

Age Discrimination and It's Implication in Human Resource Development in Nigeria

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Abstract: This study unveils the benefits of the recent moves by Nigeria's National Assembly to extend the age limit for job seekers, and the 15 July 2020 directive of the Senate through its resolution to President Muhammadu Buhari and through the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, FMLE to constitute a committee to review the age limit for job seekers which has become necessary because of the high rate of unemployment and crimes in the country. To achieve the objectives of this study which are: to identify the consequences of age discrimination on human resource development; the benefits of the recent moves by the two chambers of the National Assembly (the Senate and House of Representatives) to increase the age limit for job seekers in federal and state ministries, department, agencies, MDAs; and to proffer policy options that are likely to benefit job seekers and the government respectively, the qualitative research design was employed. The study, thus, made useful recommendations that would ensure that the May 15, 2019 bill often known as, "An Act to Prohibit Discrimination against Job Seekers in Federal Civil Service (eradication) and Allied Matters Act"; and the resolution of the Senate directing the Presidency to constitute a committee to review age limit for job seekers in the country succeeds.

Keywords: Nigeria, Job Seekers, Age Discrimination, Employment, Human Resource Development.

Introduction

Previous studies revealed that the Federal government of Nigeria over the years has pursued policies and programmes aimed at accelerating national growth and sustainable human resource development, unfortunately, studies also have shown that much is still needed to be done to achieve these set objectives through improved policy prioritisation, education and creating employment opportunities for all its citizens irrespective of status and age. Inarguably, the nation is endowed with both human and natural resources, both of which are underutilised and even when utilised are exploited to unbearable extent. As a consequence, there have been imbalances in the country's development index with poverty and unemployment, as well as insurgencies as the most visible.

In the affirmative, Oden (2019) argued that one of the major challenges and a common social issue confronting Nigerian youth and the government at all levels is age discrimination in job hiring, the consequence of which has deprived a number of qualified and eligible Nigerians of being engaged in the federal and state ministries and agencies over the year. This explains why a number of Nigerians despite their level of educational status are yet to be gainfully employed in both public and private sectors. Jojo (2016) noted that the country's age discrimination saga in work places has degenerated to the extent that some employers would want to consider candidates seeking to be employed by the institution they attended. In his words, Jojo argued that,

As long as one love those who attended the University of Ibadan, FUTA Akure, Covenant University, Babcock University, the University of Lagos and Obafemi Awolowo University, it does not mean that if one did not attend these institutions he or she should be barred not to apply for some specific job descriptions in the country since it amounts to job discrimination in terms of institution attended.

Ajose (2020), Okom and Aboh (2019) analysing the Nigeria's unemployment saga lamented that most Nigerians who have gone to school and acquire degrees and other qualifications recognised by our domestic laws, precisely from primary to tertiary institutions with the aim of securing a job and to add value to their place of employment, homes and to the society at large, have been deprived of their dreams by some circumstances beyond their control, such as gender inequality, religious belief and culture, ethnicity, tribalism, mediocrity; and most importantly age discrimination often practiced by employers of labour in the country and which specifically allows only those between 20 to 30 years to be engaged in both government and non-governmental agencies. Despite the

fact that Chapter 4, Section 42 (2) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, **CFRN** 1999 (as amended) says that, “no Nigeria shall be subjected to any disability or deprivation by reason of the circumstances of his or her birth, but age which is a circumstance of birth has been a barrier for certain group of persons in the country to be gainfully employed into governmental and non-governmental agencies (Olakanmi, 2006). This is what Zacher and Steinvik (2015) cited in Dan-Jumbo and Nwuche (2018:74) called *Ageism*; a situation in which an individual is denied employment because of his or her age or a worker or group of workers are disadvantaged or subjected to unfair treatment because of their age or because they belong to a certain age category.

Following the 2017 Federal Government collaboration with the International Labour Organisation (**ILO**) under the framework of the National Employment Policy, NEP and a revisit of the 1980, 1986 and 1996 programmes, the Federal government embarked on another phase of addressing the country’s unemployment problem. Despite the subsequent attempt targeted at addressing unemployment problem, the government is yet to have a number of the educated citizens gainfully employed up to date. Under the 1996 government framework in conjunction with the ILO, effort was made by the government to formulate policy programme under the National Employment Policy (**NEP**) with the mandate of accelerating employment, reduction of high rates of unemployment, as well as to increase the number of Nigerians already employed in the federal civil service, unfortunately, the rate of unemployment is still very high in the country, a situation that prompted the Lower Chamber of the National Assembly (the House of Representatives) in 2019 to unanimously passed into law a bill entitled; “an Act to Prohibit Discrimination against Job Seekers in Federal Government Agencies (eradication) and Allied Matters Act” co-sponsored by Honorable Sergius Ogun of Edo State (Kwen, 2019).

