is purely procedural; the bill is presented without debate, and members are informed of its content. The bill is subsequently scheduled for a second reading, where its details are more rigorously examined.

2. Second Reading: This stage marks the beginning of substantive deliberation. The bill's general principles and practical implications are debated constructively. Depending on their origin, bills are categorised accordingly: those emanating from the executive are labelled "Executive Bills." In contrast, Senate-originated bills are designated "SB" (Senate Bill), and House of Representatives-originated

bills are identified as “HB” (House Bill). If the bill successfully passes this stage, it is referred to the relevant committee for further examination and refinement.

3. **Committee Stage:** At the committee stage, the bill undergoes detailed scrutiny by the appropriate standing committee by the house’s established rules and procedures. The committee evaluates the bill’s content, structure, and provisions to ensure it meets legislative standards. This stage often includes public hearings or consultations with professionals, experts, and stakeholders, allowing broader input on the proposed legislation. Such engagement ensures that diverse perspectives are considered. Upon completion, the committee compiles its findings and submits a report to the house, accompanied by recommendations.

4. **Report Stage:** During the report stage, the committee’s findings and recommendations are presented to the house, typically by the chairperson. The house deliberates on the bill in detail, considering any proposed amendments. If no significant objections arise and the majority agrees, a motion may be moved to advance the bill to the third reading.

5. **Final Stage:** At this concluding stage, the bill is presented to the House for final consideration, often with minimal or no further

amendments. If the required majority approves the bill, it is forwarded for concurrence in the other chamber (in a bicameral legislature) or submitted to the president for assent. Before submission, a clean copy of the bill is produced to ensure accuracy.

The legislative authority of the National Assembly at the federal level and the State Assemblies at the state level is explicitly established in Sections 4 and 100 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. These provisions underline the law-making mandate of legislators, reflecting their critical role in the governance process.

The Oyo State House of Assembly (OYSHA): Legislative Structure and Representation

The Oyo State House of Assembly, established under the provisions of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), is vested with legislative authority and serves as the law-making body for the state. Its composition includes elected Constituency Members, each representing one of the state’s constituencies, supported by a dedicated legislative and administrative staff team. These Constituency Members serve a tenure of four years, ensuring representation for their respective constituencies. The Assembly operates from its premises within the Oyo State

Government Secretariat, Agodi, Ibadan, and is currently dominated by members of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP).

The ninth Oyo State House of Assembly, inaugurated on June 10, 2019, is the latest iteration in a sequence of eight previous assemblies, continuing the democratic tradition in the state. It comprises 32 members, each representing one of the 32 state constituencies geographically aligned with the state's 33 local government areas. The alignment of constituencies and local government areas in Oyo State reflects a unique representational structure.

In comparative terms, Oyo State's approach to constituency representation aligns with certain other states in Nigeria, such as Imo and Katsina, where the number of state constituencies closely corresponds to the number of local government areas, 27 in Imo and 34 in Katsina. However, this is not the norm across the federation. For example, Lagos State demonstrates a broader constituency structure, with 40 state constituencies representing 57 administrative areas, including 20 Local Government Areas and 37 Local Council Development Areas. Conversely, some states like Akwa Ibom maintain fewer constituencies

(26) than their 31 local government areas.

This representational disparity across states reflects the interplay between administrative divisions and legislative structures in Nigeria's federal system, underscoring the unique legislative dynamics and challenges in balancing equitable representation with governance efficiency.

Youth Representation and Democratic Deepening

Democracy, defined by Huntington (1992) as a system where leaders are chosen through competitive elections with broad citizen participation, is often regarded as the most desirable form of governance. Central to the evolution of democracy is democratic consolidation, which some scholars argue hinges on the longevity of democratic institutions (Huntington, 1992; Linz & Stepan, 1996). However, more recent studies suggest that the legitimacy accorded to democracy, rather than its duration, is a more significant indicator of consolidation (Lipset, 1959, as cited in Pelizzo, 2014). Morlino (1968) expands on this, emphasising the institutionalisation of democratic procedures as pivotal in shaping the system's core features while ensuring adaptability to societal changes. Among these institutions, the legislature plays an

instrumental role in consolidating democracy, making its functionality central to democratic deepening.

