

Nigerian youth, politics and the demand for τολμηρήγεσία: A study on I Timothy 4:11–12



Authors:

Ezichi A. Ituma^{1,2} 
 Prince E. Peters^{1,2} 
 Omaka K. Ngele^{1,2} 
 Paulinus O. Agbo^{1,2} 

Affiliations:

¹Department of Religion and Cultural Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

²Department of New Testament and Related Literature, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

Research Project Registration:

Project Leader:

E. van Eck 

Project Number: 2400030

Description:

The authors are participating in the research project, 'Africa Platform for NT Scholars', directed by Prof. Dr Ernest van Eck, Department of New Testament and Related Literature, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria.

Corresponding author:

Prince Peters,
 prince.peters.195254@unn.edu.ng

Dates:

Received: 24 Aug. 2021

Accepted: 26 Oct. 2021

Published: 09 Dec. 2021

How to cite this article:

Ituma, E.A., Peters, P.E., Ngele, O.K. & Agbo, P.O., 2021, 'Nigerian youth, politics and the demand for τολμηρήγεσία: A study on I Timothy 4:11–12', *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77(4), a7099. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i4.7099>

Read online:



Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

One possible meaning of the Greek word τολμηρήγεσία (bold leadership) among the ancient Greeks was bravery and astuteness in managing human and natural resources. In this study, it is used in the context of fearlessness and willingness of the Nigerian youth to take up governmental responsibilities in leadership positions, which is achievable either through demanding governmental appointments or contesting elections for political positions through a free and fair political election. With the use of exegesis and hermeneutics, this study on τολμηρήγεσία refers to Paul's instruction to Timothy regarding bold leadership in I Timothy 4:11–12. I Timothy 4:11–12 is contextually seen as a call on Nigerian youth to adopt as a prototype; young Timothy who the elderly Paul encouraged in his words, not to allow anyone, despise his youth. This is to the intent of challenging Nigerian youth to become more proactive in national politics and governance in order to help Nigeria register its presence in the competitive global technological and scientific arena.

Contribution: The study tries to understand the age influence on Timothy and how Paul tried to deal with it. This enabled the study to be of use in addressing the challenges that Nigerian youth go through in order to have their voices heard in Nigerian politics and to also call on the youth to grow above timidity towards bold leadership.

Keywords: youth; leadership; Nigeria; Timothy; politics.

Introduction

Recently there has been an increasing global clamour for inclusion of youth in government and politics (Krook & Nugent 2018:60), especially in Nigeria (Ibezim 2019:119–136). This is a welcome development which has spurred present researchers – especially scholars in biblical studies – to enquire about the biblical position on the subject-matter.¹ The text upon which the study is based, I Timothy 4:11–12, expresses the idea that Paul was a source of motivation to his protégé Timothy. This motivation was towards being emboldened for a leadership position. This has been described as a process of 'apprenticeship' (Smith 2016:68). The motivation comes in his pastoral warning, that Timothy should not let anyone despise him being a youth at a time when Timothy had become a Christian leader. Paul realises that Timothy can be opposed and resisted as a church leader as well as Paul's lieutenant because he was a youth. This opposition could produce crippling fears in Timothy if not dispelled. Paul, therefore, moves to dispel the supposed fears in his protégé with an admonition. Such outstanding admonition makes Paul an epitome of a sound mentor in the study of mentoring relationship (Hoehl 2011:35).

Arguably, in Nigeria, chronological age has a way of attracting respect for the aged from the youth, to the extent that the young willingly give up most of their rights in reverence to the aged. This is most probably a human natural perception which cuts across geographical and cultural limitations. The elderly themselves try to remind some resilient youth who insist on their rights at the expense of the aged, the importance of honouring old age. However, in some cultures, especially in Nigeria, the old have seen this age-old tradition as a means to intimidate the youth, who though they know their rights, willingly allow it.² Such intimidation of the youth by the elderly has seen many elderly people perpetuate themselves in political leadership in Africa, with

1.This study agrees with Dooyeweerd's philosophy as expressed in the words of Taylor (1969:594–595): 'Christian political life is ... an aspect of our single-hearted service of God'. Here, 'Karl Barth's repudiation of Christian political and social action' (p. 595) as unbiblical must not also be upheld (cf. Barth 1939:20). Again, the study recognises that spiritual leadership which the text of I Timothy 4:11–12 represents, is interpretable as political leadership basically because 'the church does to some extent mirror what is happening in that arena' (Wilhelm 1998:5).