In May 1998, the Nigerian government also in collaboration with **ILO** came up with two policy frameworks, first, with the aim of meeting the challenges of the rising unemployment; and secondly eliminating underemployment in the country presented at the National Workshop held in Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria for public debate on the unemployment problem in the country in order to finding final solutions to the problem of unemployment. This was subsequently incorporated into the **NEP** programme of 2002 and approved by the federal government as a working tool. Also in 2013, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment sort the support and partnership of **ILO** to increase employment generation in the country (Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, **FMLE**, 2017). Apparently, several efforts have been made over the years by the government to eliminate all forms of unemployment in the country; yet, the government effort seems to be a mirage.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Much as the Nigeria’s government has severally attempted to create employment opportunities for the citizens through its policies and programmes, much is yet to be done to ameliorate age discrimination which has been identified as the utmost impediment to government’s efforts to eliminate unemployment in the country. The maximum age limit to apply for most government jobs, particularly in the federal and state civil service is between 25 to 28 and a little above 30 years of age as the case may be (Adelakun, 2011:30). This has no doubt affected government efforts to reduce the level of unemployment in our societies and to create enabling environment to improve on human resource development, as well as to eliminate all manners of anti-social vices such as youth restiveness and crimes in our societies.

Apart from the problem of unemployment confronting the government of Nigeria in recent years, there are several other factors that have complicated the problem of age discrimination in work places and against job seekers in the country, such as godfatherism, religious, ethnic and tribal discriminations. Ode (2019) identified bias, religion, culture, tribalism, mediocracy and corruption, alongside age discrimination as sundry factors that have confronted the nation over the years. Imposition of embargoes on employment by the Federal and some state governments is also identified as a problem. Lambo and Ekemezie (2020) have had to argue that despite several laws relating to labour and employment in Nigeria including the Constitution of the Federal Republic, **CFRN** 1999 (as amended); the Nigerian Labour Act, Chapter L1, Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 2004 often known as “Labour Act”, and multiple Federal laws that emanated from legislative enactment by the National Assembly (often regarded as Nigeria’s National Legislative house); and state laws enacted by the House of Assemblies (the Legislative Assemblies of each of the Federating units), high rate of unemployment is still a perturbing issue yet to be resolved by the government at all levels in the country.

Kwen (2019) argued that despite the May 2019 Sergius Ogun of Edo state sponsored bill known today as; *a Bill for an Act to Prohibit Discrimination against Job Seekers in the Federal Republic of Nigeria*, and unanimously passed by members of the lower Chamber of the National Assembly (the House of Representative), the government has not been able to eradicate age discrimination for job seekers in the country. While Section 3(1) and (2) of the Act provide: *that no citizen of the Federal Republic shall be deprived of employment into any of the agencies of the Federal government on the ground that he or she is above thirty (30) years*, we are yet to get it right. By implication, the increased age limit of forty-five (45) years for employment in the Federal civil service has been jettisoned by employers of labour in the country, a situation that has further complicated unemployment problem in the country. In short, age discrimination has been traced as one of the major causes of high rate of unemployment, youth restiveness and other sundry crimes in the country over the years.

Also identified as a problem is the seemingly misinterpretation of Nigerian Labour Act, CAP 198 of 1990 often regarded as the Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, particularly Section 33(2) (e) which specifically stipulates *Eighteen (18) years as the ripe age for employment*. On the other hands, 18 years in CFRN 1999 (as amended) stipulates the actual year for criminal responsibility for an individual. By implication both laws did not indulge in age discrimination regarding job seekers in any manner. Unfortunately, it is amazing that government institutions and agencies such as the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), among others have placed limit of 30 years for graduates to partake in the compulsory national youth service programme to their father land, and other sundry services in the country such as enrolment or recruitment into the armed forces, among others (Okom & Aboh, 2019).