Youth representation in governance is a critical dimension of this consolidation process, yet the global statistics reveal a stark underrepresentation of young people in political leadership. According to the 2023 Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) report, only 2.8% of parliamentarians worldwide are aged 30 and under, while 18.8% are under 40. Europe and the Americas lead in youth representation within single and lower chambers across various age brackets. Nevertheless, no parliament has achieved the IPU's target of 15% for parliamentarians aged 30 and under.

Africa, with the youngest population globally, boasting approximately 200 million people aged between 15 and 24 (United Nations, 2021), shows a paradoxical lag in youth political representation. The IPU's 2018 report highlighted African nations' ranking in youth legislators. The Gambia (4th) and Ethiopia (15th) stood out, with notable representation of legislators under 30, while Nigeria ranked 106th and 109th for legislators under 30 and 40, respectively. This underrepresentation is concerning, given the continent's youthful demographics and the corresponding potential for vibrant political

participation. Furthermore, the 2016–2018 Afrobarometer survey found that voter turnout among Africans aged 18–25 was only 50.8%, well below the overall average of 71.8%, further underscoring the disengagement of African youth from the political process.

The global discourse on integrating youth into governance has intensified, with organisations like the IPU advocating for youth quotas and establishing young parliamentary forums. In Nigeria, significant strides have been made through the "Not Too Young to Run" Act, which lowered the constitutional age requirement for political office. This reform led to the election of 39 legislators under 40 in the House of Representatives and over 200 young legislators in the State Houses of Assembly during the 2019 elections. Four young legislators rose to speakership positions, marking a milestone in Nigeria's democratic evolution.

The success of the "Not Too Young to Run" initiative underscores how youth-focused reforms can enhance democratic consolidation by fostering inclusivity and diversifying political representation. As Nigeria grapples with political apathy among young citizens, sustained advocacy, structural reforms, and deliberate policies to integrate youth into

governance will be critical in ensuring a more representative and resilient democracy.

Theoretical Framework: Leadership Competency Theory

The Leadership Competency Theory serves as the theoretical framework to assess the performance and challenges of young legislators in Oyo State, Nigeria. According to the theory, job performance is closely linked to a leader's competencies, defined as a "capability or ability" required to perform a given role (Sutton & Watson, 2013, p. 1024). Competencies, as outlined by Katz (1974) and David McClelland, the proponent of this theory, encompass both skills, managerial, humanistic, conceptual, and intelligence, including spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and social dimensions (Chow, Salleh & Ismail, 2017, p. 150). The theory also emphasises that leadership capabilities are not static but can be learned, developed, and refined through experience, education, and training, which equips leaders to respond to society's evolving demands (Lussier & Achua, 2016, as cited in Chow et al., 2017, p. 151).

The Leadership Competency Theory is highly relevant to this study, as it focuses on the role of inherent and acquired competencies in the effectiveness of leaders. As citizens

become more aware of their rights and expectations in modern societies, the need for competent political leadership becomes more pressing. Siswanti, Khairuddin, and Halim (2018) assert that influential political leaders must possess the necessary skills to meet the needs of an informed electorate. For young legislators, the theory underscores the significance of developing competencies to navigate the demands of modern governance, including lawmaking, policy implementation, and oversight.

This theory is particularly applicable in assessing the performance of young legislators in Oyo State, where the influence of digital technologies and rising demands for human rights require legislators to be highly competent. The Leadership Competency Theory suggests that young legislators must possess skills and intelligence to sponsor meaningful legislation, address public concerns, and effectively perform oversight duties. Additionally, the theory highlights the role of education and training in enhancing the performance of legislators, particularly first-time lawmakers, who may need to gain experience in the legislative process.

In applying this framework, the study examines how young legislators in Oyo State acquire and demonstrate

leadership competencies. This includes evaluating their ability to draft and introduce legislation, manage constituency relations, execute projects, and oversee. The study also looks at the role of education and training in shaping their performance and whether it meets the expectations of their constituencies.

The Leadership Competency Theory is particularly suitable for this study as it provides a straightforward approach to assessing young legislators' skills, intelligence, and educational background in Oyo State. The framework allows for analysing the competencies required for effective legislative performance and the degree to which young legislators demonstrate these competencies.