2.Recent attacks by government agencies against the youth, especially those carried out by the police department called the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), notorious for 'beating, shooting indiscriminately, maiming and killing of citizens' (Abiodun et. al. 2020:50), was vehemently resisted by Nigerian youth through a nationwide protest. It is alleged that the protest saw the military open fire on the youth at Lekki toll gate in Lagos state on the 20 October 2020 during their peaceful protest (see <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/10/killing-of-ensars-protesters-by-the-military-must-be-investigated/>). For details of the #endSARS protest and its root cause, refer to Aljazeera News (2020), George (2020) and Ukpe (n.d.)

special emphasis on Nigeria.³ These elders then go ahead to brainwash the same youth into becoming supporters to their desires to spend a life time in office. The aftermath then is that these youth are 'not represented adequately in formal political institutions and processes such as parliaments, political parties, elections, and public administrations' (United Nations Youth n.d.:2). It has been argued that the 'youth constitute a fifth of the World's population' (Mengistu 2017:1). Also argued is that the 'world is home to 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24, and the youth population is growing fastest in the poorest nations' (Das Gupta et al. 2014:ii). Yet they are the most marginalised in Nigeria, and the most vulnerable to various economic attacks around the world. This has:

[A] clear negative relationship between [their] material circumstances and their health outcomes and behaviours such as being overweight, lack of physical activity, higher levels of smoking and mental health problems; all of which persist throughout [their] life. (Alemán-Díaz et al. 2016:4)

Agreeably 'all young people are entitled to a life ... that enables them to be active participants in society' (Alemán-Díaz et al. 2016:6). This has been corroborated in the words of Glassco and Holguin (2016). They bemoaned the exclusion of the youth 'from formal political processes', despite that 'they will bear the brunt of the world's unsolved dilemmas' (p.2). Glassco and Holguin (2016:2), therefore, saw this development as a 'sad fact [which] is evident in adult-centric public policies and in social norms and values that usually fail to take into account of young people's views, interests or voices'.

To draw on the socio-cultural context of the studied text in order to analyse leadership situations for contemporary Nigerian youth, this study makes use of exegesis and hermeneutics. The aim of this study is to advocate for a youth friendly politics in Nigeria and to serve as a call for active participation of the youth in politics for its numerous benefits.

Nigerian politics and youth involvement

The United Nations (UN) working document on the youth states that:

They can be a creative force, a dynamic source of innovations, and they have undoubtedly, throughout history, participated, contributed, and even catalyzed important changes in political systems, power-sharing dynamics and economic opportunities. However, youth also face poverty, barriers to education, multiple forms of discrimination and limited employment prospects and opportunities. (United Nations Youth n.d.:1)

This UN observation cannot be truer in Nigeria. Youth participation in politics so far as Nigerian system allows, is not to exercise their franchise by electing a political leader of their choice, but to serve as political tools, human machinery, merely to be used within the period of elections and voting,

³That the political elite who hold power in Nigeria have refused to let go, but instead have changed over time, from being military class to bourgeoisie class is not in doubt. Such transformation is said to have continued to 'suppress and undermine people over time' (see Uwaifo n.d.:11).

as agents of electoral violence (see Eneji & Ikeorji 2018:9–13; Inokoba & Maliki 2011:222–223). They carry out this nefarious act through the use of 'physical harm, (homicide, torture, assault), threats (physical, verbal, intimidation; destruction of property), arson, damage from dangerous objects, forced displacement and ballot box snatching'. (Badejo & Stephens 2012:312). Unfortunately, after being used during election, they are then abandoned after elections. Efforts to retrieve the dangerous weapons from these youth, given to them by the godfathers during election, becomes a difficult task after the election. Most times, this has led to untold mayhem in the society. An explanation of ill treatment of youth can be found in Falade's (2014) assertion that:

[I]n Nigeria, political activities and transition programmes have been marked with turbulence, uncertainties and violence ... [and] from the First Republic, the Nigerian politics is characterized by greed, love of power, violence, assassination, thuggery and election rigging. (p. 17)

Rightly asserted, thuggery and all sorts of political violence are just the jobs the old politicians find the youth fit to do. Many youthful lives have been wasted whilst they worked for their political godfathers. These godfather politicians:

[H]ave resurfaced in successive elections, especially at the Federal level. Most of these persons have been in positions of authority between 60s and 80s. Some of [them] have ruled as military heads during the military regime and are still making efforts to get into the Aso Rock. (Etim & Duke 2019:89)