It is imperative to note that despite the birth of NEP since 2002, several legislations, protests, as well as increase in population and the changing dynamics of work and employment in the country over the years, economic growth in the country has been less inclusive and jobless in character. While the economy has achieved a reasonable level of growth in GDP, a lot of Nigerians have been left behind in the process due to deficit of employment opportunities sometime traced to age discrimination, underfunding and ineptitude on the part of the government. The country's labour market, however, has also become totally deficient in the fundamental elements of labour right, entitlement and conditions that could possibly promote decent work. These factors, no doubt, have created serious problems of industrial adjustment, mismatch between the supplies of skills by the Nigeria educational system, and demand for such skills in the labour market (FMLE, 2017).

All of these, undoubtedly, have raised pertinent questions as to whether the efforts of the federal government over the years to eliminate age discrimination for Nigerians seeking employment in federal and state ministries and agencies, and in private sector, would ever be resolved? Notably also is the question as to what could be done to ameliorate age limit as a barrier to Nigerian youths or job seekers seeking employment in government ministries and agencies across the country? This study, therefore, seeks to examine the extent to which age discrimination or limit has increased the rate of unemployment and undermine human resource development in the country over the years. Also of pertinence is the recent move by the National Assembly to extend age limit for Nigerian graduates seeking employment in federal ministries, departments and agencies; and policy options that are likely to benefit the government and job seekers.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the implications of age restriction on human resource development in Nigeria, while the specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Identify the consequences of age discrimination for job seekers in Nigeria,
- ii. Examine the benefits of the recent move by the National Assembly to increase age limit for job seekers in the country, and
- iii. Recommend policy options that are likely to benefit job seekers and the government in the country.

To this end, this study addresses the following research questions:

- i. What are the consequences of age discrimination for job seekers in Nigeria?
- ii. What are the benefits of the recent move by the National Assembly to increase age limit for job seekers in the country?
- iii. What are the policy options that are likely to benefit both job seekers and the government?

2.1 Review of Related Literature:

2.1.1 Age Discrimination, Job Opportunities and Human Resource Development

To ensure that human beings irrespective of age, sex, race, ethnic nationality, and religious and political affiliations are integrated into the society is the responsibility of a responsible government. A responsible government is expected thereof to adequately integrate its citizens into the larger society by providing them standard education and health facilities, and most importantly integrating of the youth who are the most vulnerable into valuable ventures such as creating of job opportunities and significant others. A nation that undermines its human resource development is tantamount to face the consequences which often include youth restiveness, anti-social activities, insurgency, and other forms of crimes, as evident in our contemporary Nigerian society. Although, efforts are being made by the authorities in recent times to ameliorate all forms of anti-social behaviour in our society through policy frameworks and creation job opportunities for all eligible citizens.

The United Nations Development Programme, **UNDP** 1990 report sees human resource development as an essential component of any modern or civilised society. It went further to define human resource development, “as that which focuses on giving the citizens more freedom to live lives they value”. For instance, educating the girl child would build her skills, but it is of no use if she is denied equal opportunity to compete with the opposite sex and have access to seek for employment. What is the need if she does not have the right skills to adapt to the local labour market? This is also application to all the citizens of the state irrespective of age and sex. Human resource development, fundamentally, is all about recreating access to resources needed to live a decent life, especially creating the right atmosphere for human development, as well as the right choices, not insisting that they make use of them. In other words, no one can guarantee human happiness but the choices they make in oftentimes do complement government efforts (see UNDP Report, 1990).

In 1999, the **UNDP** strategic plan introduced a new approach for advancing human wellbeing which it describes as an approach targeted at the expansion of the richness of the economy in which human beings live with emphasis on the people, their opportunities and choices in order to live good lives. By implication, human resource development is focused on improving the lives of the people rather than assuming that economic growth alone would lead to greater wellbeing for all. Income growth, therefore, is a means rather than an end in itself and this can only be done through the provision of jobs without discrimination of any kind. These are essential necessities expected of any member nation the United Nations, UN.

Suffice it to state that age discrimination against job seekers in Nigeria has rendered eligible young men and women unemployable. As a consequence, it has also created volatile environment conducive for age falsification and other forms of crimes to thrive in the country. In line with this stand point, Okom and Aboh (2019:17) argued that the ceiling age of twenty (20) and thirty (30) years have restricted a lot of applicants outside the age brackets to be employed: the implication of which has promoted all forms of corrupt practices such as falsification of age through the court of law, etc. Citing the 2016/2017 recruitment exercise by the Nigerian Police for Cadet Assistant Superintendent of Police (Cadet ASP) and the advert of 2015 by Fidelity Bank Plc for job seekers, it was argued that the age limit of Twenty-three (23) and twenty-eight (28) years for the police recruitment exercise, and twenty (20) and twenty-eight (28) for Fidelity Bank respectively, contravene Chapter IV, Section 42 (2) of **CFRN** 1999 (as amended) and that which states that, *on no account shall one be deprived of any opportunity whatsoever on the circumstances of his or her birth*. By implication, birth is a natural phenomenon and age is a circumstance of birth, therefore, those above the specified age limits in both recruitment exercises were deprived of the opportunities to be eligible for the recruitment exercises or to be offered employment as the case may be.