This theoretical framework is also relevant for exploring how young legislators engage with the complexities of lawmaking, address public concerns, and fulfil oversight responsibilities. It helps identify performance gaps, especially when young legislators need more essential skills or knowledge. For instance, the study explores whether these legislators are adequately trained in legislative processes and whether their education equips them with the skills necessary to perform effectively in office.

Furthermore, the Leadership Competency Theory offers insights into how young legislators respond to societal demands and challenges. By examining the relationship between leadership competencies and legislative performance, the study aims to highlight areas where young legislators may need further support in terms of education and training to enhance their performance. This study contributes to the broader discourse on youth participation in governance and democratic consolidation in Oyo State. It provides insights into how young legislators can improve their legislative performance and address their constituents' needs.

Overall, the Leadership Competency Theory serves as a valuable framework for assessing the skills, experience, education, and leadership performance of young legislators in Oyo State. By applying this theory, the study analyses young legislators' challenges and opportunities, contributing to effective governance and leadership within the state.

Methodology

This study employed a case study design that integrated quantitative and qualitative research methods to explore young legislators' legislative performance and challenges in the Oyo State Ninth Assembly (OYSHA). The mixed-methods

approach allowed for triangulation of numerical data with narrative insights from key stakeholders, thus offering a richer, more holistic understanding of the subject matter. The quantitative component drew on secondary data sources, including legislative documents, bulletins, and official records of legislative proceedings. These documents provided a robust framework for evaluating the formal activities of young legislators, focusing on critical indicators such as the number and nature of bills sponsored, motions raised, and plenary attendance.

The qualitative aspect of the study was informed by Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted with key stakeholders within the legislative environment. These interviews provided contextual and in-depth insights into the challenges young legislators face, their contributions to legislative processes, and the dynamics of their interactions with older legislators.

This research focused on the Oyo State House of Assembly (OYSHA) during the Ninth Assembly spanning from 2019 to 2023. However, the study specifically concentrated on the legislative activities from June 10, 2019, to August 12, 2021, due to the availability of relevant data. The study's geographical scope was limited to Oyo State, focusing on

legislative activities and functions within the timeframe above. This scope was designed to assess the distinct roles and performance of young legislators and to compare their experiences and challenges with those of their older counterparts in the Assembly.

The study employed a purposive sampling technique to select Key Informants for the qualitative component. This sampling strategy ensured the inclusion of individuals with direct knowledge and relevant experience concerning the legislative processes and the performance of young legislators. A total of seven (7) Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted, comprising four (4) legislators from OYSHA (two young and two older legislators) and three (3) staff members of the Assembly. These individuals were selected based on their intimate knowledge of legislative activities, dynamics within the Assembly, and direct engagement with the young legislators' roles. The purposive sampling approach facilitated an in-depth exploration of young legislators' challenges, contributions to the legislative process, and interactions with older colleagues.

In addition to the qualitative data, secondary data were obtained from publicly available records, including legislative proceedings and official

documents. These secondary data were essential for assessing the legislative outputs of both young and old legislators, focusing mainly on bills sponsored, motions moved, and plenary attendance. The quantitative data provided a benchmark for comparing the performance of young legislators against that of their older colleagues.

Data Collection Instruments: The data collection instruments used in this study included:

1. Secondary Data Sources: Legislative documents, bulletins, and official records of proceedings provided a quantitative basis for assessing the legislative performance of the young and older legislators in the Ninth Assembly. These documents were analysed to assess the number of bills sponsored, motions raised, and attendance records.
2. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposively selected group of stakeholders, including legislators and Assembly staff, to gain insights into the challenges faced by young legislators, the dynamics between young and older legislators, and the impact of intergenerational relationships on legislative performance.

Data Collection Procedure: Data collection for the quantitative component involved retrieving secondary data from publicly available legislative records, including bills, motions, and attendance logs for the period under study (June 10, 2019, to August 12, 2021). These records were analysed to provide an empirical basis for comparing the performance of young and older legislators.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted in person for the qualitative component, with interviews lasting between 30 and 45 minutes. Participants were informed of the study's objectives and were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participant's consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Data Analysis Techniques: Quantitative Data Analysis: Descriptive statistical techniques were employed to analyse the secondary data collected from legislative records. Key metrics were computed and compared for young and older legislators, including the number of sponsored bills, motions raised, and attendance records. This analysis helped identify patterns in the two groups' legislative activities and contextualised young legislators' role in the legislative process.