These politicians carefully sneak their own children out of the country to study abroad whilst the Nigerian poor youth fight and maim themselves on their behalf. Ironically, these old politicians take undue advantage of the youth in a country where the youth amount to more than two-third of the entire population (Eneji & Ikeorji 2018:9). Due to several outcries both nationally and internationally on the unimaginable discriminations that Nigerian youth receive politically, an act 'to alter the provision of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 and for other matters connected therewith', sponsored by Tony Nwulu of the 8th National Assembly, was on 31 May 2018 signed into law by President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari. It was in the aftermath of the #NotTooYoungToRun campaign:

This Bill seeks to alter the Section 65, 106, 131, 177 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) to reduce the age qualification for the office of the President and Governor and membership of the Senate and House of Representatives and the State House of Assembly ... [and also] to allow independent candidacy in Nigeria's electoral process.⁴

At the successful signing of the bill into law, the #NotTooYoungToRun campaign organised a press conference where they highlighted the importance of the act. They argued:

That the reform would promote democratic development, deepen intergenerational dialogue and learning, reduce political violence and instability, and enhance competitive politics. They also emphasized the positive impact on the political rights of

⁴See <http://www.wassupnow.com/home/administration/copyof/not-too-young-to-run/pdf>.

young people, pointing out that youth under the age of 35 formed 65% of the population and 53% of registered voters. (Krook & Nugent 2018:60)

Despite the evidences of the advantages of this new act, the age reduction for youth seeking elective offices in Nigeria has been variously criticised, with some even calling it 'arrant nonsense ... unnecessary, useless, and deceitful and the victory associated with it as pyrrhic' (Punch 2018). This negative perception of the act was the reason why Etim and Duke (2019) stated that:

[R]ather than destructively criticizing the relevance of the act, youths and Nigerians should wake up to the current reality and grab the opportunity to make a difference in Nigerian politics. (p. 89)

Whilst this study may not agree with some of the reasons for condemning the act, its main concern and in fact, objection is that there exists other forms of political disenfranchisement, including poverty, lack of political connections and non-appointment to governmental positions that Nigerian youth presently face. These make the act almost impotent. On the continental level, perhaps, this is what the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) (2018:8) was trying to hammer on when it stated that 'youth participation in politics ... either in the form of direct representation in political structures or within less formal modes of political engagement, remains limited across Africa'. The study argues that even if the age to contest in an election is reduced to 10 years of one's chronological age, with the absence of heavy bank account and political connections, which majority of these youth lack, their ambitions are still defeated. However, with the passage of the 'Not Too Young to Run Act' into law, the youth are a step closer to conquering their challenge of being kept far from the corridors of power. With a little team work, the youth in Nigeria, can take the reins of power and boldly assert themselves, not just to clinch power but to use it constructively for the benefit of the masses.

I Timothy as Pastoral Epistle

The Book of I Timothy being one of the three Pastoral Epistles, is traditionally believed to be written by Paul (Dlamini 2018:5); however, they are 'more questionable than any other letters in the *corpus Paulinum*' (Wallace 2004). In fact, Long (2016:1) suggested that 'they were almost surely written several decades after Paul's death'.⁵ It is argued that 'conservative scholars who regard the [Pastoral Epistles] as coming directly from the pen of Paul have made remarkably little of them despite their passion to defend their Pauline character' (Marshall 2020). This could be directly responsible for the scanty literature in its defence.⁶ The Pastoral Epistles

5. Baur gives a long list of brilliant reasons why the Pastoral Epistles is not Paul's work but spurious (see Baur 2003:98-105). However, 'the indicators confirm that the three letters were known and used – as Pauline writings – prior to the time of Polycarp (110–135; possibly by the time of *1 Clement*) and consistently afterward through the early centuries of the church' (Towner 2006:2).

6. The Pastoral Epistles is fraught with serious challenges. Firstly, its absence in \mathfrak{P}^{46} and Codex Vaticanus (Aageson 2008:3), including the fact that it is 'among the most neglected books of the New Testament' (Long 2016:1) accounts for its struggle to

as a whole and I Timothy precisely concerns itself with leadership qualifications and responsibilities, and how a part of the church responded to the problem of heterodoxy and heteropraxy, especially when it concerns 'the church's relationship with Jews and the Jewish law' (Aageson 2008:2). The latter (heteropraxy-incorrect practice)⁷ is the concern of this article; which primarily touches on Paul's call on Timothy to be bold and assertive in his leadership role despite the possibility of opposition.