A nation like Nigeria with huge human resource, and founded on the principles of justice, equity, and freedom; age discrimination wouldn't have been a barrier to young men and women seeking employment into government agencies and non-governmental institutions because it contravenes Section 17 (13) (a) of **CFRN** 1999 (as amended) which states that, *the government shall, as a matter of policy, make sure that every citizen, without any form of bias, are not prevented from securing adequate means of livelihood and opportunity to secure employment or job in the country*. No matter the angle one conceived discrimination, it is a distinguishing treatment either on the individual or group of individuals in the larger society or in an organisation (Okom & Aboh, 2019).

According to Lippert-Rasmussen (2006) cited in Okpalaobi and Ibekwe (n.d: 97), moral philosophers see discrimination in its entirety as a disadvantageous treatment meted on an individual or group of individuals either on the basis of age, tribe, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and gender. This definition of discrimination, either expressive or descriptive in nature, has provided a detailed description of what it takes to discriminate, and all of which, undeniably, is seen in the Nigerian society in recent times. As provided by the International Labour Organisation (**ILO**), the term, *employment discrimination* has come to mean “a violation of human right which as a consequence entails a waste of human talents and detrimental to the productivity of human resource, socio-economic growth and inequalities that undermine social cohesion and solidarity, as well as a brake on the reduction of poverty (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2006). Although, employers have the right to determine not only the job available in their establishments or the categories or qualifications of those to be engaged, but it mustn't be done in a way that one feels discriminated either by his or her age, race, ethnic nationality, tribe, religious background and sex. This is a plausible reason for the **ILO**, some national governments and the Nigerian National Assembly (NASS) to kick against discrimination of any form in job places.

Odeku and Animashaun (2012) see discrimination as, “any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, all of which nullify or impair equality of opportunities or treatments in job places”. Furthermore, they see the Nigeria's case as complex, overlapping and systemic since it is practiced in virtually all the sectors of the nation's economy, governmental and non-governmental sectors. Citing the **CFRN** 1999 (as amended), Odeku and Animashaun argued that Chapter IV, Section 42 of the Constitution does provide a tool for citizens' freedom from discrimination. Section 42 (1) which specifically provides that, “a citizen of the Federal republic irrespective of his or her community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political origin, shall not, by any reason be discriminated against”.

Subsection 1(d) states that: *nothing in the subsection shall invalidate any law by reason only that the law imposes restrictions with respect to appointment of any person to any government office or as a member of the Armed Force in the country*. This provision failed to specifically focus on employment related discrimination which made it easy for employers of labour to erroneously integrate it into other sectors to encourage discriminatory practices (Odekun & Animashaun, 2012:4691). Adeleye, Atewologun and Matanmi (2014) argued that, “although, an anti-discrimination clause in **CFRN** of 1999 (as amended) expressly prohibits discrimination on the *grounds of community, ethnicity, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion*, yet, there are widespread of evidence that Nigerian citizens still face discrimination in the form of inequality and restriction in government and non-governmental agencies. Furthermore, they argued that the government seems to focus more on legislations and efforts toward attainment of a balance in ethnic equality in public or government sectors and in public education and political institutions, leaving the private sector employers with substantial autonomy to manage and recruit their workforce thereby creating room for the private sectors to discriminate on grounds of age in particular.

Despite the Federal government effort under the Federal government human capital development strategies 1999 to prioritised poverty reduction and empowerment of the Nigerian citizens in rural and urban areas, as well as to increase the prospect for economic productivity and the quality of life for those living in rural and urban areas all over the country, the question remains that human resource development over the years is unachievable. Proactive policy actions which include employment opportunities for all eligible citizens without discriminations of any kind or avoidance of corrupt practices in government policies and programmes seems to be unimplemented (Adelakun, 2011). Ajose (2020) argued that despite several efforts by the government to ameliorate the high rate of unemployment in collaboration with the **ILO** and to provide a clear description of discrimination in work places and the declaration of same as violations of human right to gainful employment and a waste of human talents, job seekers are still facing age discrimination. This practice is detrimental to productivity and economic well-being of the individuals. It has also promoted inequality in socioeconomic status of the individuals and unemployment crisis.