Qualitative Data Analysis: The qualitative data from the Key Informant Interviews were analysed using content and thematic analysis. This process involved coding the interview transcripts to identify recurring themes, categories, and patterns related to young legislators' experiences, challenges, and intergenerational dynamics within the Assembly. Key themes explored included the challenges young legislators face, their contributions to legislative processes, and the nature of relationships between young and older legislators. The thematic analysis also aimed to uncover how these interpersonal dynamics influenced the performance of young legislators in the Assembly.

The findings from both the quantitative and qualitative components were triangulated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the legislative performance and challenges young legislators face in the Oyo State Ninth Assembly. By integrating these data sources, the study presented a nuanced view of the factors influencing young legislators' performance, legislative output, and interactions within the broader legislative environment.

Results and Analysis

Young Legislators in the Oyo State House of Assembly (OSHA), Ninth Assembly

In the Ninth Assembly of the Oyo State House of Assembly (OYSHA), 13 legislators aged between 25 and 40 years represent a significant proportion of the 32-member Assembly. This demographic shift reflects the successful implementation of the #NotTooYoungToRun Act, which lowered the age requirement for contesting state legislative positions from 30 to 25. As a result of this reform, the Ninth Assembly saw the election of one of the youngest Speakers in the country, who was only 32 years old. Additionally, OYSHA became home to the youngest legislator in Nigeria, who was just 26 years old. These developments were emblematic of the broader trend of increasing youth representation in Nigerian legislatures, facilitated by youth-oriented electoral reforms.

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the age distribution of the young legislators in OYSHA and the broader age range of the Assembly members, providing a clear representation of the generational composition of the legislature. Notably, OYSHA also had one female representative, aged 50, highlighting the gender disparity in the Assembly compared to the relatively young male-dominated

cohort. The oldest member of the Ninth Assembly was 64 years old, further emphasising the generational contrasts within the legislative body.

This youth representation within the Oyo State House of Assembly underscores the evolving dynamics of Nigerian politics, where the legislative process is increasingly influenced by a younger, more diverse group of lawmakers empowered by legal reforms that aim to enhance political inclusion and representation for the younger population.

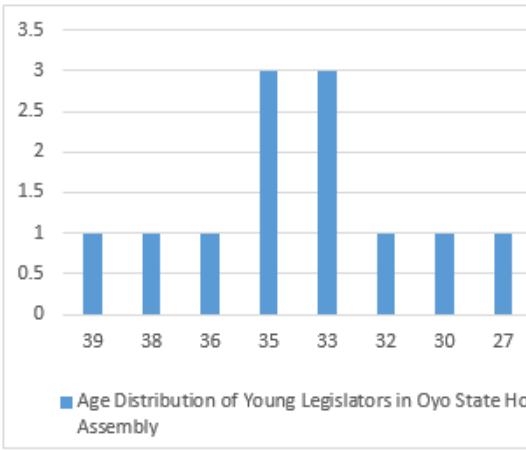


Figure 1: Age Distribution of Young Legislators in the Ninth OYSHA Assembly

Figure 2: Age Ranges of Legislators in the Ninth OYSHA Assembly
Source: Author (2022)

Assessment of Young Legislators' Performance in OYSHA

Performance of Older Legislators: Older legislators in the Oyo State House of Assembly (OYSHA)

URL: <http://journals.covenantuniversity.edu.ng/index.php/cujpia>

demonstrated more robust performance in legislative activities, particularly in sponsoring bills and motions and addressing urgent matters of public importance. The data revealed that older legislators were responsible for sponsoring 16 of the 19 bills and introducing 31 motions. In contrast, younger legislators showed a less pronounced contribution in these areas but were still involved in various legislative activities despite their smaller number. These findings suggest that older members assumed a leadership role in critical legislative functions while younger members contributed actively in other capacities.

