

## Social Media and Political Participation in the 2023 General Election in Lagos State

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### **Abstract:**

*This study focuses on the use of social media and political participation in the 2023 general election in Lagos State. The study emanates from the idea that social media offers new platforms for communication, participation, and political engagement. This study examines the role of social media in shaping political participation during the 2023 general election in Lagos State, Nigeria. Through the quantitative analysis method, this research seeks to explore the extent to which social media influenced voter engagement, political discourse, and electoral outcomes in Lagos State. It objectives sought to: assess the factors informing social media use; and determine the effects of political use of social media. The study adopts Uses and Gratification as theoretical framework. Survey method was employed as a method of data collection through questionnaire. A sample of 364 residents of Iju Ishaga was used for the analysis. Based on the findings, residents of Iju Ishaga used social media because of easy access, availability and interactivity. The findings of the study revealed that social media plays a significant role in participatory politics among the residents of Iju Ishaga. The study discovered that residents of Iju Ishaga are quite active on social media particularly on WhatsApp. The platform is essential in both offline and online political activities, thus, enhancing political knowledge and increasing political participation and inclusion in Nigeria. The study also discovered that the residents with regular use express their political and policy preferences by engaging themselves and political actors directly through social media platforms. They are able to post their opinions and contribute to political discourses.*

### **Keywords:**

*General election; Political discourse; Political participation; Social media and Uses and Gratification*

## I. Introduction

Social media are well-liked hubs for social interaction that produce material created by users. As such, they have a significant and lasting impact on their users. Using a variety of social networking sites and platforms, social media are news forms that allow their consumers to engage in online social interaction (Ahmed & Aondover, 2022). Via online networks, social media makes it easier to share knowledge and concepts. Social media is a wide range of applications and platforms that let people share material, communicate online, and create communities. Examples of these include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. The 2015, 2019, and 2023 elections in Nigeria saw a significant change in the political involvement and participations. Users' political attitudes and involvement have changed as a result of the use of social media platforms by individuals, political parties, and organizations. These platforms include Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and WhatsApp, which have made it easier for people to share political information.

Aondover et al., (2022) observed that social media has become a powerful social and political force in society. This has been made possible by contemporary developments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), which have further propelled a paradigm shift in the manner of information dissemination and social interaction across all institutions of society. In today's interconnected world, social media has become an integral part of our daily lives, transforming the way we communicate, conduct business, discuss politics, and share our culture. Its impact is undeniable and has the potential to shape political participation in significant ways.

The rapid development of social media has brought about major changes in how people find and connect with individuals who share similar interests. During the last general elections, numerous celebrities, including Peter Obi and Bola Tinubu, leveraged their social media presence to engage with voters and influence their choices and directions. This demonstrates the power social media platforms hold in shaping political discourse and decision-making (Aondover et al., 2023)

Moreover, the nature of information dissemination has been profoundly impacted by social media. Social media also play a key role in businesses' marketing strategies given the sheer amount of time individuals spend each day on social platforms and apps. It can also collect information helps businesses to fine-tune their marketing campaigns and conduct market research. It helps companies promote products and services as it enables the distribution of targeted, timely, and exclusive sales and coupons to potential customers. Further, social media can help build customer relationships (Hile et al., 2023)

However, it is crucial to recognize that social media's impact on political participation is not limited to positive outcomes. There are challenges and concerns associated with the interaction between social media and general elections. One significant concern is the spread of misinformation and fake news, social media is now an essential component of communication and public discourse in society because to its widespread use (Aondover & Pate, 2021).

Additionally, privacy and data security have emerged as prominent concerns. Social media platforms collect vast amounts of personal data, raising questions about how this data is used and protected. The misuse or mishandling of personal information can undermine trust in social media platforms and discourage users from actively participating in political conversations (Aondover et al., 2022). Considering these complex dynamics, it is essential to investigate the relationship between social media usage and political participation in the context of the 2023 General Election in Lagos State. By understanding the impact of social media on political engagement, we can identify the challenges and opportunities it presents and develop strategies to maximize its positive effects while mitigating its negative aspects. This study aims to shed light on the role of social media in shaping the political landscape of Lagos State during the 2023 general election.