Warr (1994) cited in Dan-Jumbo and Nwuche (2018:54) sees age-base discrimination as; “not only refusing to offer employment to an applicant seeking for employment because of his or her age but also by giving less pay, denying training, promotions or other entitlements and benefits because of age”. In the same manner, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, **CIPD** (2003) defined age-base discrimination as “a behaviour from others (i.e. employers) that disadvantages a person or group of persons on ground of age”. Okafor (2010) also cited in Dan-Jumbo and Nwuche (2018) argued that age discrimination has inarguably become a customary practice by Nigerian employers of job; a practice that is undertaken by public and private sectors against potential

job seekers on grounds of age.

Abubakar (2003) argued that the problem of age discrimination in Nigeria has generated a lot of issues of concerns to job seekers and the government across the country in recent times. Sympathetically, age-based discrimination is revealed not only when an individual seeks employment but also in several forms including; forcing retirement because of one's age; assigning older workers to duties that limit their ability to compete for high level jobs in organisations; requiring older workers to pass physical examination as a condition to remain employed; indicating age preference in advertisements for employees such as "young dynamic person (s) wanted; and most significantly promoting younger workers while denying older ones promotions because of fewer years of retirement.

This is what prompted the National Assembly to legislate on age discrimination against job seekers in Nigeria, as evident in the recent resolution passed by the Senate directing the President of the Federal republic to setup committee to look into this perturbing issue in our private and public sectors. The moves by the National Assembly have, thus, been described by analysts and observers of the Nigerian politics as a big step against age discrimination in government jobs. According to Age Discrimination Info/News (2019), the move by the House of Representatives to approve the ban of age discrimination against job seekers in Federal government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), apart from the security agencies such as the Nigerian Armed Forces, the bill stands to increase the number of Nigerians to be engaged in government agencies and to reduce high rate of unemployment and crimes in the country already detrimental to national peace and security.

Following the processes leading to the passage of the bill, co-sponsor of the bill, Mr. Sergius Ogun (of the All Progressive Congress, APC Edo) argued that the bill seeks to increase the age limits of Nigerian seeking for employment in government offices and to ensure that private sectors employers would follow the MDAs and remove any age limits imposed against job seekers, although, there was no direct legislation against private sector employers. The co-sponsor of the bill, Mr. Babajimi Benson (APC Lagos) on the other hand, assure Nigerian that more would be done to contain all forms of discriminations including sex, religion and race discrimination in government ministries and agencies. Furthermore, he called for the removal of all forms of barriers that deprived qualified, energetic and patriotic Nigerians the opportunity to fulfill their dreams, goals and opportunity to contribute their quotas to societal development. Mr. Edward Pwajok, Chairman of the House Committee on Rules and Business, argued that the bill was targeted at eliminating age discrimination against job seekers in Federal government ministries, departments and agencies in order to lift the age barrier standing against qualified youths from being gainfully employed in government establishments (Age Discrimination Info/News, 2019; Ozibo, 2020).

According to Iroanusi (2020) and Aborisade (2020) the call by the Senate to review the age limit for job seekers in the country was sequel to a motion moved by Senator Ibrahim Gobir of APC Sokoto East calling on the Senate to direct the President of the Federal Republic to direct **FMLE** to review age limit for job seeker which has over the years inadvertently marginalised and excluded skillful, competent and prospective applicants from the federal and states' civil services. Iroanusi (2020) argued that one of the major consequences of age discrimination against job seekers is high rate of unemployment, a situation in which Nigerian graduates spend up to 10 years seeking employment, and which put them in a disadvantaged position by no fault of theirs. Furthermore, he argued that in desperation, Nigerians resort to falsification of age all in the bid to fall within the required age and for them to be gainfully employed. He therefore traces the high rate of crime in the country to high rate of unemployment and poverty which have plagued the country like a cancan worm and increased the rate of insecurity in recent times in the form of armed robbery, banditry, human and drug trafficking, as well as insurgencies.