Youth Contributions: Although younger legislators comprised a minor faction within the OYSHA (13 members), their contributions to legislative activities were noteworthy. Their participation, although fewer in number, had a meaningful impact on driving legislative activities forward. While the older legislators took the lead in more formalised tasks such as bill sponsorship, the younger legislators were recognised for their energy and enthusiasm, helping propel discussions and initiatives in the assembly.

The Clerk of OYSHA offered a balanced view of the performance of young legislators, praising their

active participation and enthusiasm for the legislative process. The Clerk remarked:

“I like what is happening here. So far, we have passed so many bills. The young ones are very active, and even though they are not many, the few who are present come together and keep driving the house. I prefer working with them because they bring a sense of fulfilment to my profession. I would say they are performing well.”

While acknowledging the younger legislators' efforts, the Clerk emphasised the complementary role of older members, whose experience and composure were critical in maintaining stability and providing depth to the legislative process. The Clerk further cautioned against overstating the efficacy of younger legislators, noting that their approach was often action-oriented, in contrast to the older legislators who exhibited a more thoughtful and composed approach:

“The older ones have their role to play in terms of experience and thinking through issues because they are more composed, unlike the younger ones who are always about action instead of taking time to think through the process.”

Attendance Discrepancies: The analysis revealed a significant difference in attendance patterns between the younger and older

legislators. Younger legislators exhibited poorer attendance records than their older counterparts, with many frequently absent from sessions. More concerning was that several younger members needed official permission for their absences, raising questions about their commitment to legislative duties.

Notably, attendance records indicated that while all legislators, excluding the Speaker, missed at least three sessions, younger legislators had a higher absenteeism rate. For example, one young legislator, identified as YL7-OYSHA, missed 40 plenary sittings, a record that stands out in contrast to others. This absenteeism was linked to his responsibilities as Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Relations, where he frequently undertook official assignments that required him to be absent.

Despite this, attendance issues were expected of younger legislators, as older members also exhibited some absenteeism. However, older legislators, such as OL13-OYSHA, who missed seven sessions, adhered to formal attendance protocols by seeking permission for four absences. In contrast, younger legislators like YL4-OYSHA, who served as the Deputy Chief Whip, were absent from 11 sittings without requesting permission, further highlighting the disparity in adherence to attendance policies.

An older legislator remarked, “The youthful exuberance is there,” which may partially explain the attendance inconsistencies. However, even in the case of YL7-OYSHA, the frequent absences were not entirely justified by his additional legislative duties, which raises questions about the lack of formal attendance compliance.

Punctuality Issues: Punctuality was also an area of concern within the OYSHA. Both older legislators and staff members reported delays in the commencement of plenary sessions. One senior legislator noted:

“If we want to sit and adjourn until 10:00 a.m. tomorrow, by 1:00 p.m., we may not be ready to go to the plenary session,” underscoring the persistent issue of tardiness that affected legislative operations.

Additionally, staff members expressed concerns about inadequate transportation arrangements during late-night sittings. A female staff member recounted the challenges experienced during the assembly's early sessions in 2019, followed by the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 lockdown and the #EndSARS unrest in 2020. She explained:

“We worked late into the night because plenary sittings did not end until around 8:00 p.m.... It was risky going home around that time.”

When asked whether these late sittings remained a concern, she

acknowledged that conditions had improved slightly. Still, she confirmed that official transportation arrangements had yet to be made for staff working late hours, highlighting a continued gap in support for assembly personnel during extended sessions.

Legislative Contributions of Young and Old Legislators in OYSHA:

A detailed comparison of legislative contributions between young and old legislators showed that older members dominated all key legislative activities, including bill sponsorship, motions, and addressing matters of urgent public importance. Specifically, older legislators sponsored 16 of the 19 bills and introduced 31 motions, far outpacing their younger counterparts. However, the younger legislators, despite their smaller numbers, made significant contributions in areas such as matters of urgent public importance, where the gap was just seven contributions. The analysis further indicated that most of the bills and motions sponsored by older legislators originated from house officers, suggesting a more structured approach to legislative activity among the senior members of the assembly.