At its core, politics embodies the dynamic and intricate tapestry of actions, initiatives, and strategic maneuvers undertaken to govern and shape the destiny of a nation, state, or any political entity. It epitomizes the art of decision-making and power distribution, intricately woven with the noble purpose of enhancing the well-being of an entire community. Apart from this elections still determines the composition of the government, it provides ways and platforms for the citizens to prefer the party which they want to see at the position of power (Kurfi et al., 2021).

Within this profound sphere, individuals synergistically unite, driven by an unwavering commitment to forge a society that thrives on equity and prosperity for all. As eloquently articulated by the revered leader Barack Obama, politics becomes a rallying ground where people coalesce to champion the collective interest and pursue a common vision of a better future. Importantly, from the primary purpose of engineering and enhancing social interaction, there has been a dramatic shift in the usage of social media for social movement mobilization and, more recently, for both political communication and political participation globally.

Undeniably, luminaries like Martin Luther King Jr. have indelibly etched their mark on the annals of politics, harnessing its immense potential to advocate for social justice and transcend the divisive boundaries of race, kindling an unwavering flame of hope that sparks transformative and lasting change. In essence, politics stands not only as a mechanism of governance but as an unwavering beacon of hope, a conduit for progress, and a resounding call to forge an inclusive, compassionate, and harmonious society for generations to come.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

The emergence of social media platforms has changed the way political information is shared, consumed and discussed, by realizing what may have been perceived at the relevance of social media, it is also necessary to understand the opportunities for political engagement and also the opportunities for political engagement and also the extent in which Nigeria electorates were involved in creating and sharing political information using social media platforms. Also there is need to know whether social media was used to reduce or increase political problems in the general elections (Maikaba & Msughter, 2019). To address these concerns and examine the impacts of social media usage in the 2023 general elections in Lagos state, by analyzing social media usage patterns, understanding how political information is disseminated and exploring its effects on political consciousness and involvement, we can gain insights into the potential consequences and benefits of social media engagement in the political process.

### **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the technologies used in political participation on social media in the 2023 general elections in Lagos State.
2. To ascertain if social media facilitate the dissemination of political information in Lagos State during the 2023 general elections.
3. To find out if social media usage influence the political awareness and engagement of voters in Lagos State during the 2023 general elections.
4. To discover the challenges in the use of social media for political participation in the 2023 general elections in Lagos State.

## **II. Review of Literature**

### **2.1 Social Media and Political Polarization**

While social media connects individuals, it has also been associated with the intensification of political polarization, users may be exposed to extremist viewpoints, which can reinforce ideological divisions and hinder constructive dialogue, and this polarization may influence how individuals engage with political content and interact with those holding different opinions (Yar'Adua et al., 2023). The 2023 general election in Nigeria saw a new dimension different from the usual, due to the active role of social media. This implies that a good number of Nigerians have now tapped into different social media platforms. The media platforms has been identified

as a key factor that has changed the way politics and elections used to be, bringing everyone together to participate and share their opinion freely (Mojaye & Aondover, 2022).

However, there are about 32.9 active social media users in Nigeria (Onyejelem & Aondover, 2024), a Lagos-based Digital Marketer said the just concluded election was a complete testament of what social media can do and how it can keep everyone involved. Social media has become a more comfortable platform for campaigns and the best medium to engage Nigerians especially the youths. People were more enlightened on the new electoral act even before the election. Even people that don't vote and haven't been voting got motivated through speculations from social media. It gave room for sensitization on PVC, it opened a public space for election monitoring and sharing of information while opening a wider view for users' opinion both those in Nigeria and diaspora.

Onyejelem and Aondover (2024) also state that social media also led to the emergence of more online political groups and pages which are regarded as Structure, making it possible for online meetings from any location thereby giving opportunities for people's opinion and involvement in politics. He said: "The just concluded election was an eye opener on Social Media power. A lot of information was possible to get and made public both positive and negative. Many attitudes were seen and reported by individuals. Election results were captured and reported boot by boot from individuals willingly through social media. We were able to follow the trends as it was all reported by individuals for public notice.