Sitz im Leben of I Timothy 4:11–12

It seems that I Timothy 4:11–12 and 2 Timothy 1:7 are built from the same life situation/context. In both passages, Paul⁸ or the assumed author(s) try to dispel from Timothy or the assumed protégé the spirit of cowardice (*πνεῦμα δειλίας*). It will be difficult to see Paul's efforts of dissuading Timothy from trepidation as historical, if those texts are not read as genuine Pauline texts.⁹ This is because, if the texts are pseudepigraphical, it clears the person of Paul of having assumed that Timothy could fall into the act of cowardice prevalent amongst the youth of his day. This would also validate other remarks of courage he made about Timothy in other texts of the Bible. Such warning against cowardice made to Timothy would therefore be redirected to another writer of pseudonymous personage. This implies that, if we are going to read the texts as pseudepigraphical, we must refer to Timothy's character as assuming a typical rather than historical form (Hutson 1997:59). As referring to I Timothy 4:12 itself, Hutson is of the opinion that the exhortation there 'reflects common prejudices against youth in general and does not justify an assumption that Timothy in particular was especially sensitive to criticism' (Hutson 1997:59). What Hutson did not explain was if Timothy also suffered from the same prejudice suffered by 'youth in general' at that time. However, he goes on to build a formidable argument on typical prejudices against youth in antiquity (Hutson 1998:168–178). Hutson interprets the Pastoral Epistles as 'addressed to youthful leaders' (Hutson 1998:i), an interpretation that gives impetus to this study.

Close reading of I Timothy 4:11–12

Brodie (2008:161) quoted R.B. Thieme Jr. as saying that, 'Timothy was a general acting like a private'. Although that was hardly Timothy's situation from the context of the text, it would have been an act of cowardice for someone with so much power as Timothy had. The verb, upon which the degrading position Timothy was warned to resist robustly,

..... find its place amongst the writings of Paul. However, some argue to the contrary (Collins 2002:1; Johnson 2001:16–18; Quinn & Wacker 2000:3–4).

7. A detailed discourse on heterodoxy as a form of heresy in the Pastoral Epistles was discussed by Skarsaune (1994:9–14). The study omits this angle of discussion because it is not within the scope of the study.

8. Simpson uses a well versed and thoroughly researched external and internal evidences to credit the authorship of the Pastoral Epistles to a man whom Chrysostom used *ὁ τριτηχῆς ἀνὴρ* to describe his physical stature, and Augustine used, *paullum modicum* *Quid* to refer to his Roman nickname; that is, Paul. See Simpson (1954:1).

9. Hutson stated that 'N. Brox resists reading such remarks as biographical (*Die Pastoralhriefe*...) and offers a positive portrait of Timothy from Acts and Paul (17–19)'. He also cites Scott (1936:51–52, 91).

was καταφρονέω. It has been viewed as conveying the meaning of being despised, scorned, and to show such scorn by active insult (Smith 2006:2). In other words, the person or thing to which the verb is used to describe is to be disregarded as unworthy of any serious attention. In the passage, the cause of Timothy's problem is his youth (Dibelius & Conzelmann 1972:70). Νεότης, which translates the word 'youth' in the text, is, according to Plato, 'a relative term' (Simpson 1954:69). It depends on the age bracket considered youthful at the period of time when it is in use. But what is historically clear is that Timothy would have been a person of around 40 years when he was referred to as a youth (Shepherd 1942; Simpson 1954). And if Pastoral Epistles preferred married men as leaders (see I Tim. 3:2), the character, Timothy was qualified both by age and office as a leader.¹⁰ Ironically being a youth was a stage in one's life where one should have both physical and energetic advantage over the aged, but it turned out that the youth of Timothy's period were generally looked down upon and this made them unable to hold any real power and authority. Paul wanted Timothy to be an exception; asking him 'not to be ruled by οἱ πρεσβύτεροι in his legation amongst those who associated authority closely with age' (Simpson 1954:70). Therefore, earlier in verse 11, Paul instructs Timothy to παραγγέλλω which is to 'command' (Simpson 1954:69) and to 'teach' (διδάσκω) which could amongst other meanings, be to 'direct'. The first verb calls attention to Paul's use of military imagery which is 'an important factor in the construction of social order' (Punt 2016:203). There is every possibility that Paul's use of παραγγέλλω derives from military precision of the Greco-Roman military force. 'Greek and Roman philosophers often used battle or war terminology for human moral efforts. Philosophers, Paul and others shared a world in which armies and warfare contributed to its contours' and the use of these terminologies abound in Pauline corpus (O'Brien 1991:330–331); but not only in Pauline Corpus:

