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RESEARCH ARTICLES



Youth quotas and “Jurassic Park” politicians: age as a heuristic for vote choice in Tunisia’s new democracy

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ABSTRACT

Countries that undergo a democratic transition often adopt youth quotas to ensure stability and legitimacy in the eyes of a potentially rebellious youth cohort. Tunisia followed this trend by instating a youth quota after undergoing a youth-led democratic revolution in 2011. This subsequently led to youth representing 52% of the candidates (aged 18–35) in the 2018 municipal elections. However, it has yet to be tested whether a candidate’s age matters when evaluating politicians and casting a ballot in elections among Tunisian voters. This article explores the link between age and candidate evaluations which has been largely understudied in the political behaviour literature. Using an original survey experiment fielded in Tunisia, I run a series of regressions that model the relationship between several age treatments and candidate evaluations. Overall, I find that most Tunisians do not use age as a heuristic cue when evaluating political candidates running for office with the exception of the oldest voters who tend to prefer a candidate that is in their 50s. These results showcase the potential limitations of youth quotas serving as a mechanism ascertaining governmental legitimacy in the eyes of young people.

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KEYWORDS youth; candidate evaluation; representation; Tunisia; survey experiment

Introduction

Transitions from authoritarian rule and democratization often embody a change in the economy through liberalization, democratic promotion and improvement of human rights, and a strengthening of civil society.¹ Another important element is improving upon meaningful participation and elections.² One of the most common reforms taking place in democratizing states is the implementation of legislative or electoral quotas – notably gender quotas. The increased adoption of gender quotas took off with global liberalization efforts during the third wave of democratization, and today, many hybrid political regimes instate quotas to stave off pressures to democratize.³ In some cases, the introduction of gender quotas has led to an increase in the participation of women in formal politics enhancing inclusivity.⁴ However, scholars contend that pre-existing power structures disable women from effectively participating.⁵ Critics argue that quotas are merely a symbol of increased democratization and do not lead to substantive political outcomes in some countries.

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More recently, youth quotas have become a popular policy world-wide and are framed as steps towards democratization in countries that experience political transitions within semi-democratic and authoritarian regimes.⁶ The quotas are implemented to instil stability and legitimacy in the eyes of a potentially rebellious youthful cohort by bringing youth into the political fold. For example, the countries of Uganda, Rwanda, Kyrgyzstan, and Kenya all adopted youth quotas after political conflict and the subsequent re-writing of their constitutions.⁷ Egypt, Gabon, Morocco, and Tunisia all adopted youth quotas as a result of the youth-led Arab spring uprisings in 2011.

Although scholars find that there are both strengths and weaknesses in adopting quotas in democratizing countries, it has yet to be known whether quotas have an impact on the general electorate. Previous studies on quotas in democratizing countries have mainly focused on the impact of quotas in enhancing representation in legislative institutions and subsequent policy outcomes, but whether these candidates are more positively evaluated by their respective demographic voting bloc has yet to be discerned. For example, does the general electorate view “inclusive” candidates as better equipped to represent the interests of voters with the same characteristics (that is gender, age, etc.)? This study fills this gap by investigating whether the age of a political candidate matters when evaluating a potential representative using an original survey experiment fielded from 21 May to 9 June, 2018 which was 15 days after the 6 May, 2018 municipal elections. These local elections were important for youth representation given that 52% of the candidates running in the elections were youth (aged 18–35). Conducting this experiment – a mere couple weeks after the municipal elections – provides an opportunity to assess the impact of age in a context where Tunisians just witnessed a dramatic rise in the number of youth candidates running on party lists due to revisions to Tunisia’s youth quota electoral code.

This article proceeds as follows. First, I provide background knowledge on Tunisia’s democratic transition and controversies surrounding the youth quotas. Second, I provide an overview of the heuristic voting literature regarding age and posit my hypotheses. Third, I offer experimental evidence arguing that contrary to what is commonly found in the descriptive representation and heuristic voting literature, age as a voting heuristic has failed to take root among youth and among most Tunisians in this new democracy. This section is followed by a discussion of the findings and directions for future research.