According to Mojaye and Aondover (2022) social media platforms offer a platform for people to voice their perspectives and interact with others, yet they also foster echo chambers and filter bubbles that expose users predominantly to content that aligns with and also social media limit the information that users encounter or consume online. This selective exposure reinforces ideological divides and obstructs constructive discourse among individuals holding contrasting viewpoints. The algorithms driving social media prioritize content that evokes intense emotional reactions or engagement, thereby propagating sensationalist or extremist opinions. Consequently, this amplification of the most extreme voices accentuates polarization, deepening divisions within a particular political spectrum (Yar'Adua et al., 2021).

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Moreover, the anonymity and virtual disconnect granted by social media can dehumanize those with differing opinions, leading to a propensity for hostile and uncivil exchanges. The consequence is a digital milieu characterized by animosity, impeding genuine comprehension and collaborative resolution. While social media's potential to unite individuals and facilitate political involvement is evident, it confronts the formidable challenge of nurturing polarization and impeding substantive dialogues between individuals harboring distinct political convictions and also offers a direct connection to people and thus allows for the spread of fragmented ideas..

## **2.2 Positive and Negative Impacts on Political Participation**

The phenomenon of political participation carries a complex array of impacts on societies, encompassing both advantageous outcomes and detrimental consequences that intricately shape the dynamics of democratic systems. On the positive side, active engagement in

political processes empowers individuals, igniting a sense of civic duty and responsibility as citizens recognize their pivotal role in influencing the direction of their nation. Findings by Ukwala, in Msughter (2019) show that protest experience and political efficacy significantly increased students' intention to join politics more than social media. Of the variables, political efficacy was the strongest predictor of intention to participate in politics (Usman et al., 2022).

Uwalaka (2021) observed that this engagement, often manifested through voting, campaigning, or community involvement, leads to a more informed and educated electorate capable of making well-reasoned decisions on critical matters. Furthermore, heightened political participation fosters the amplification of diverse perspectives, enriching the discourse around policies and issues with a tapestry of viewpoints that reflect the heterogeneous fabric of society. This inclusivity not only ensures that marginalized voices find representation but also cultivates an environment where robust debates can flourish, potentially yielding more comprehensive and sustainable solutions (Obasi & Msughter, 2023).

Nevertheless, the positive impacts of political participation are met with an equally intricate web of negative consequences that warrant careful consideration. The fervor of political engagement can inadvertently sow the seeds of polarization, where individuals gravitate towards extreme ideologies, leading to heightened divisions within societies (Axelod, 2021). The pursuit of unwavering positions often hampers the collaborative discourse necessary for compromise and constructive problem-solving. Additionally, the digital era has introduced a new dimension of concern, as the ease of disseminating information has led to the rampant spread of misinformation and manipulation. Online platforms can amplify false narratives, eroding the accuracy of political discourse and diluting the potential for well-informed decision-making (Msughter et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the landscape of political participation is not immune to systemic challenges that can skew its impacts. Instances of voter suppression, whether through restrictive laws or discriminatory practices, hinder equal access to the democratic process and undermine the principles of representation and fairness. These hurdles disproportionately affect marginalized communities, erasing their voices from the political landscape.

### **2.3 Impact of Social Media on Political Awareness**

Social media platforms have significantly impacted political awareness by providing a fast and accessible channel for citizens to engage with political issues, candidates, and election processes. Political awareness plays a pivotal role in the preparation and rehabilitation of understanding the plans, objectives, systems, public policies of the political party, and the participation in improving them". In today's digital age, social media platforms have become powerful tools that facilitate the dissemination of information, promote discussions, and foster engagement on a wide array of political matters. These platforms have revolutionized the way citizens interact with the political landscape, offering a dynamic and accessible channel through which people can explore and participate in various aspects of the political sphere (Msughter, 2023).