[E]arly 2nd-century Christianity already displayed a proclivity for military terminology, especially incumbent in the works of Clement of Alexandria, Ignatius of Antioch and Origin [sic], but this is not a foreign phenomenon. Military terminology was current in the cults of Bacchus, Mithras, Venus and Isis. (Potgieter 2020:6)

Even the usage of the second verb διδάσκω may also have military implications. It is known that in the Greek world, the Athenians needed 2 years of military training from their boys whilst they were school pupils, and the Spartans needed 23 of those years. Whilst in military training, even a slightest question from the teacher, brought severe whipping (ed. Hirsch 2018:18) to the pupils. This suggests that the two verbs are executable only by the brave and the intelligent; attributes quite suppressed amongst the youth of Timothy's time. So if Paul asked young Timothy to step into them, he sees in Timothy the prerequisites to bold leadership (Bateman 1993:26).

Paul calls on Timothy to become a τύπος – an example or a model – (see Simpson 1954:70). This seems basically to avoid a lifestyle quite demeaning to one aspiring to public office. To

10.1 Timothy 3:2 insists that a bishop should be a married man, and Timothy was severally referred to as a bishop (see Bateman 1993:4; Williamson 1965:109).

be a τύπος was to the end of exemplification ἐν ἀναστροφῇ ... ἐν ἀγνείᾳ [in conduct... in purity]. Although these attributes are not easily found amongst the youth, cultivating them gives an impetus to the youth towards bold leadership.

Some commentators like Utley (2013:58) made suggestions which agreed with the school of thought that the text (1 Tm 4:12) speaks of the personality of Timothy. This opinion, however, does not seem to suit the passage because the injunction μηδεὶς καταφρονεῖτω is a paraenesis,¹¹ and not an explanation of Timothy's personality. In fact, some scholars believe that Paul was not addressing 'Timothy', but youthful leaders in the studied text.¹²

τολμηρήγεσία (bold leadership) stepping out of the shadows for Nigerian youth

Nigerian politics has distinguished itself as politics that is characterised by violence and all forms of malpractice (Badejo & Stephens 2012:312). This has in fact generated much data in any discussion regarding Nigerian politics and youth involvement. It has also been known to be youth unfriendly (Adebayo 2018). Hence, it favours only the old who also have the power of money and influence. Adebayo's study calls to mind the young president of France who was elected in 2018 at the age of 39, Emmanuel Macron. One of Adebayo's research questions which asked, 'What must African youths do to initiate change and produce a Macron-like leader' (Adebayo 2018:141) gives credence to the challenge of youth neglect in politics and leadership in Africa, and in particular Nigeria. His research was succinctly summarised with the observation that Macron was just an infant when many current African leaders started their leadership career. His major worry is 'that there have been attempts by younger men to vie for political office across the continent but with little or no success' (Adebayo 2018:141). This lack of success may be as a result of poor motivation on the youth to become bold participants on the nation's politics.

The exegesis of this study suggests that Paul's admonition towards boldness and bravery was not targeted at just dispelling fear and cowardice from Timothy but firstly, at admonishing him to not allow such traits as cowardice to creep into him. This could be the reason why Paul used several imperatives παραγγέλλω, διδάσκω, καταφρονέω, γίνομαι to instruct the young Timothy. Like Timothy, Nigerian youth need to be reminded that they hold great potentials in them, potentials both unknown to the youth and also capable of steering the country out of the quagmire of failure and dysfunctional leadership which it presently faces.

Nigeria, like the rest of Africa, has neglected the place of youth in leadership because of the selfishness of the nationalists and

11. Joohan Kim's thesis deals mainly with the hortatory nature of the New Testament Epistles and classifies such passages as paraenesis (see Kim 2012:60–102).