Tunisia’s democratic transition and the implementation of youth quotas

Youth were seen at the forefront of the protests that ultimately ousted the country’s dictator, Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, who had ruled the country for 24 years.⁸ Initially, youth were very optimistic following the democratic revolution and were particularly excited about having the chance to vote in free and fair elections.⁹ The youth in Tunisia – deemed by Tunisian authorities as citizens between the years 18–35 – represent a large and potentially powerful voting bloc given the country’s median age is 29.¹⁰ However, this optimism faded after Tunisia held its first round of elections in October of 2011 for the National Constituent Assembly (NCA). Youth believed in the legitimacy of the 2011 elections, but one young Tunisian remarked that “the youth were disappointed from the very first day that the NCA took office”.¹¹ This negative evaluation of the NCA government was connected to the lack of youth

representation and the saturated presence of old guard elites.¹² Youth felt the politicians who took office did not “look like them” given most of the politicians in government were in their fifties or sixties with many politicians exceeding the age of eighty years old.¹³ Young people also felt the parties lacked a cohesive political agenda due to fractured self-interests, and they believed the politicians were more concerned about gaining materially and politically than serving the citizens of Tunisia.

The older age of political candidates continued to shape youth attitudes towards candidates in subsequent elections. Monica Marks, a Tunis based Oxford University researcher explained that youth were unlikely to vote in the October 2014 parliamentary elections because “It is Jurassic Park politicians. Many Tunisian politicians are old, and I don’t know if they have been able to connect with the young”.¹⁴ This perceived lack of connection between youth and older politicians continued in the years following the 2014 elections with Sara Yerkes noting “Through my interviews with young and old members of Tunisian government and civil society, it was clear that young people perceive the older generation as disrespectful and discriminatory towards them and that older Tunisians perceive youth as inexperienced”.¹⁵ Regardless that Tunisian voters cast a ballot for a party and not for individual candidates, these sentiments show that the age of political candidates matters and is often used as a heuristic cue for young voters who view older politicians as out of touch with the interests of youth.

However, old age is not always used as a heuristic associated with negative attitudes towards politicians. Tunisia’s late president Beji Caiid Essebsi – who served from December 2014 to July 2019 – became one of the world’s oldest political leaders and Essebsi actually used his old age to gain support for his candidacy during the 2014 electoral campaign. Essebsi was 88 years old when running for president when he recanted to Tunisian voters that “I’m too old to become a dictator now! No one becomes a monster at my age”.¹⁶ This positive framing regarding senior leadership resonated with voters who associated Essebsi’s old age with experience and wisdom which gained him popular support. Ultimately, Caiid Essebsi won the presidential election over his incumbent opponent Moncef Marzouki who was 68 years old.

Tunisia continued on its path of democratization by officially decentralizing government authority by holding the country’s first municipal elections. These elections were considered to be the first genuinely competitive and fair nationwide municipal elections in Tunisia’s history and presented opportunities for grassroots political mobilization.¹⁷ There were 53,668 candidates competing for 7212 seats across 350 municipal elections. Remarkably, 27,907 of these candidates were youth.

However, the role of youth in Tunisia’s post-revolution environment has been controversial. The inclusion of youth in politics is not a central theme of Tunisia’s constitution and is only mentioned in Article 133 that states “The elections law shall guarantee the representation of youth in local authority councils”,¹⁸ but there is no clear protocol for fulfilling this guarantee. This juxtaposes the push from many women’s groups who successfully sought a gender parity law to be established in the constitution.

It was not until discussions surrounding revisions to Tunisia’s electoral code prior to the 2014 elections that the inclusion of youth in formal political processes was concretely debated. However, the weakness of the youth inclusion clause in the constitution created a chasm between those who interpreted youth inclusion as central to Tunisia’s democratic progress and those who viewed youth inclusion as a minor focus given that young people often lack the necessary experience to effectively engage in politics. Most

of the deputies who were pushing for the quotas were middle-aged and a large portion came from the moderate Islamic party *Ennahda*.

An official youth quota was adopted in April 2014 after debates began in January of that year. These quotas were implemented with the 2014 parliamentary elections as a part of the country's democratization process after the Arab spring. Every party list was required to have a youth candidate (aged 18–35) among their top four on their list, however this rule was rarely taken seriously among the political parties. Parties were only supposed to receive campaign financing from the federal government if they abided by the youth inclusion law, but many observers contended that this form of retribution was not followed.