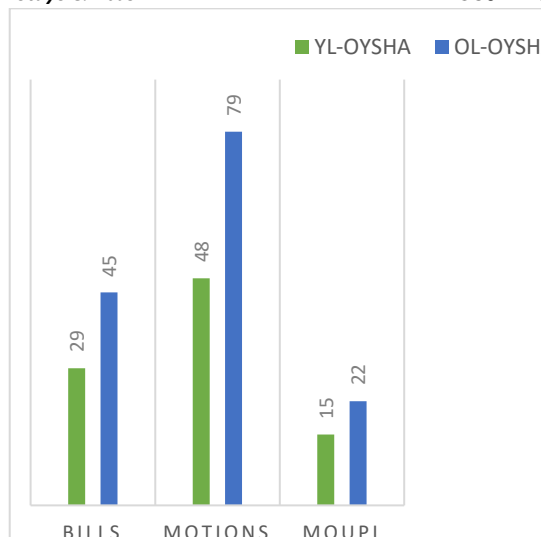


Figure 3: Sponsored/Co-Sponsored Bills, Motions, and Matters of Urgent Public Importance (MoUPI) by Young and Old Legislators in OYSHA, Ninth Assembly (06/10/2019 - 08/12/2021)

Source: Author (2022)

Surprising Performance of Young Legislators in OYSHA:

The performance of younger legislators in the OYSHA surpassed initial expectations, prompting expressions of surprise and admiration from their older colleagues. A returning senior legislator praised the younger members' rapid adaptation and impressive contributions, remarking that their engagement in capacity-building programmes had significantly enhanced their legislative skills. He stated:

“Unexpectedly, our people [young legislators] are learning seriously on the job. I am surprised. The way they

march, it is as if they have been here before.”

Another senior legislator further echoed this sentiment, emphasising that the younger members effectively used training opportunities, adding: “I can categorically beat my chest at their performance.”

These observations reflect a broader sense of pride among senior legislators regarding the achievements of the Ninth Assembly, particularly about the substantial number of bills and motions passed. The senior legislator expressed pride in the assembly's accomplishments: “If you look at the number of bills and motions passed, it goes to the credit of the Ninth Assembly... I am happy that I am part of it.”

The combination of youthful energy, commitment to self-improvement, and mentorship from experienced members contributed to the assembly's remarkable achievements, defying initial doubts about the potential of younger legislators.

Challenges of Young Legislators in OYSHA: A Scholarly Analysis

The role of young legislators within the Oyo State House of Assembly (OYSHA) is essential for advancing dynamic governance and addressing youth-specific concerns. Nevertheless, these young representatives face several substantial challenges that constrain

their legislative performance and hinder their capacity to contribute effectively to the policy-making process. This section explores young legislators' critical challenges in OYSHA, mainly focusing on the lack of support from older colleagues, inadequate youth representation in parliament, and the pervasive cultural biases that restrict their political engagement.

Lack of Support from Older Legislators: One of the most significant obstacles young legislators in OYSHA encounter is the need for more support from their older counterparts. Reports suggest that older assembly members often express disdain, mainly when young legislators assume leadership positions, such as committee chairs. These tensions arise due to intergenerational differences in leadership styles, with older legislators sometimes reluctant to recognise the authority of their younger colleagues. A respondent highlighted this challenge, noting, "Young legislators appointed as committee chairs faced challenges in gaining the backing of older or returning members. This resulted in occasional friction between a young chair and older committee members." Mentorship and support from seasoned legislators are necessary to ensure the effectiveness of young representatives, particularly when

navigating complex legislative tasks. The absence of a structured support system limits the ability of young legislators to grow in their roles and contributes to a sense of disempowerment within the legislative process. However, despite these challenges, some young legislators have found ways to navigate these tensions, demonstrating resilience and adaptability in their leadership roles. This emerging capacity for conflict resolution points to the potential for bridging generational gaps in the legislature, fostering a more collaborative environment.

Inadequate Representation of Youths in Parliament: Another challenge frequently cited by young legislators in OYSHA is the need for more youth representation within the legislative body. The underrepresentation of youth in parliament exacerbates difficulties in advancing youth-centric policies and engaging older colleagues in discussions about the priorities of younger constituents. Several young legislators expressed frustration with this imbalance, stressing the need for greater youth participation in legislative activities. One young legislator succinctly articulated this sentiment, stating, "If we try to teach more youths in the legislative activities of the state, or for the federal at large, it will be a running

one... it will not be... a commanding one... We look forward to forming a real quorum to bring that youthful drive to help build... Nigeria at large.”