12. In order to justify that the context of cowardice spoken about in Paul's admonition to Timothy conforms to the youth in general, Hutson speaks of Epictetus' use of the word as a rhetoric instrument especially in pedagogy. Hutson (1997:72) referred to Epict, *Diss.* 1 24 1–10, 20 (trans. Oldfather, LCL, modified) on the philosopher as a scout, cf. Epict, *Diss.* 3 22, 23–26 as exemplifying Epictetus's admonition towards bravery to his pupils.

their successors, that is, members of the military junta. Pareto's ([1968] 1991:72–81) 'exclusive' elite qualities for ascending to political power which include 'education', 'intelligence', 'shrewdness' and 'union' or organisational capacity (Kifordu 2011:30) received a reversal trend in Nigerian context. Almost all the military leaders who took over from the nationalists had low education before clenching the reins of power in Nigeria. While they hold on to the seat of power, they encourage the youth to go to school, a project which becomes futile immediately after graduation because the system gives them no opportunity to either be gainfully employed or start their own enterprise or even to engage in politics. This frustration has led the youth to many known vices. Although the participation in vices should be frowned upon among Nigerian youth just as Paul spoke against it to Timothy, the political leadership in Nigeria has contributed a great deal to the frustrations of the youth which in turn takes away their *ἀγνεία* (purity). To this, one would dare say that Nigerian politics has influenced the youth rather negatively.

Their move towards ending SARS brutality which was unfortunately hindered by the infiltration of hoodlums, and which the federal government and Lagos state government quelled, need to be repeated on a broader scale. However, this time, they should be careful not to allow hoodlums infiltrate their peaceful way of demanding equal rights and justice with their peers all over the world. It is regrettable that despite their youthful strength and updated current global knowledge through internet facilities, the Nigerian youth is easily intimidated especially by the very less experienced but cunning elders. This could be as a result that:

[M]ost of the political developments in Nigeria during colonial period had bold stamp of the Christian political factor,¹³ which made the youth to adhere to the instruction and socialization provided by their parents, elders and kinsmen. (Ushe 2014:22)

Such adherence to instruction was in deference to the political elders which they unfortunately abused. With the global quest for scientific and technological advancements, Nigeria, which is currently a developing country, have almost no opportunity to crawl out of the hole of primitive and outdated times and aspire to meet the standard set by the leading powers in global advancements unless the youth are given the chance to lead. This study agrees with Otuonuyo (n.d.) that:

[A]ll over the world, the paradigm of shifting political leadership to the doorsteps of the youths who have the ability, energy, vision and courage to take democratic governance to the next level is fast gaining grounds. (p. 3)

Stepping out of the shadows for the Nigerian youth as they did during #EndSARS protest is not only imperative, but a necessity if Nigeria as a state need move forward. In the words of Ushe (2014:15) 'the hopes and prayers of Nigerians

13. Although Nigeria is a secular state, religion has played an important role in the ideological formulation of the nation's beliefs and practices. Religion has even coloured certain aspects of the nation's constitution to which the secularity of the Nigerian state is obscured (Yesufu 2016:4). If Christian ideology contributed to stripping Nigerian youth such boldness to compete with the elderly politically, then a good interpretation of the Christian text should help alleviate the condition.

alone cannot ensure the realization of the dreams of our people, unless the youths are involved in partisan politics of the nation'. This is the crux of the study.

Conclusion

After examining Paul's admonition to young Timothy to be bold and courageous despite all oppositions, especially for being a youth, the study applied this to the Nigerian context with emphasis on the current Nigerian youth. Timothy could have easily felt intimidated by the feeling that his elders automatically translated to his betters, but Paul encouraged him not to entertain such thoughts and to refuse to allow people (the context suggests false teachers who are older than Timothy) look down on him because he was a youth, and that his youthfulness was a reflection of strength. This analogy was applied in the Nigerian context where Nigerian youth, like the youth in Timothy's time, honour old age to the extent of being almost disempowered in their preference of old age as a symbol of wisdom and perfection. The study believes that if the youth are not brought into the mainstream of leadership in Nigeria, the desired success in the global competition to attain technological and scientific excellence may be a mirage for Nigeria.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

All authors contributed equally to this work.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

Reference

Aageson, J.W., 2008, *Paul, the Pastoral Epistles, and the early church*, Hendrickson, Peabody, MA.