Through the real-time sharing of news articles, videos, and political content, social media instantaneous flow of information empowers citizens to remain up-to-date with the latest political serves as an effective vehicle for staying informed about current events and developments. Occurrences ensuring that they are well-informed participants in the democratic process. Moreover, social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have reshaped the relationship between citizens and political candidates. By providing a direct line of

communication, candidates can share their views, policies, and respond to inquiries from the public. This new found transparency enhances accessibility, allowing constituents to interact with candidates on a more personal level (Ahmed & Aondover, 2022).

Citizens themselves have become content creators on these platforms, generating and sharing political content that can quickly gain traction and raise awareness about specific issues or candidates. This range of content, from informative videos to satirical memes, has the power to spark meaningful discussions and heighten engagement among users. Online movements and advocacy efforts have flourished in the digital realm, facilitated by the viral nature of hashtags, campaigns, and petitions. Social media has proven to be a forceful tool for highlighting critical political issues and placing pressure on authorities to address these concerns promptly and effectively.

Discussion and debate thrive on social media platforms, offering spaces where users can share their opinions and engage with differing viewpoints. This diverse exchange of ideas cultivates a more informed citizenry, enabling people to explore a variety of perspectives and deepen their understanding of complex political matters. During elections, these platforms provide real-time coverage and updates, allowing citizens to closely follow results and analysis. This bridges the information gap that might have existed previously, encouraging active participation and heightened engagement with the electoral process. While social media can sometimes be a breeding ground for misinformation, it has also given rise to fact-checking initiatives that counter false information and promote accuracy in political discussions. This serves as a critical component of maintaining a well-informed electorate.

Engaging younger generations in politics has been made more accessible through the popularity of social media among this demographic. Its presence on these platforms encourages younger citizens to develop political awareness and engagement from an early age. Furthermore, candidates now utilize virtual town hall meetings and debates to reach a broader audience, transcending physical limitations and enabling more citizens to participate in political discussions. Beyond national borders, social media connects citizens to global political events and discussions, broadening their understanding of international affairs and fostering a more interconnected world view.

## **2.4 Political Campaign Strategies in the Digital Age**

Political campaign communication has become increasingly hybrid and the ability to create synergies between older and newer media is now a prerequisite for running a successful campaign. In the era defined by the rapid evolution of technology, political campaigns have embraced the digital age, reshaping their strategies to resonate with the rhythms of social media. Candidates and parties now weave intricate webs of outreach, leveraging the immediacy of platforms to disseminate information and spark discussions. With a simple tap, news articles, videos, and political content surge through the digital veins of society, ensuring citizens remain attuned to the ebb and flow of current events (Aondover et al., 2022).

The relationship between politicians and constituents has transformed as well. The likes of Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have birthed a virtual agora where politicians and the public engage in direct discourse. With a few clicks, candidates cast their views, policies, and even personal anecdotes onto the digital stage, fostering a sense of transparency that transcends the barriers of physicality. Yet, it's not only the politicians' voices that reverberate across these digital plains. Citizens wield their creativity to craft content that resonates with their political affiliations. From thought-provoking videos to satirical memes, the digital canvas becomes a mural of perspectives, sparking debates that span continents and cross generations. Online activism

thrives, hashtags becoming rallying cries that galvanize communities and draw global attention to pressing issues.

The art of discourse flourishes as social media platforms serve as arenas where voices from diverse corners meet. Users converge to discuss policies, share opinions, and engage in debates. This influx of viewpoints nurtures a more informed and critical citizenry, enriching democratic discourse. Campaigns no longer wait for results to trickle in; social media platforms provide live coverage of elections, allowing citizens to participate in real-time analyses. The once formidable information gap has all but vanished, replaced by a vibrant exchange of ideas that enriches political engagement.