It is important to note that before the moves by the National Assembly to extend the age limit to at least 45 years for Nigerians seeking for jobs in government establishments, there was actually no specific legislation governing age discrimination against job seekers in the country. Though, the Constitution of the Federal Republic 2011 (as amended) has the fundamental provision which generally guarantees all citizens freedom from discrimination. For instance, Section 42 of the Constitution specifically provides for the right to freedom from discrimination which means that a citizen of Nigeria shall not in any way be subjected to any restriction expressly or in application of any law of the state (executive or administrative actions inclusive) denied his or her rights just because of his or her place of origin, sex, religion or political opinions.

In addition to this, the Constitution also contains guiding principles against discrimination, as evident in Section 17 (3) of Chapter II of the Constitution which specifically provides that the state shall direct its policy towards ensuring the following: first, opportunity for security of adequate means of livelihood; secondly, just and human conditions of work; thirdly, health, safety and welfare of all persons in employment; fourthly, equal pay for equal work without discrimination on any ground whatever; and lastly, prohibition of child and aged labour, all of these shall be guaranteed to avoid discrimination of any form (CFRN, 1999; 2011). Unfortunately, these provisions have in often cases misinterpreted by government representatives and officials leading to conscious and unconscious abuses of the provisions of the Constitution of the Federal republic. By implication, there is this belief that the government of Nigeria is the chief violators of the provision of the laws of the state since it encourages age discrimination in workplaces, especially in government establishments, ministries and agencies. This situation, inarguably, has undermined human resource development over the years since a lot of Nigerians are unemployed.

3.1 Research Method

The study adopted quantitative research design to ascertain the facts and objectives of the study which are to examine the implications of age restriction on human resource development in Nigeria. The populations of the study were lecturers, NYSC members, staffs of FMLE, students and Non-academic staffs. A minimum sample size of 150 was calculated using the formula for sample size determination and for estimating proportion. A simple random sampling technique was used to collect the data. The study employed a structural questionnaire in collecting the data and it comprised demographic characteristics, consequences of age discrimination for job seekers in Nigeria, benefits of the recent move by the National Assembly to increase age limit for job seekers in the country and recommendation of policy options that are likely to benefit job seekers and the government in the country. The administered questionnaires were retrieved from the respondents immediately after administration. Cronbach Alpha test reliability was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The Cronbach Alpha Reliability statistics gave 0.854. Data generated were analysed using SPSS version 17.0. The data were presented in descriptive statistics using simple percentages and frequencies (F).

4.1 Findings of the Study:

As shown in table 4.1 below, 60(40.0%) of the respondents were between ages 20-29 years followed by 30-39 years, 40(26.7%) and 40-49 years 30(20.0%). In addition, almost half of the respondents 70(46.7%) were males and 50(33.3%) were students, 45(30.0%) were Youth Corp members.

Table 4.1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variable	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Age		
20-29	60	40.0
30-39	40	26.7
40-49	30	20.0
>49	20	13.3
Sex:		
Male	70	46.7
Female	80	53.3
Status of Respondent:		
Lecturers	20	13.3
NYSC	45	30.0
FMLE Staffs	10	6.7
Students	50	33.3
Non-academic staffs	25	16.7

The respondents in the study were spread across various sections of the Nigerian society, some of whom are scholars in the Nigerian universities and colleges; members of the compulsory National Youth Service Corps, NYSC Programme selected by the researchers; staffs of the FMLE, students and a few educated citizens randomly

selected from the general public, particularly from university communities (categorised as non-academic staffs). Through the questionnaire majority of the respondents agreed that there are a lot of consequences much more than any other form of discrimination following age discrimination against job seekers in the country since the birth of the country in 1960.

4.1.1 Research Question 1: What are the consequences of age discrimination for job seekers in Nigeria?

Responses from majority of the respondents revealed that age discrimination against job seekers in the country has created a lot of issues ranging from increased unemployment rate 70(46.4%) and crime rate 60(40.0%), and that which seems not to have any solution in sight until the recent moves by the National Assembly to increase the age limit for job seekers in Nigeria. Further findings revealed that apart from the high rate of unemployment caused by age limit for job seekers in the country, a handful of Nigerian youths took to crimes because they were denied the opportunities to contribute their quota to the Nigerian society, as well as to their families and to better their lives by the government that was supposed to provide them jobs after graduation from the government and private colleges and institutions. This no doubt has amounted to the violation of the rights of these categories of Nigerian youths and that which entails a waste of their skills and knowledge acquired in the cause of their studies in Nigerian institutions.