This statement underscores the aspirations of young legislators for more equitable representation within legislative bodies, where their concerns can be better addressed and their influence can be more pronounced. It also highlights the growing belief that empowering young legislators can invigorate the political system and produce a more dynamic and responsive government. Increased youth involvement is seen not only as a means of diversifying the decision-making process but also as an essential mechanism for ensuring that the interests of younger generations are effectively represented at the highest levels of governance.

Cultural Biases in Governance:

Cultural traditions in Nigeria often emphasise respect for elders, which fosters a perception that younger legislators lack the wisdom and authority necessary for effective governance. This societal bias significantly impacts the relationships between young legislators and their older colleagues and their interactions with constituents. The prevailing belief that youth should defer to the older

generation until they have proven themselves can stifle the influence of young legislators, leading to challenges in asserting their authority.

A striking example of this cultural bias was shared by one young legislator, who recounted an experience at a constituency meeting: “When I newly came in, I had a meeting at my constituency. After the elders had spoken, it was agreed that the youth should be allowed to converse with their honourable members. In the presence of hundreds of people, a young man stood up to say: ‘If the Holy Quran says a person lacks wisdom, then that person does not have sense; you [referring to the young legislator] do not have sense.’ Constituent members were shocked, but I appreciated him because he was trying to prove a point.”

This encounter reflects broader societal attitudes that diminish the contributions of youth in governance, highlighting the challenges young legislators face when attempting to assert their influence within the legislative body and their constituencies. The cultural resistance to youth leadership is not confined solely to older generations; even among their contemporaries, young legislators often encounter scepticism and criticism. Such

attitudes create a demoralising environment that discourages the younger generation from fully participating in governance, thereby hindering their potential to contribute meaningfully to political discourse and legislative progress.

Moreover, young legislators often find themselves caught in a cycle of belittling comments, undermining their authority and legitimacy in the eyes of their peers and constituents. These challenges, which stem from intergenerational tensions and cultural biases, exacerbate young representatives' difficulties, complicating their efforts to establish credibility and gain the respect necessary to fulfil their legislative duties effectively.

Young legislators' challenges in OYSHA are multifaceted and deeply rooted in intergenerational dynamics, cultural traditions, and political structures. The lack of support from older colleagues, inadequate representation of youth in parliament, and cultural biases create significant barriers to the effective engagement of young legislators. However, despite these challenges, young legislators have demonstrated resilience, adaptability, and a willingness to learn, positioning them as essential actors in the future of Nigerian governance. By addressing these challenges, mainly through fostering intergenerational

collaboration and promoting greater youth participation in legislative processes, the OYSHA can better harness the potential of its young members, creating a more inclusive and dynamic legislative environment.

Conclusion

The analysis of young legislators in the Oyo State House of Assembly (OYSHA) highlights their performance and challenges in the political landscape. Young legislators have demonstrated enthusiasm and energy, contributing to the legislative process, particularly in matters of urgent public importance. Their involvement has been pivotal in passing bills and motions, marking a notable shift towards youth-driven leadership. However, their performance is impeded by several factors, including inexperience, inconsistent attendance, and cultural biases. Despite the advantages of youth-oriented reforms like the #NotTooYoungToRun Act, the young legislators need help securing their older counterparts' support and navigating societal expectations, which often undermine their authority.

Additionally, attendance and punctuality issues reflect a lack of professionalism in some young legislators, which could undermine their future political prospects if not addressed. Nonetheless, their

contributions must be noticed, as they bring a new dimension to governance, driven by a desire for change and improvement. The balancing act between the energy of youth and the wisdom of experience remains crucial in achieving legislative effectiveness.