Yet, as with any digital advancement, pitfalls await. The same platforms that facilitate dialogue also serve as conduits for misinformation. But these spaces also give rise to initiatives that counter falsehoods with fact-checking. The delicate balance between the power of information dissemination and the challenge of accuracy continues to shape the digital political landscape (Hile et al., 2023). From the spirited activism of the young to the virtual town hall meetings conducted by candidates, the digital age offers new frontiers for political engagement. Borders blur as citizens connect with global political events, broadening their perspectives and intertwining their narratives with the tapestry of international affairs. In this era, where social media is a bridge to ideas, an amplifier of voices, and a catalyst for political engagement, the strategies of political campaigns have irrevocably injected an element of dynamism, immediacy, and interaction into the political process, forever altering the landscape in which politicians and voters coalesce.

## **2.5 Election Monitoring and Transparency**

Social media has indeed emerged as a potent tool for the monitoring of election processes, reporting irregularities, and fostering transparency within electoral systems. Its real-time, accessible, and far-reaching nature has allowed platforms to become conduits for citizens, election observers, and media outlets to actively contribute to upholding the integrity of elections. Through these platforms, citizens can rapidly disseminate information, sharing images, videos, and reports pertaining to election-related events. This encourages open dialogue and swift reporting of irregularities like voter suppression, malfunctioning voting machines, or instances of voter intimidation, ultimately ensuring that potential violations are promptly brought to public attention.

Moreover, social media has democratized the process of vigilance, empowering ordinary individuals armed with Smartphones to capture and broadcast incidents they personally witness. This grassroots approach minimizes the chances of misconduct going unnoticed, promoting both transparency and accountability. The collective effort of this larger pool of observers further enhances the accuracy of reported incidents, thereby reinforcing the authenticity of the information being shared.

In addition, social media serves as a direct communication channel between official election authorities, organizations, and the general public. Election commissions and monitoring bodies can leverage these platforms to share real-time updates on voting processes, address concerns, and clarify misconceptions. This proactive engagement fosters trust in the electoral system, showcasing a commitment to transparency that resonates with the public (Kurfi et al., 2021). However, the dynamic nature of social media also presents challenges. The rapid propagation of unverified information and rumors can lead to confusion and misinformation. Responsible sharing practices and source verification are vital to counteract this phenomenon.

In essence, social media functions as a bridge between citizens and the electoral process, enabling real-time reporting, observations sharing, and direct communication. It thereby promotes transparency and accountability within electoral systems. To harness its full potential, a collaborative effort involving online communities, election authorities, and civil society is essential. This cooperative approach ensures the accurate dissemination of information, prevents the spread of misinformation, and upholds the overall integrity of elections. As Attahiru Jega aptly stated in 2019, "Transparency is vital for the credibility of elections". This sentiment reinforces the significance of a transparent electoral process for maintaining public trust and a robust democratic foundation.

## **2.6 Online Political Discourse and Engagement**

Social media platforms have transformed the landscape of political discourse by providing a digital arena where citizens engage in discussions, debates, and interactions. As referenced by Mark Zuckerberg in 2019, he noted, "Giving people a voice and enabling a vigorous exchange of ideas is important for building a more open and informed society." This sentiment underscores how these platforms empower individuals to share opinions, engage in conversations, and stay informed about political issues, reshaping the nature of civic engagement. The accessibility offered by these platforms ensures participation from diverse backgrounds, broadening the voices contributing to political debates and engaging demographics that might not have been as active before (Kurfi et al., 2021).

The rapid dissemination of information on social media allows citizens to effortlessly share news, videos, and political content, accelerating the spread of information and granting access to a variety of sources and viewpoints, thereby enhancing overall political awareness. Engaging on social media platforms encourages a quest for understanding, motivating individuals to explore diverse perspectives through discussions and research, nurturing a more informed citizenry.

Moreover, these platforms serve as catalysts for mobilization and activism, as citizens unite around political causes, leveraging their collective power to organize protests, campaigns, and petitions that amplify their impact. This digital involvement often transitions into tangible civic participation, motivating individuals not only to converse online but also to actively partake in offline actions such as voting and attending town hall meetings. The unique feedback loop facilitated by social media enables citizens to interact directly with politicians, offering insights into public sentiment that can drive policy adjustments and nurture a more responsive political landscape.