The 2014 youth quota was changed in 2017 by requiring every party list to include a youth candidate in their top three positions and within every six consecutive members. The inclusion of a youth candidate every six members was a major change from the 2014 electoral law. In 2018, the government was also much stricter regarding campaign financing, and many political parties felt the pressure to include youth in the top three positions in order to receive state funds. As a result, about 52% of the candidates running in the elections were between the ages of 18–35.¹⁹ Overall, youth won about 37.16% of the seats at the municipal level.²⁰ This contrasts with youth representation at the parliamentary level when only 23% of the seats were allocated to youth in 2014. Tunisia's youth represent about 32% of the total population.

Overall, the youth quotas in Tunisia sought to legitimize and stabilize the transitioning country.²¹ Political parties hoped to garner support among youth through these quotas and the government sought to lessen young people's propensity to revolt.²² However, for these quotas to work in practice, young people must view these younger candidates as being effective politicians who can represent their interests. However, it is possible that youth quotas could have the adverse effect. A common fear related to quotas is that candidates nominated using the quota system are viewed as less competent than those not nominated by the quota. It is possible that youth, especially non-voting youth, might evaluate young candidates less favourable than older candidates.

Given that turnout among youth in Tunisia remained low in the 2018 elections, it is more likely that the youth quotas either had no effect or an adverse effect on youth perceptions of the political candidates. The remainder of this article assesses this quandary in the context of Tunisia and fills a much-needed methodological gap in the study of the relationship between age and candidate evaluations. Investigating this question in the context of Tunisia also shapes our understanding of the efficacy of youth quotas serving as a legitimizing and stabilizing tool for democratizing regimes.

Voting heuristics and age

Voters often use short cuts or voting heuristics when evaluating candidates during elections, especially in low information environments.²³ These cues may take many different forms including partisan identity,²⁴ candidate ideology,²⁵ group endorsements,²⁶ and candidate viability.²⁷ Voters may also use a candidate's physical appearance to rationally evaluate a candidate because these traits are often used in evaluating others in everyday interactions²⁸ when information is lacking.²⁹ In fact, a candidate's physical traits are often used as a heuristic for evaluating and choosing candidates independently of a candidate's position on policies.³⁰

The literature on descriptive representation argues that a candidate's traits often lead voters to prefer one candidate over another.³¹ These traits serve as a baseline in which voters evaluate political candidates, and "the more an agent resembles oneself the more he or she might be expected reflexively to understand and act on one's own interests".³² Descriptive representation can lead to substantive representation where an elected official is more likely to adhere to the interests of a specific group while in office. Thus, a candidate's demographic characteristics can make voters feel empowered and less alienated from the political system because that candidate is more likely to represent their interests.³³ This is the case with race, notably in the United States,³⁴ and with ethnicity in Europe,³⁵ and India.³⁶

The causal link between a voter's demographics and a candidate's demographics has also been studied in respect to gender.³⁷ However, the evidence showcasing whether female voters actually prefer female candidates is mixed. For example, women's preference for a female candidate might be dependent upon historical context,³⁸ education level of women voters,³⁹ and saliency of gender during an election.⁴⁰ Others have found there to be no causal link between gender and vote choice.⁴¹ Despite these inconsistent findings, Campbell and Heath find that women were more likely to prefer women during the British 2010 general elections because there was an increase in women candidates running in these elections.⁴² This pattern of behaviour among women in the British 2010 general elections signals that an increase in the number of candidates with a specific trait is likely to lead to more positive evaluations of candidates among voters with similar traits.