This has equally affected productivity, human resource development and economic growth in the country 90(45.0%). Most importantly, age discrimination against job seekers has generated socio-economic inequality that has undermined social unity and cohesion 70(35.0%), as well as hindered poverty 80(53.3%) reduction and high rate of unemployment in the country. Categorically, respondents unanimously and strongly agreed that age discrimination has affected the individuals in virtually all sectors of the nation’s economy, i.e. from public to private sectors, and in the armed forces in which age limit is strictly observed. Respondents also strongly agreed that another obvious consequence of age discrimination is falsification of age by members of the public 60(40.0%) in order to be eligible for enrolment and employable in the armed forces on the one hand, and in the private and public sectors on the other hand. The consequence of this is evidenced in several cases of over aged workers found in the public or civil service; a situation that has led to difficulties in retiring old hands, and replacing them with younger ones.

Table 4.2: Consequences of age discrimination for job seekers in Nigeria

Variables	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Increase unemployment rate.	70	46.6	60	40.0	10	6.7	10	6.7
Increase in crime rate.	60	40.0	50	33.3	25	16.6	15	10.1
Low productivity, human resource development & economic growth.	70	35.0	90	45.0	30	15.0	10	5.0
Increased rate of poverty.	80	53.3	40	26.6	10	6.7	20	13.4
Socio-economic inequality which has undermined social unity & cohesion.	70	35.0	30	15.0	30	15.0	20	13.4

Increased age falsification among members of the public.	60	40.0	60	40.0	15	10.0	15	10.0
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4.1.2 Research Question 2: What are the benefits of the recent moves by the National Assembly to increase age limit for job seekers in the country?

Responses to the question two of the questionnaire which seeks the perceptions or opinions of the selected respondents in relations to the potential benefits of the recent moves by the **NASS** to increase age limit for job seekers in government ministries, departments and agencies shows that the moves would in no small measure increase the number of Nigerian youths in federal and state ministries, departments and agencies. It should be noted that the Lower Chamber of the National Assembly on May 15, 2019 approved a new law which seeks to increase age limits for government employment. We should also recall that the 9th Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on Wednesday July 15, 2020 complemented the Lower Chamber’s effort to eliminate age discrimination for job seekers in the country by urging the Federal Government through a unanimous *Resolution of the Senate* to direct the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment (**FMLE**) to set up a committee to review the age limit for job seekers in the country. These moves undoubtedly would be advantageous to job seekers in particular and Nigerians in general only if the moves will be highly respected by those concerned. The consequences of job age discrimination, undeniably, have over the years include deprivation of eligible and dynamic youths’ employment in federal and state governments’ ministries, departments and agencies; a situation that has equally promoted crime rate and insurgencies in the country.

Findings, thus, shows that a greater number of the respondents strongly agreed that the benefit of the move by the Senate to remove age limit for job seekers in the country is unquantifiable since it would increase the number of persons to be engaged in federal and state governments’ ministries, departments and agencies 70(46.6%) on the one hand, and reduces crime rate and other forms of anti-social vices in the Nigerian societies on the other hand 60(40.0%). Significantly, the respondents agreed that the extension of age limit for job seekers by the National Assembly in the country is likely to promote fairness, equality and job effectiveness in government ministries, departments and agencies 70(46.6%) since the most eligible and qualified candidates are likely to be selected for recruitment rather than the initial practices that barred them from the civil service. Furthermore, the respondents also agreed that the increase in age limit for job seekers in Nigeria would end discrimination against job seekers in governmental and private organisations 60(40.0%) as well as reduce the spiralling number of unemployed graduates and school leavers in the streets 70(46.6%) and protection of the fundamental human rights of job seekers 80(53.3%). No doubt the benefits of increasing the age limit for job seekers in the country are enormous and it is hoped that government at all levels including the private sector would adopt this policy to ensure equity and fairness in employment to all Nigerians.