However, the landscape is not devoid of challenges. Social media's power to promote engagement can inadvertently foster echo chambers, where individuals encounter information that reinforces their preexisting beliefs, leading to polarization and impeding constructive discourse. The speed of information dissemination on these platforms also exposes citizens to misinformation and disinformation, potentially compromising the quality of political discussions and citizen engagement.

## **2.7 Theoretical Framework**

The study employed Uses and Gratification Theory, which was framed by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch in the 1970s. Uses and Gratification Theory turned attention away from media sources and message effects to audience uses of media content. The uses (exposure to the media) and, gratification (benefits or gains) are determined by the needs of members of the audience. Uses and Gratification is concerned with what people do with media

instead of what media do to people. The practical use of the media is what the Uses and Gratification Theory explains. This theory emphasizes on the reason(s) people have for engaging one medium over another as well as the gratifications they aim to derive.

Thus, youths, as the audience, are active in the following sense. Firstly, with regards to their needs, they select the social media platform that appeals to them. Secondly, they selectively consume the political contents that meet their needs. Thirdly, the political content may or may not affect them. It does, it will result in increased participation of youths in politics. This goes to show that the youths, as the audience, are not passive. In the same vein, political candidates are also able to select and use the social media platform of their choice to disseminate the messages of their choice during electoral campaigns and other electioneering activities. The theory is relevant to this study as this research looks into why and how youths use social media to participate in politics.

In the context of this study, the application of user and gratification theory to the study of social media and political participation offers valuable insights into how individuals engage with digital platforms for both personal gratification and political involvement. This theory provides a lens through which we can understand why users choose to consume and interact with social media content, as well as how these platforms influence their political behaviors and engagement.

In the realm of social media, User Gratification Theory sheds light on why people select specific platforms and content to fulfill their personal needs. Social media users may seek information, entertainment, social interaction, identity validation, or emotional satisfaction. For instance, individuals might use platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter to connect with friends and family, share personal experiences, seek validation through likes and comments, and satisfy their need for social connection and also explains the understanding on the use of new media and how users seek social media and to what extent they are satisfied with its type, content, and method of use as a tool for political participation is being explained (Mojaye & Aondover, 2022).

When examining political participation, the theory reveals how social media users engage with political content to satisfy their information-seeking needs. Social media serves as a platform where users can access news articles, opinion pieces, and political discussions. Individuals can tailor their media consumption to receive information that aligns with their political ideologies, reinforcing their existing beliefs. Moreover, social media facilitates interactions with political figures and organizations, allowing users to seek real-time updates, engage in discussions, and share their viewpoints.

User Gratification Theory also comes into play when understanding how social media enhances political engagement through social interaction. Social media platforms enable users to join political groups, participate in online discussions, and share their perspectives with a global audience. This dynamic interactivity satisfies users' need for social engagement and empowerment, fostering a sense of participation and connection to larger political conversations. Entertainment, a key driver in User Gratification Theory, intersects with political participation on social media. Users may be drawn to engaging and entertaining political content, such as satirical videos, memes, and political humor. This content not only provides amusement but can also shape users' perceptions of political issues and figures.

While User Gratification Theory provides valuable insights, it's essential to acknowledge potential challenges. The theory might not fully capture the complexity of the social and psychological factors that influence political behavior. Additionally, it might not account for the unintended consequences of exposure to biased or sensationalized information on social media. It also recognizes that individuals have tremendous power over their decision on what they want in a media over the media's influence on them.

In essence, the application of User Gratification Theory to social media and political participation highlights the dual nature of individuals' engagement on digital platforms. It illustrates how users seek personal gratifications through social interactions, information acquisition, and entertainment, while also engaging in political discussions, staying informed, and participating in political processes. This theoretical framework helps illuminate the motivations behind users' online behaviors and their impact on broader social and political dynamics.