Although there are numerous studies focusing on the relationship between race, gender, ethnicity and candidate evaluation, the impact of age has received more limited attention. The focus on youth and perceptions of candidates has mainly focused on how media exposure and advertising impacts youth evaluations of candidates. For example, Baumgartner and Morris find that American youth exposed to jokes about George W. Bush and John Jerry on *The Daily Show* were more likely to negatively evaluate these candidates even after controlling for partisanship and demographics.⁴³ Winfrey, Warner, and Banwart find in their study that strong gender identification among young women was associated with a more positive evaluation of Obama during the 2012 elections due to political advertising.⁴⁴

The impact of social media on youth perceptions of candidates has also received attention. Douglas, Raine, Maruyama, Semaan, and Scott assessed how young voters form impressions of political candidates running for office through the use of social networking sites.⁴⁵ They found that millennials were more likely to emphasize the community involvement of their candidate when evaluating candidates through social media. Overall, these studies focus on youth evaluations of political candidates, but they narrowly focus on the impacts of the media and fail to test whether the age of the candidate is playing a role in shaping these evaluations.

Webster and Pierce provide a step towards filling this gap by investigating whether age is likely used as a voting heuristic during low information elections and whether the relative age gap between co-partisan voters in the United States impacts their favourability of that candidate.⁴⁶ They find that age is used as a voting heuristic in low information election environments among the most educated electorate, however age was not used as a voting heuristic for vote choice in national presidential elections where voters likely had more information about the candidates.

Overall, the Webster and Pierce study shows that context matters in shaping whether age is used as a heuristic for vote choice. I expect that age is likely to have an impact on candidate evaluations and vote choice in Tunisia especially given the hype surrounding the dramatic increase in youth candidates running in the 2018 municipal elections. The “Jurassic” or “dinosaur” age of the political candidates in Tunisia has been cited as a source of mistrust between youth and politicians. Thus, Tunisian youth should not only be more likely to favour younger candidates, but they should be more likely to disfavour older ones. However, it is also possible that voters will prefer older candidates who possess more experience and expertise over youth and will be more critical of the abilities of youth candidates to serve as effective politicians. From this theory, I test the following the hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: Younger Tunisians are more likely to positively evaluate younger candidates.

Hypothesis 2: Younger Tunisians are more likely to negatively evaluate older candidates.

Hypothesis 3: Tunisians are more likely to positively evaluate older candidates.

Methods and procedures

Data and sample

I test these hypotheses using data from my original 2018 Tunisia Survey.⁴⁷ I run a survey experiment investigating whether a candidate’s age impacts young people’s perceptions of a hypothetical politician running for office. The expectation is that when youth are given simultaneous information about a candidate, age should factor in as a salient variable when evaluating a politician. I also expect that older candidates might be more favoured by the general population. The sampling methodology consisted of targeting people aged 18+ years throughout the entire country. Tunisia is sub-divided into 24 governorates, which are further broken down into 264 districts (delegations) and 1136 rural sectors and 951 urban sectors. The sample drawn from the 24 governorates is proportional to population size derived from the 2014 Institute of National Statistics population data (latest census). Random selection of delegations is also apportioned based on population size. This same format for random selection is done at the sector level, and households in each chosen sector are selected by first using the day code to establish a starting point and then skipping every fifth house in urban areas and every third house in rural locations. Respondents in households are selected using the Kish Method, and the sample size was 1000 respondents.

Dependent variables

There are five major outcome variables of interest used in this study: overall positive evaluation of candidate, degree that respondent takes candidate seriously, belief that candidate represents interests, belief that candidate is a good politician, and vote choice. These five outcome variables are measured via responses to the question of whether the respondent strongly agrees, agrees, neither agrees or disagrees, or strongly disagrees to the statements (1) “My overall evaluation of this candidate is positive” (2) “I would take this person seriously as a political candidate” (3) “I think this candidate would represent my interests” (4) “I believe this candidate would be a good politician” (5) “I would potentially vote for this candidate”. The responses to these questions are

coded 0–4 with 0 denoting strongly disagree and 4 denoting strongly agree. The responses to each question are also collapsed together to form an additive index that measures the overall political evaluation of each hypothetical candidate [0 = “completely negative evaluation”, 20 = “completely positive evaluation”]. Models are run using regression for each itemed response as well as the overall political evaluation.