Table 4.3: Benefits of the recent moves by the National Assembly to increase age limit for job seekers in the country

Variables	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Reduction of crime rate & other forms of anti-social vices.	50	33.3	60	40.0	30	15.0	10	5.0
Increased in number of persons engaged in federal & state	70	46.6	50	33.3	20	13.3	10	6.8

governments' ministries & departments.									
Promotion of fairness, equality & effectiveness in ministries, departments & agencies.	60	40.0	70	46.6	15	10.0	5	3.4	
End of discrimination against job seekers in governmental and private organisations.	60	40.0	50	33.3	15	10.0	25	16.7	
Reduction of the spiralling number of unemployed graduates & school leavers in the streets.	50	33.3	70	46.6	20	13.3	10	6.8	
Protection of the fundamental human rights of job seekers.	80	53.3	50	33.3	10	6.8	10	6.6	

5.1 Summary and Conclusion:

This study which has discussed the consequences and benefits of the recent moves by the National Assembly to increase the age limit for job seekers has tremendously and extensively pointed out the fact that the Federal government led by President Muhammadu Buhari has a lot to do if the move by the National Assembly is to succeed and achieve the targeted objectives which are, first, to increase the chances of Nigerians barred by age limit to seek for jobs, and secondly, to ensure that crimes and other forms of unaccepted acts common among jobless youths are reduced to a reasonable extent, among others. In essence, the faiths of job seekers who are in large numbers across the country depend on the action and inaction of the present administration. The choice lies in the hands of the administration and as a matter of urgency, the administration need to implement or rather ascent to all the bills relating to improving the standard of living of Nigerians and the workforce on the one hand, and those still unemployed, young men and women across the country who are becoming destitute because of lack of social amenities needed for their social and physical developments on the other hand.

The study revealed among others the need for the government at all levels to key into the provisions of the **ILO** particularly in the area that concerns the universal welfare of the labour force through efficient and effective policy frameworks and programmes. Since the **ILO** recognizes the consequences of *employment discrimination* which it describes as, “another form of violation of human rights, and that which its consequences entails a waste of human talent, as well as that which is detrimental to productivity of human resource and socio-economic growth cum that which promotes inequality that has equally undermine social cohesion and solidarity on the one hand; and on the other, failed to reduced poverty in Nigerian societies over the years, the federal and state governments of Nigeria should as a matter of fact take cognizance of the provisions and pertinence of the ILO labour laws and the relevance of all the sections of our domestic Labour Act of 2004”. Inarguably, respects for the rule of law and resolutions of the National Assembly relating to improved labour force would go a long way to promote social relations between the government and the governed in the country, as well as national cohesion, economic growth and human resource development, especially through job creation to all people of different ages willing to work. However, extension of age discrimination recommended by the National Assembly through the bill passed by the

House of Representative and complemented by the resolution of the Senate, inarguably, reflected the actual positions and feelings of Nigerians who are within and above job age limit forcefully imposed by the employers of labour in the both public and private sectors. In This has influenced the positions and responses of the respondents, particularly the NYSC members who are likely to be victims of age discrimination saga after their compulsory national youth service programme: a feeling that has been justified severally in the past and some of whom have relatives who are still unemployed and victims of employment age limits orchestrated by employers of labour in the country over the years despite the absence of direct age limits for job seekers in the Constitution of the Federal republic of Nigeria, CFRN 1999 (as amended) and other relevant laws of the federation.

6.1 Recommendation:

Following the above arguments and stand points in relations to age limits or discriminations against job seekers in Nigeria, the following recommendations are made:

1. The study recommends among others the need for the Federal government to urgently respect the resolution of the National Assembly and dutifully setup a committee to review age discrimination in work places in the country. This has become necessary considering the high rate of unemployment which has undoubtedly breeds all forms of issues of national concern, including increased crime rate and insurgencies, and wide spread poverty in the country.
2. It would be necessary for the government of Nigeria to sanction any of its officials or officers in the private sector who denied any one seeking for job in their establishment or agency on grounds of age since this act amounts to age discrimination for the job seeker. This would no doubt check the common practice of age discrimination against job seekers across all the sectors of the nation's economy. In other words, the government should impose a fine on any one or enact a legislation covering prison term for government officials involved in the practice of age discrimination in its ministries, departments and agencies.
3. The government should also create enough jobs to take care of the large number of job seekers across the country because calling on employers of labour to adhere to the resolution of the Senate or ascent to the bill passed by the House of Representative in order to increase age limits for job seekers in the civil service is not enough to eliminate age discrimination in the country. This no doubt would help the government to engage potential job seekers or applicants in the civil service for self sustenance rather than them taken to crimes as last resort.
4. The government should also establish a functional data base to record the birth of every Nigerian irrespective of places of birth (rural or urban areas) and that of foreigners who are given birth to in the country. If this is efficiently and effectively implemented, there wouldn't be any need for one to falsify his or her age in order to secure a job in any government ministries and agencies.

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