### III. Research Methods

The study adopted survey research method, survey research method means collecting information about a group of people by asking them questions and analyzing the results. They are a good choice when you want to find out about the characteristics, preferences, opinions, or beliefs of a group of people. Also, the choice of survey method was informed based the postulation of the positivist approach of research design, which subscribe to quantitative method. The population of this study is focused on the individuals in Iju Ishaga Area of Lagos which are Four Hundred Thousand Individuals (400,000). Therefore, the sample size of this research is calculated by using Taro Yamane Formula with 95% confidence level. The calculation formula of Taro Yamane is presented as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where : n=Sample size required

N=number of people in the population

e=allowable error (%)

Calculation;  $n = 400,000 / (1 + 400,000(0.05)^2)$

$$n = 400,000 / (1 + 400,000(0.0025))$$

$$n = 400,000 / 1 + 1000$$

$$n = 400,000 / 1100$$

$$n = 364.$$

This study adopts the convenience sampling technique which is under the Non probability sampling technique. In Convenience sampling technique, each cluster of the sample has been selected from the target population on the basis of their accessibility or convenience to the researcher.

### IV. Result and Discussion

**Table 1.** Gender of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage%
Male	136	37.4
Female	228	62.6
Total	364	100

Source: (Field Survey, 2024)

Table 1 presents the gender of the respondents. Based on frequency and percentage the data shows 37.4% (n=136) are male, 62.4% (n=228) are female. Based on the data generated, female respondents have the highest, which means they are the dominant respondents within the period of study. This result mirrors previous study conducted by Arijeniwa et al., (2022) in which the authors found that youths are the highest users of social media in Nigeria and world over. Findings also showed that the respondents were able to establish the perceived roles that social media performs in electioneering campaign, especially as regards Nigerian youths.

**Table 2.** Age of the respondents

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
18-23	301	87%
24-29	29	8%
30-35	6	2%
36-ABOVE	10	3%
TOTAL	346	100

Source: (Field Survey, 2024)

Table 2 presents the age bracket of the respondents. Based on frequency and percentage the data shows that 18-23years of the respondents account for 87% (n=301), 24-29years 8% (n=29), 30-35 years 6% (n=6), 36-Above 10% (n=10). This means that 18-23 years of the respondents are the dominant respondents in the study as they establish 87% compare to other age brackets in the study.

**Table 3.** Duration of the Use of Social Media

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
About a year ago	9	2.5
About two years ago	23	6.3
About three years ago	36	9.9
About four years ago	296	81.3
Total	364	100

Source: (Field Survey, 2024)

Table 3 shows how long the respondents have been using social media. Based on the data, 2.5% (n=9) of the respondents said about a year ago, 6.3% (n=23) of the respondents said about two years ago, 9.9% (n=36) of the respondents said about three years ago. 81.3% (n=296) said about four years ago. These findings indicate that most individuals from Iju Ishaga have started using social since about four years ago. Momoh et al (2019) findings correspond with previous findings that information exchange as well as voter education and mobilization are crucial role performed by the social media during election.

**Table 4.** Frequency of Social Media Usage

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
Always	173	47.5
Regularly	148	40.7
Occasionally	31	8.5
Rarely	12	3.3
Total	364	100

Source: (Field Survey, 2024).

Table 4 shows how often respondents use social media. From the table above 47.5% (n=173) respondents chose always, 40.7% (n=148) respondents chose regularly, 8.5% (n=31) respondents chose occasionally, 3.3% (n=12) respondents chose rarely. This data therefore shows that most respondents in Iju Ishaga use social media on a daily basis. Aondover et al., (2022), study also explains the presence of respondents using social media for one to three years in the early adoption within the community.

**Table 5.** Reasons for Using Social Media for Political Participation

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
Easy access	159	43.7
Because it is available	56	15.4
Interactivity	137	37.6
Because most people use it	12	3.3
Total	364	100

Source: (Field Survey, 2024)

Table 5 shows the reasons why respondents use social media for political participation. Based on the table above 43.7%(n=159) of the respondents said easy access, 15.4%(n=56) of the respondents said because it is available, 37.6%(n=137) of the respondents settled on interactivity, and 3.3%(n=12) said because most people use it. The responses show that most of the respondents used social media for political participation because of easy access.