Treatment variables

There are three treatment variables used in this experiment: candidate age, candidate’s stance on impunity legislation, and candidate mosque attendance. There are four different versions of the candidate age treatment, two versions of the stance on impunity treatment, and 3 versions of the mosque attendance treatment. The variation of these treatments resulted in a $4 \times 2 \times 3$ factorial design which resulted in 24 different versions of the experiment overall. Respondents were read a vignette about a hypothetical political candidate (see Table 1). The vignette started with the phrase: “Now imagine that you met a person who is a political candidate running for office. This political candidate has the following attributes: they [*treatment*]” (see Table 1). The candidate was either 19 years old, 34 years old, 54 years old, or 72 years old. Each age treatment variable is dichotomous.

The candidate was also either supportive of increasing impunity for security forces or was against it. Increasing impunity is coded 1 for supports this legislation and 0 if they do not support this legislation. The candidate was also described as either attending prayers at mosque more than once a week, once a month, or rarely. More than once a week is coded 2, once a month is coded 1, and rarely is coded 0. I include the candidate’s stance on impunity legislation and their mosque attendance to provide the respondent with multiple pieces of information simultaneously to assess whether the age of political candidates matters given other information when evaluating a candidate. The impunity legislation was a “hot topic” debate immediately leading up to the 2018 municipal elections and there were many protests. Mosque attendance in Tunisia could signal the level of religiosity or conservatism of the candidate which might impact evaluations. Another possible effect of the mosque attendance treatment is that it may be used as a proxy for partisan ID (albeit weak proxy) given that one of the two major political parties in Tunisia is a moderate Islamic party.

Results

To assess the effects of the age treatments on candidate evaluations, I run a series of OLS regressions estimating models among four different age cohorts. The youngest cohort is aged 18–27, the second youngest cohort is 28–34, the second oldest group is 34–54 and

Table 1. Age and candidate evaluation experimental design.

Stem: Now imagine that you met a person who is a political candidate running for office. This political candidate has the following attributes:

Vignette: [They are supportive of increasing impunity for security forces/They are against any legislation that would increase impunity for security forces], [They are 19 years old/They are 34 years old/They are 54 years old/They are 72 years old], [They attend prayers at mosque more than once a week/They attend prayers at mosque once a month/They rarely attend prayers at mosque].

Note: The statements in brackets represent the treatments that are randomly assigned to each respondent.

the oldest group is 55 + . **Figure 1** displays the estimated treatment effect of candidate age on the overall political evaluation with 95% confidence intervals among these four age categories and among all respondents (pooled). The treatment “candidate is 19 years old” is the omitted reference category. The full regression results are located in the appendix.

Surprisingly, the results in **Figure 1** offer no support for the expectation that a candidate’s age has an impact among young voters. The coefficients on the age treatment where the candidate is 34 is positive among the youngest cohort, second youngest cohort, and second oldest cohort, but fails to reach conventional thresholds of statistical significance. The age treatment where the candidate is 34 is negative among the oldest group, but again remains insignificant. The age treatment where the candidate is 72 years old is negative among the pooled respondents, the second youngest group, and the second oldest group, denoting that the 72-year-old candidate is evaluated more negatively than the 19-year-old candidate, but these coefficients do not reach statistical significance. Even more perplexing is that the coefficient on the 72-year-old age treatment is positive among the youngest cohort, signalling that this candidate was preferred over the 19-year-old candidate, but again does not reach statistical significance. Overall, the age treatments appeared to have no patterned effect among all respondents in this study with the exception of the oldest respondents who evaluated the 54-year-old candidate 1.87 units more favourably than the 19-year-old candidate ($p < 0.05$). Thus far, I find scant evidence to support any of the posited hypotheses.

Policy stance treatments and the mosque attendance treatments had a much stronger effect with the pooled respondents being 1.32 units more likely to prefer the candidate who support impunity legislation ($p < 0.01$), and .554 units more likely to prefer the candidate who attends mosque more frequently ($p < 0.01$). A similar trend was found among respondents in the second youngest group and in the oldest group, although respondents in the oldest group did not seem to care much about mosque attendance when evaluating their candidate. I also ran an interaction between the mosque attendance treatment and each age treatment and found that the 54-year-old candidate was