- Abiodun, T.F., Oloyede, A.O., Ademola, O.E., Abah, O. & Kehinde, O.S., 2020, 'Unlawful killing of civilians by officers of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) unit of the Nigerian police in South-West Nigeria: Implications for national security', *African Journal of Law, Political Research and Administration* 3(1), 49–64.
- Adebayo, J.O., 2018, 'Gerontocracy in African politics: Youth and the quest for political participation', *Journal of African Elections* 17(1), 140–161. <https://doi.org/10.20940/JAE/2018/v17i1a7>
- Aleman-Díaz, A.Y., Toczydlowska, E., Mazur, J., Frasilho, D., Melkumova, M. & Holmqvist, G., 2016, *Why income inequalities matter for young people's health: A look at the evidence*, Working Paper 2016-06, UNICEF Office of Research, Florence.
- Aljazeera News, 2020, *Timeline: #EndSARS protests in Nigeria*, viewed 31 October 2020, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/22/timeline-on-nigeria-unrest>.
- Badejo, A.O. & Stephens, O.A., 2012, 'Predisposing factors to youth involvement in electoral violence in Lagos metropolis', *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies* 3(3), 312–316. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ejcv.v3i2.63601>
- Barth, K., 1939, *Church and state*, SCM Press, London.
- Bateman, J.J. (transl.), 1993, *Collected works of Erasmus*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
- Baur, F.C., 2003, *Paul the apostle of Jesus Christ: His life and works, his epistles and teachings*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA.
- Brodie, B.W., 2008, *1 Timothy*, s.n., s.l.
- Collins, R.F., 2002, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus: A commentary*, New Testament Library, Westminster John Knox, Louisville, KY.
- Das Gupta, M., Engelman, R., Levy, J., Luchsinger, G., Merrick, T. & Rosen, J.E., 2014, *State of world population 2014*, UNPF, New York, NY.
- Dibelius, M. & Conzelmann, H., 1972, *A commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, transl. P. Buttlaph & A. Yarbro, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, PA.
- Dlamini, S.T., 2018, 'An exegetical study of 1 Timothy 6:3–12 with special reference to its implications for the prosperity gospel', Masters thesis, South African Theological Seminary.
- Eneji, A.P. & Ikeorji, C.R., 2018, 'Youth political participation and electoral violence in the 21st century Nigeria: Bridging the gap', *World Journal of Innovative Research* 4(6), 9–13.
- Etim, E.E. & Duke, O.O., 2019, 'A critical assessment of the "not too young to run act" and democracy in Nigeria', *International Journal of Research Culture Society* 3(1), 89–93.
- Falade, D.A., 2014, 'Political participation in Nigerian democracy: A study of some selected local government areas in Ondo state, Nigeria', *Global Journal of Human-Social Science: Political Science* 14(8), 16–23.
- George, A., 2020, *The roots of the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria*, viewed 31 October 2020, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/10/25/roots-endsars-protests-nigeria/>.
- Glassco, J. & Holguin, L., 2016, *Youth and inequality*, Oxfam briefing paper, 12 August, pp. 1–40, Oxfam, Québec.
- Hirsch, Jr., E.D., (ed.), 2018, *Ancient Greece and Rome*, Core Knowledge Foundation, Charlottesville, VA.
- Hoehl, S.E., 2011, 'The mentor relationship: An exploration of Paul as loving mentor to Timothy and the application of this relationship to contemporary leadership challenges', *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 3(2), 32–47.
- Hutson, C.R., 1997, *Was Timothy timid? On the rhetoric of fearlessness (1 Corinthians 16:10–11) and Cowardice (2 Timothy 1:?)*, A revised version of a paper delivered to the 314th meeting of the Chicago Society of Biblical Research at Wheaton College, pp. 58–73.
- Hutson, C.R., 1998, 'My true child: The rhetoric of youth in the Pastoral Epistles', A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Yale University in Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, pp. i–384.
- Ibezim, E.A.C., 2019, 'The philosophy of youth inclusion in Nigerian politics: Trend, challenges and prospect', *Journal of Religion and Human Relations* 11(1), 119–136.
- Inokoba, P.K. & Maliki, A.E., 2011, 'Youths, electoral violence and democratic consolidation in Nigeria: The Bayelsa state experience', *Anthropologist* 13(3), 217–225. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09720073.2011.11891200>
- International IDEA, 2018, 'Youth participation in political processes', *Second Annual Summer School for Young Leaders from African Political Parties: Kigali, Rwanda*, 6–8 June.
- Johnson, L.T., 2001, *The first and second letters to Timothy*, Anchor Bible 35A, Doubleday, New York, NY.
