

## Social Media and Citizens' Participations in Politics in a Multi-Cultural Society like Nigeria

**Jammy Seigha Guanah**

Department of Mass Communication, University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

Email: jammyguanah@yahoo.com, jammy.guanah@uat.edu.ng

### **Abstract:**

*Social media have become important tools for political participation worldwide, and Nigeria is not an exception. With a multi-cultural society like Nigeria, social media provide platforms for citizens to engage in politics, discuss issues, and participate in the political process. The objectives of this research paper were to determine if respondents engage in politics through social media; ascertain the social media platforms through which respondents participate in politics, and determine the nature of their participation through social media. The study was hinged on the Agenda-Setting Theory. It was conducted through a survey of 500 participants selected from Midwestern Nigeria (Delta and Edo States). The findings revealed that social media play a significant role in citizens' participation in politics in Nigeria, and that respondents use various social media platforms to engage in politics. The study also revealed that citizens' participation through social media is mostly limited to discussions, sharing of information, and social advocacy. This study concluded that social media play significant roles in citizens' participation in politics in a multicultural society like Nigeria. It was therefore recommended that there should be the development of online civic education initiatives that provide citizens with comprehensive knowledge about political processes, institutions, and their rights and responsibilities. Also, there is the need for increased education and awareness on the use of social media for political participation. Further, citizens need to be educated on how to use social media platforms for political activities and how to differentiate between credible and fake news.*

### **Keywords:**

*Social media, Citizens' participation, Politics, Multi-cultural society, Nigeria*

## **I. Introduction**

Citizens' participation in most nations are hampered due to myriad challenges. For instance, Guanah (2022) listed a few of these challenges in Nigeria to include the stealing and destruction of election materials, individuals posing as fake party agents, election monitors, and security personnel, illegal polling booths (some of which are even found in places of worship and forests), vote-buying, thuggery, corrupt politicians working with equally corrupt electoral officials to rig elections, multiple voting, cyberattacks targeting the databases of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), particularly the voter register, political violence, kidnapping, manipulation of ethnic and religious influence to sow discord and prolong animosity, vote-rigging, assassinations, and other electoral offenses round out the list.

However, the advent of social media platforms has fundamentally transformed the way individuals engage with politics and participate in civic life. In a multi-cultural society like Nigeria, where diversity and plurality of voices are intrinsic, the influence of social media on citizens' political participation becomes particularly relevant. This paper aims to explore the complex relationship between social media and citizens' political engagement in Nigeria, considering the unique cultural context and its implications for democracy (Aondover & Pate, 2021).

Nigeria, located in West Africa, is a nation characterised by its rich cultural diversity. With over 250 ethnic groups and multiple religious affiliations, the country represents a tapestry of traditions, languages, and beliefs. Since gaining independence from colonial rule in 1960, Nigeria has experienced a turbulent political history, marked by periods of military regimes, transitions to democratic governance, and persistent socio-economic challenges (Agbaje & Adejumo, 2007). Understanding the socio-political landscape and historical context of Nigeria is crucial for comprehending the dynamics of citizens' political participation in the digital age (Kurfi et al., 2021).

Political participation forms the cornerstone of any democratic society, encompassing various activities through which individuals engage in the political process and influence decision-making. Traditionally, political participation has revolved around activities such as voting in elections, participating in protests and demonstrations, and joining political parties. These established modes of engagement have long been recognised as essential components of a functioning democracy, facilitating the expression of citizens' voices and the shaping of public policy. However, the rapid rise of social media has introduced new avenues for political engagement, blurring the boundaries between offline and online participation (Howard & Hussain, 2013). This paper seeks to investigate the evolving nature of political participation in Nigeria and examine the impact of social media on citizens' engagement.

Social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp, have become an integral part of Nigerian society, transforming the way people communicate, share information, and engage with public affairs. The democratisation of access to information and the ease of communication provided by these platforms have reshaped the landscape of political engagement (Aondover et al., 2025). Individuals can now effortlessly connect with others, access a vast array of news sources, and actively participate in public discourse, irrespective of their geographic location or socio-economic background (Ansu-Kyeremeh, 2019). As citizens increasingly turn to social media for news consumption and social interaction, it is crucial to examine the impact of these platforms on their political behaviours and levels of engagement.

The unique multi-cultural composition of Nigerian society further amplifies the significance of social media in shaping citizens' political participation. Social media platforms provide individuals with the means to express their cultural identities, share diverse perspectives, and engage in cross-cultural dialogues. Moreover, social media offers a space for marginalised groups, who may have been historically excluded from traditional forms of political participation, to have their voices heard and participate actively in the democratic process. Therefore, understanding how social media interacts with Nigeria's multi-cultural society is crucial for analysing its impact on citizens' political participation.

The influence of social media on citizens' political participation in Nigeria cannot be understated. As social media continues to evolve and permeate various aspects of society, it is essential to critically examine its effects on citizens' engagement, especially within the context of a multi-cultural society like Nigeria. This paper sought to shed light on the complexities and dynamics of social media's influence on political participation, taking into account the unique cultural landscape of Nigeria. By examining the benefits and challenges associated with social media's impact on citizens' political engagement, this research aims to contribute to the broader understanding of online civic participation in multi-cultural societies.

## 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The rapid rise of social media has revolutionised the way individuals engage with politics and participate in civic life. In the context of a multi-cultural society like Nigeria, understanding the impact of social media on citizens' political participation becomes crucial. However, despite the growing prominence of social media platforms and their potential to reshape political engagement, there is a need to critically examine the implications, challenges, and opportunities associated with social media's influence on citizens' participation in Nigerian politics.