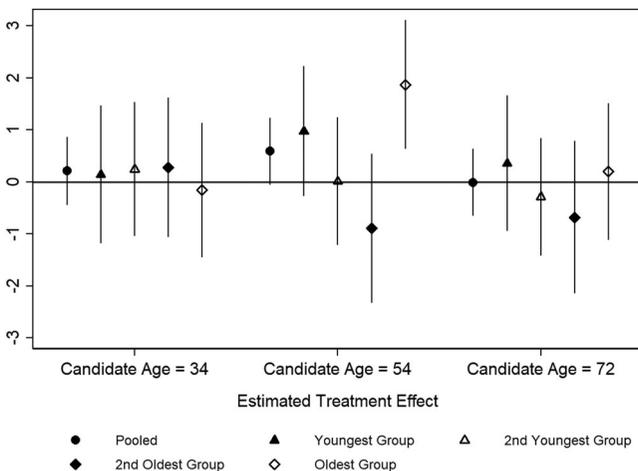


Figure 1. Estimated treatment effect across age cohorts. Source: 2018 Tunisia Survey. Pooled ($N = 1,000$); Youngest Group ($N = 258$); Second Youngest Group ($N = 268$); Second Oldest Group ($N = 225$); Oldest Group ($N = 249$).

more likely to be evaluated positively if he attended mosque more frequently among oldest respondents. This is likely related to the fact that the oldest respondents in the sample were also the most religious.

I ran separate regressions with “This candidate represents my interests”, “I would vote for this candidate”, “I would take this candidate seriously”, and “This candidate is a good politician” as separate outcome variables. The results are displayed in Figure 2. The regression coefficients are located in the appendix. Surprisingly, I again find that youth did not believe the younger candidate was more likely to represent their interests. The youngest cohort was also not more likely to vote for the younger candidate, take the candidate seriously, or believe that the candidate is a good politician. In fact, none of the age treatments had an impact on any of these evaluations, again showing no support for my first two hypotheses.

The same pattern holds true for older generations, with the exception of the oldest respondents who were more likely to evaluate the 54-year-old candidate more positively than the 19-year-old candidate. The 54-year-old candidate was viewed 0.439 ($p < .01$) units more likely to represent the interests of the oldest respondents. Oldest respondents were 0.34 ($p < 0.05$) units more likely to take the 54-year-old candidate more seriously and were 0.324 ($p < 0.05$) units more likely to believe that this candidate was a good politician. Oldest respondents were also 0.441 units more likely to vote for this candidate over the 19-year-old candidate ($p < 0.05$). Overall, there is weak support for hypothesis three that Tunisians will prefer older candidates.

It is possible that the age treatments might be moderated by whether youth felt that their cohort represented a powerful voting bloc. The youth candidate might be more favoured in districts where there is more pressure for this candidate to respond to youth interests.⁴⁸ To measure the degree to which youth represent a powerful voting bloc, I use election data from Tunisia’s Independent High Authority for Elections that gives the number of registered youth voters and the number of total registered voters in each electoral district. I then coded each respondent in my 2018 Tunisia

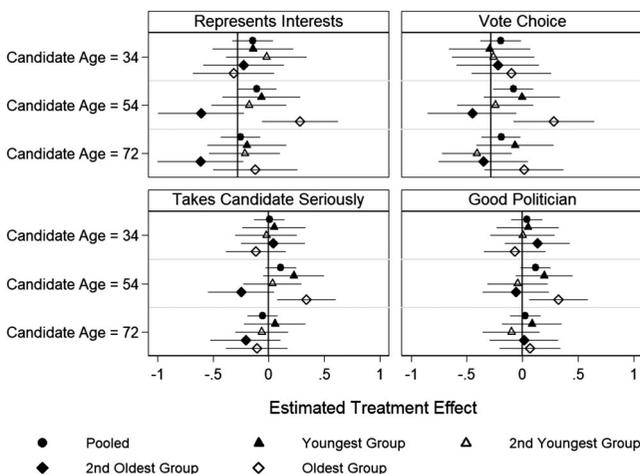


Figure 2. Estimated treatment effects of age treatments across evaluation categories. Source: 2018 Tunisia Survey. Pooled ($N = 1,000$); Youngest Group ($N = 258$); Second Youngest Group ($N = 268$); Second Oldest Group ($N = 225$); Oldest Group ($N = 249$).

survey with a value matching the percentage of young people registered in their actual electoral district to create the *district level youth registration* variable.