- Kifordu, H.A., 2011, 'Nigeria's political executive elite: Paradoxes and continuities, 1960–2007', PhD thesis, Erasmus University Rotterdam.
- Kim, J., 2012, 'The Pastoral Letter in Early Christianity up to the Early Fifth Century C.E.', PhD thesis, Stellenbosch University.
- Krook, M.L. & Nugent, M.K., 2018, 'Not too young to run? Age requirements and young people in elected office', *Intergenerational Justice Review* 2, 60–67.
- Long, T.G., 2016, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, KY.
- Marshall, I.H., 2020, 'Recent study of the Pastoral Epistles', *Themelios* 23(1), viewed 14 August 2020, from <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/recent-study-of-the-pastoral-epistles/>.
- Mengistu, M.M., 2017, 'The quest for youth inclusion in the African politics: Trends, challenges, and prospects', *Journal of Socialomics* 6, 189.
- O'Brien, P.T., 1991, 'The Epistle to the Philippians' *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, pp. 330–331, Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Otuonuyo, G.I., n.d., 'Christian politics: The desired need for the political spectrum of Nigeria', A thesis submitted to Life Theological Seminary, Lagos.
- Pareto, V., [1968] 1991, *The rise and fall of the elites: An application of theoretical sociology*, The Bedminster Press, Totowa, NJ.
- Potgieter, A., 2020, *Contested body Metaphors of dominion in Romans 5–8*, AOSIS books, Cape Town.
- Punch, 2018, *On the not-too-young-to-run act*, viewed 12 July 2020, from <https://punchng.com/on-the-not-too-young-to-run-act/>.
- Punt, J., 2016, 'Paul, military imagery and social disadvantage', *Acta Theologica Suppl* 23, 201–224. <https://doi.org/10.4314/actat.v23i15.10>
- Quinn, J.D. & Wacker, W.C., 2000, *The first and second letters to Timothy*, Eerdmans Critical Commentary, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Scott, E.F., 1936, *The Pastoral Epistles*, pp. 51–52, 91, Hodder & Stoughton, London.
- Shepherd, J.W., 1942, *New Testament Epistles*, Gospel Advocate, Nashville, TN.
- Simpson, E.K., 1954, *The Pastoral Epistles: The Greek text with introduction and commentary*, The Tyndale Press, London.
- Skarsaune, O., 1994, 'Heresy and the Pastoral Epistles', *Themelios* 20(1), 9–14.
- Smith, R.E., 2016, 'Embracing intentional leadership succession: A seminar for senior leaders of the Southern New England Ministry Network', A project submitted to the Doctor of Ministry committee in candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Ministry, pp. 1–193.
- Smith, T.L., 2006, *Timothy – Let no man despise thy youth (1 Timothy 4:12)*, No publication details.
- Taylor, E.L.H., 1969, *The Christian philosophy of law, politics and the state*, The Craig Press, Nutley, NJ.
- Towner, P.H., 2006, *The letters to Timothy and Titus*, Wm. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Ukpe, W., n.d., *#EndSARS: A day by day timeline of the protest that has brought Nigeria to its knees*, viewed 31 October 2020, from <https://nairametrics.com/2020/10/25/endsars-protest-a-timeline-of-all-the-major-events-from-october-3rd/>
- United Nations Youth, n.d., *Youth, political participation and decision-making*, viewed 11 July 2020, from <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/factsheets/youth-political-participation.pdf>.
- Ushe, U.M., 2014, 'Christian youths and politics in Nigeria: Implications for sustainable development', *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* 16(8), 15–29.
- Utley, B., 2013, 'Paul's fourth missionary journey: 1st Timothy, Titus and 2nd Timothy', viewed 22 August 2021, from <https://www.ibiblio.org/freebiblecommentary/pdf/EN/VOL09.pdf>.
- Uwaifo, S.O., n.d., 'Circulation of the elite and the Nigerian political situation: A discourse', A thesis presented to the Department of Political Science and Public Administration Babcock University, Ilesan Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria in partial fulfillment for Doctor of Philosophy, p. 11
- Wallace, D.B., 2004, *1 Timothy: Introduction, argument, outline*, viewed 14 August 2020, from <https://bible.org/seriespage/1-timothy-introduction-argument-outline>.
- Wilhelm, H.-M., 1998, 'African Christian leadership: Cultures and theologies in dialogue', A Master of Theology thesis submitted to the University of South Africa.
- Williamson, G.A., 1965, *Eusebius*, revised and edited with a new introduction by Andrew Louth, Penguin Books, London.
- Yesufu, M.L., 2016, 'The impact of religion on a secular state: The Nigerian experience', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 42(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2412-4265/2016/255>