**Table 6.** Social Media Used for Political Participation in the 2023 General

<b>Variables</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE%</b>
Whatsapp	104	28.6
Instagram	111	30.5
Twitter	149	40.9
Total	364	100

Source: (Field Survey, 2024)

Table 6 shows the social media platform respondents used for political participation. The above data shows that 28.6% (n=104) of the respondents used Whatsapp, 30.5% (n=111) of the respondents used Instagram and 40.9% (n=149) used twitter. This shows that most respondents used twitter for political participation in the 2023 general election. This aligns with Momoh's (2019) assertion that ease of access to information drives social media use.

**Table 7.** Effectiveness of Technologies for Political Participation on Social Media

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
Very good	144	39.6
Good	146	40.1
Fair	74	20.3
Total	364	100

Source: (Field Survey, 2024)

Table 7 shows how the respondents rate the effectiveness of technology for the political participation in the general election 39.6% (n=144) rates it very good, 40.1% (n=146) rates it good, and 20.3%(n=74) rates it fair. Based on the table, it is obvious that the effectiveness of technology was very good as 40.1% of the respondents agree to it.

**Table 8.** Misinformation or Disinformation on Social Media in the 2023 General Elections

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
Yes	264	72.5
No	41	11.3
Maybe	59	16.2
Total	364	100

Source: (Field Survey, 2024)

Table 8 reveals whether the respondents encountered any kind of Misinformation during the 2023 general elections. Going by the data 72.5%(n=264) chose yes, 11.3%(n=41) chose no while 16.2% (n=59) chose maybe. Based on this context, most respondents encountered misinformation from social media during the 2023 general election. Santini et al., (2019) observed that there is a high prevalence of misinformation on social media during the 2023 general elections raises serious concerns about the integrity of the electoral process and the well-being of society.

**Table 9.** Accessibility and Inclusivity of Social Media for Political Voices

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
Very Good	103	28.3
Good	179	49.1
Fair	68	18.7
Poor	14	3.85
Total	364	100

Source: (Field Survey, 2024)

Table 9 ascertains how the respondents rate the overall accessibility of social media platforms for diverse political voices. 28.3%(n=103) agreed on very good, 49.1%(n=179) agreed on good, 18.7%(n=68) agreed on fair and 3.85%(n=14) chose poor. Based on this study, it is evident that most respondents said the overall accessibility of social media was good as 49.1% records the highest within the period of study.

**Table 10.** Challenges of Using Social Media for Political Participation

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
Yes	96	26.3
No	141	38.7
Not really	127	34.9
Total	364	100

(Field Survey, 2023)

Table 10 examines whether the respondents encountered any challenge while using social media. Based on the table above 26.3% (n=96) choose yes, 38.7% (n=141) choose no and 34.9% (n=127) choose not really with this response it is quite obvious that most respondents encountered issues while using social media for political participation.

## V. Conclusion

The findings of this study show that many individuals in Nigeria are quite active on social media particularly on Twitter. These platforms are essential in both offline and online political activities, thus enhancing political knowledge and increasing political participation and inclusion in Nigeria. More political actors, including the government agencies, need to embrace these platforms because they are ideal for reaching out to a majority of the residents in Nigeria. Furthermore, social media plays a big role in raising awareness and drawing attention to political issues. From the findings, it can be stated that the more the individuals access political information on social media, the more they engage in online political activities like commenting, sharing or liking a political post, video, link or tweet. The more they engage in political activities on social media the greater their level of offline forms of political participation. Some of these activities include discussing with family and friends, voting or intending to vote and encouraging others to vote. Therefore, the study concluded that majority of the residents use Twitter, which they utilize for their political discussions, among the residents of Iju-Ishaga using social media for political purposes during elections is very often and the role of social media use in participatory politics among the residents of Iju Ishaga, is among the major source of political information.

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