Figure 3 displays a histogram of the distribution of respondents across district level youth registration. Youth registration in the 2018 municipal elections was on average around 32.5% with a standard deviation of 3.94. The district with the highest level of youth registration was at 43% and the lowest level of youth registration was at 21%. This histogram shows there was variation in levels of youth registration across the districts, and voters in a district with a higher percentage of registered young voters might view younger candidates differently than older candidates.

To investigate variation across youth registration at the district level, I interacted each candidate age treatment with *district level youth registration*. Figure 4 shows the estimated treatment effects of each candidate age treatment x *district level youth registration* on candidate evaluations across age cohorts and among young women and young men with 95% confidence intervals. Again, I find that the candidate age treatments did not significantly impact candidate evaluations across any of the cohorts. The results remain similar to what is found in Figure 1. Only the oldest respondents are impacted by the age treatments with the 54-year-old candidate being evaluated .057 units more positively than the 19-year-old candidate (p -value < 0.05). The regression coefficients are located in the appendix.

Discussion

The “youth dimension” in Tunisia continues to be a part of political discourse given the heightened saliency of age after the death of Tunisia’s President Beji Caiid Essebsi on 25 July, 2019. Essebsi was the oldest sitting president in the world at the age of 92. After Essebsi’s death, Tunisia’s Speaker of the Parliament, Mohamed Ennaceur, who presided as interim president, stated that someone younger should take charge and that *Niddaa Tounes* should “open the door to the youth”.⁴⁹ However, this analysis shows no support that age matters when evaluating candidates in the context of Tunisia.

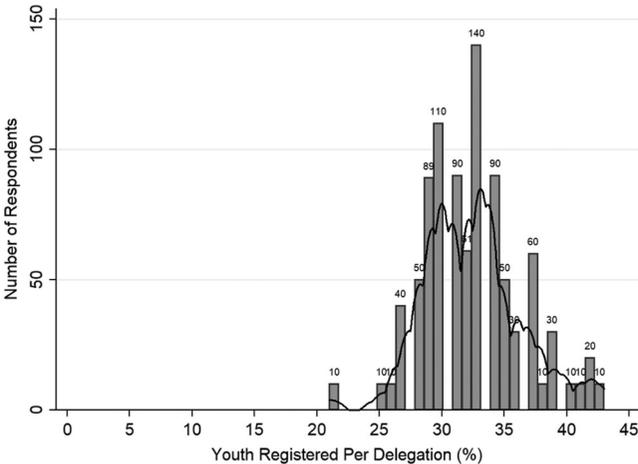


Figure 3. Histogram displaying percent of youth registration by district across respondents.

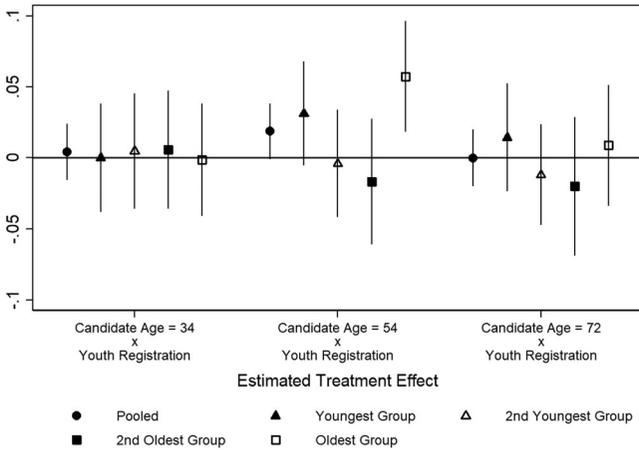


Figure 4. Estimated treatment effect of age treatments x youth registration. Source: 2018 Tunisia Survey. Pooled ($N = 930$); Youngest Group ($N = 241$); Second Youngest Group ($N = 225$); Second Oldest Group ($N = 209$); Oldest Group ($N = 225$).