Policy Recommendations

These recommendations address young legislators' performance and key challenges and provide actionable steps for various stakeholders to implement:

1. Enhancing young legislators' legislative knowledge and skills is a critical area that needs immediate attention. In partnership with academic institutions and training organisations, the Oyo State House of Assembly should design and implement targeted training programmes for young legislators to achieve this. These programmes should cover essential areas such as the legislative process, effective communication with Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), and engagement with constituents. Additionally, mentorship initiatives led by seasoned legislators can offer young members practical insights into the intricacies of legislative duties, such as policy formulation, negotiation strategies, and institutional protocols. By establishing such capacity-building initiatives, young legislators will be better equipped to navigate complex legislative processes and effectively represent their constituencies. To bring this recommendation to fruition, key stakeholders include the OYSHA leadership, senior legislators, academic institutions, and training organisations. Furthermore, collaboration with development agencies and donor organisations can provide funding and technical support for these programmes. Institutionalising such initiatives will ensure that young legislators continuously build the skills necessary to perform their duties effectively.
2. Formal mechanisms for intergenerational collaboration should be established within OYSHA. This could include mentorship programmes where senior legislators guide younger ones, sharing their knowledge and experience navigating legislative affairs. In addition to formal mentorship, cross-generational workshops and peer-to-peer exchanges can foster dialogue and mutual respect between young and older legislators. Such initiatives would help bridge the divide between different age groups and enhance legislative effectiveness. Stakeholders responsible for implementing this recommendation include OYSHA leadership, senior legislators, political parties, and civil

society organisations promoting intergenerational cooperation. These initiatives can be easily integrated into existing legislative processes, ensuring sustained collaboration and knowledge sharing between different age groups.

3. OYSHA and political parties should advocate for reforms that ensure a more balanced and inclusive representation of youth. One effective measure could be the implementation of youth quotas or reserved seats in the legislature. Additionally, political parties can create incentive programmes to encourage young people to run for office at various levels of government. This could include providing financial and logistical support for campaign activities and organising training workshops to prepare young candidates for political office. To make this recommendation a reality, OYSHA, political parties, the National Assembly, and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) are critical stakeholders. These reforms would enhance youth participation in legislative processes and ensure that youth concerns are adequately represented in policy discussions.

4. Cultural biases that undermine the role of young legislators in governance must be addressed to create a more inclusive political environment. Educational campaigns

should be launched to challenge these biases and promote the value of youth in leadership positions. These campaigns should engage political leaders and constituents, emphasising the importance of inclusive leadership for national development. Additionally, political leaders, in collaboration with cultural and religious institutions, should work to change societal perceptions about youth in politics through public service announcements, community dialogues, and school-based programmes. By fostering a culture of inclusion and respect for younger leaders, these efforts will gradually reduce the biases that hinder young legislators' contributions. Key stakeholders in this initiative include OYSHA, political parties, cultural and religious institutions, the media, and civil society organisations. Public campaigns can be effectively delivered with the support of media outlets and community-based organisations, ensuring broad outreach and sustained impact.

5. To ensure that young legislators uphold their responsibilities with professionalism and commitment, it is essential to implement robust attendance and accountability systems. These systems should include stricter regulations on attendance, with clear consequences for non-compliance. An effective monitoring and reporting system should track legislators' attendance

and participation in critical legislative activities. Furthermore, regular performance reviews for young legislators, providing constructive feedback and highlighting areas for improvement, would ensure that they remain focused on their legislative duties. OYSHA leadership, the legislative committee on ethics, and civil society organisations monitoring legislative accountability are critical stakeholders in this process. The parliamentary committee can manage the development of a tracking system for attendance and performance, ensuring transparency and accountability within the legislature.

6. Young legislators must have access to the necessary logistical and administrative support to perform their duties effectively. This includes providing transportation, particularly for those facing challenges with late-night sittings, and ensuring that legislators have the necessary tools to perform their roles. The OYSHA should allocate additional resources to support young legislators, such as transportation stipends or dedicated transport services during legislative sessions. Technology platforms that streamline legislative processes—such as electronic voting systems, e-consultations, and digital access to legislative resources—should be introduced to improve efficiency and productivity. Key stakeholders involved in this recommendation

include OYSHA, government ministries responsible for transportation, civil service commissions, and ICT service providers. The allocation of resources for logistical support can be integrated into the legislature's annual budget, while partnerships with private sector providers can enhance the technological infrastructure required for legislative processes.

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