One explanation for these null results is that the overall effect cannot be discerned because it is possible that younger voters like youth candidates in some ways, but dislike them in others. The outcomes in this particular survey experiment are rather general and could be built upon by adding in more specific measures that disentangle how voters feel about the candidate's ability to connect with youth versus their experience and ability to govern. Another possibility is that younger voters like younger candidates, but assume (rightly or wrongly) that the electorate does not favour the younger candidate which dissuades youth from supporting them. Thus, analysing the expectations of how others might view the candidate is another direction that would build upon this study.

Another explanation is that many youth organizations and NGOs in Tunisia were not heavily pushing for the adoption of the youth quotas.⁵⁰ The adoption of the youth quotas was mostly driven by middle-age politicians. Young people's lack of drive towards pushing these quotas signals an apparent disinterest in formal politics. Thus, young people might associate these quotas more with cosmetic legitimacy than as a means for actual participation. Unless, youth inclusion is expanded beyond the party ticket, young people unlikely "buy-in" to the notion that their interests will be met by politicians – young and old.

Overall, these results hold important implications for the study of representation and political behaviour in democratizing countries. Youth quotas instated in a country undergoing a democratic transition are unlikely to shift young people's negative orientations towards formal politics. This finding could partly be explained by a "new awakening of political consciousness" among young activists who believe that representation is not enough. This "new awakening" is in reference to Ishkanian and Galsius' study of the meaning of democracy among youth activists. They found that young people believe that representative democracy is insufficient and that being "active on the street" should be viewed as serious form of legitimate political engagement, and not just a threat to democracy and democratization.⁵¹

This notion is important for scholars and practitioners situated in democratizing countries because increased protests may no longer be a sign of instability, but are a sign of political awakening among an electorate that is seeking to effectively engage *with* the system and not against it. In other words, quotas are not the key to keeping youth satisfied and engaged as the transition unfolds, but practitioners and representatives need to create a culture of democracy where collective action is viewed as a legitimate tool for influencing politics.

Future directions for research

There are still several unexplored questions when investigating the impact of youth quotas on voters' perceptions of candidates. For example, in the case of Tunisia, many of the youth candidates in the 2018 elections were female given that many political parties "double dipped" in order to fulfill both the youth and gender quotas. It is possible that young women in the context of Tunisia might differ in their perceptions of young candidates given that these candidates are typically female. The context of the elections might also matter when it comes to evaluating candidates. However, the positive and significant relationship between age and turnout and age and voter registration persisted in both the national and local elections in Tunisia, signalling that there are no apparent differences in age-specific voting behaviour between municipal and national elections.

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27. Mutz, "Mechanisms of Momentum."
28. Lau and Redlawsk, "Advantages and Disadvantages of Cognitive Heuristics."
29. McDermott, "Race and Gender Cues."
30. Banducci et al., "Ballot Photographs and Cues in Low Information Elections"; Olivola and Todorov, "Elected in 100 Milliseconds"; Shepard and Johns, "Candidate Image and Electoral Preference in Britain"; Todorov et al., "Inferences of Competence."
31. Campbell and Cowley, "What Voters Want"; Cutler, "The Simplest Shortcut of All"; Leeper, "The Impact of Prejudice on Female Candidates"; McDermott, "Race and Gender Cues"; Sanbonmatsu, "Gender Stereotypes and Vote Choice"; Sigelman et al., "Black Candidates, White Voters."
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33. Pantoja and Segura, "Does Ethnicity Matter?"
34. Sigelman et al. "Black Candidates, White Voters"; Tate, *From Protest to Politics*; Terkildsen, "When White Voters Evaluate Black Candidates."
35. Bergh and Bjorklund, "The Revival of Group Voting"; Teney et al., "Ethnic Voting in Brussels."
36. Heath, Verniers, and Kumar, "Do Muslim Voters Prefer Muslim Candidates?"
37. Beaman et al., "Powerful Women"; Herrick and Sapieva, "Perception of Women Politician"; Huddy and Terkildsen, "Gender Stereotypes"; Matland and King, "Women as Candidates"; Matland, "Putting Scandinavian Equality to the Test"; Matland and Tezcur, "Women as Candidates."
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50. Belschner, "The Adoption of Youth Quotas."
51. Ishkanian and Glasius, "What Does Democracy Mean?"

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