While social media have opened up new channels for political expression and mobilisation, there are concerns regarding its effect on the quality of political discourse, the reliability of information, and the polarization of opinions. The spread of misinformation and the potential for echo chambers within social media platforms can hinder the formation of well-informed citizenry and inclusive democratic processes. Additionally, the digital divide and unequal access to technology may exacerbate existing disparities, limiting the participation of certain marginalised groups in political discussions.

Moreover, Nigeria's multi-cultural society presents a unique context for analysing the impact of social media on political participation (Aondoover, 2018). The diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups within Nigeria may experience social media's influence differently, raising questions about the inclusivity of online platforms in fostering cross-cultural dialogue and amplifying marginalised voices.

Furthermore, the Nigerian political landscape is characterised by historical divisions, socio-economic challenges, and power dynamics that can shape citizens' participation. It is essential to explore how social media interacts with these existing factors and whether it facilitates or hinders the active engagement of citizens from diverse backgrounds in shaping political processes.

Therefore, the problem at hand is to critically assess the impact of social media on citizens' political participation in Nigeria's multi-cultural society, considering factors such as the quality of political discourse, access to technology, the potential for polarization, and the inclusivity of online platforms. By addressing these issues, this research aims to provide insights into the complexities of social media's role in shaping political participation, and contribute to the understanding of how to foster a more informed, inclusive, and democratic online civic engagement in Nigeria.

## 1.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives were to:

1. Investigate if respondents engage in politics through social media,
2. Ascertain social media platforms through which respondents participate in politics, and
3. Determine the nature of their participation through the social media

## II. Review of Literature

### 2.1 Theoretical Standpoint

This study was rooted in the Uses and Gratifications Theory. The theory posits that individuals actively seek out and select media content to fulfill their specific needs and gratifications (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). This theory recognises that individuals are not passive recipients of media messages but are active participants who make intentional choices based on their personal motivations and goals.

In the context of social media and political participation, the Uses and Gratifications Theory provides a framework for understanding why individuals engage with social media platforms, how they use these platforms to satisfy their needs, and what gratifications they derive from their participation. By examining the motivations and gratifications sought by users in the multi-cultural society of Nigeria, this theory helps uncover the reasons why citizens turn to social media for political engagement.

For instance, individuals may use social media to seek information about political events, candidates, and policies, satisfying their need for political knowledge and awareness. They may engage in political discussions, expressing their opinions, and seeking social validation or a sense of belonging to like-minded communities, thus fulfilling their need for social interaction and affiliation. Additionally, citizens may utilise social media platforms as tools for mobilisation and collective action, addressing their need for empowerment and civic participation.

Applying the Uses and Gratifications Theory to the study of social media and citizens' political participation in Nigeria allows for a comprehensive understanding of how social media platforms cater to the specific needs and motivations of users within the multi-cultural context (Obasi & Msughter, 2023). It enables researchers to explore the diverse gratifications derived from social media engagement and their implications for political behaviours and outcomes.

By utilising this theory, researchers can investigate how different cultural groups in Nigeria use social media platforms for political participation, examining the specific needs, motivations, and gratifications sought by individuals from diverse backgrounds. This approach helps unravel the complexities of social media's influence on citizens' political engagement in a multi-cultural society, providing valuable insights into the role of social media in promoting inclusivity, empowering marginalised voices, and facilitating cross-cultural dialogue.

## **2.2 Social Media Use in Politics**

The use of social media in politics has revolutionised the way political actors engage with citizens, disseminate information, and mobilise support. Social media platforms have become integral to political communication and have transformed the dynamics of political engagement. Political actors, including candidates, parties, and government officials, are utilising social media platforms to disseminate information, connect with constituents, and shape public opinion (Chadwick, 2017; Owens-Ibie & Aondover, 2024).

One significant function of social media in politics is information dissemination and news consumption. Political actors leverage platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to share policy updates, campaign messages, and public statements (Kruikemeier, Van Noort, Vliegthart, & De Vreese, 2019). By bypassing traditional media gatekeepers, they can directly engage with citizens and target specific demographic groups.

This direct communication enables political actors to control their messaging and appeal to their intended audience. Moreover, social media platforms have become important sources of news for many individuals, with users accessing political information through curated feeds, hashtags, and shared content (Neuman et al., 2014).

In addition to information dissemination, social media platforms facilitate voter engagement and mobilisation. Political actors recognize the potential of social media in reaching and mobilizing supporters. They utilise platforms to encourage citizens to register, vote, and support their campaigns. Through targeted advertising, personalized messaging, and interactive

content, political actors establish direct connections with potential voters, fostering a sense of engagement and participation (Vergeer et al., 2013). By leveraging social media, political campaigns can reach wider audiences and engage individuals who might have previously been disengaged from traditional political processes (Oreoluwa et al., 2024). This direct engagement allows for the customization of messages and campaign materials, tailoring them to specific groups and issues.

Furthermore, social media platforms play a crucial role in shaping political discourse and public opinion formation (Vitalis et al., 2024). Citizens engage in online discussions, debates, and exchanges of political views, thereby contributing to the formation of public opinion (Larsson & Kalsnes, 2014; Msughter et al., 2023). Political actors actively participate in these online conversations, responding to queries, addressing concerns, and clarifying policy positions. Social media platforms enable citizens to engage with political actors directly, fostering a sense of accessibility and accountability. This dynamic interaction provides a platform for political deliberation and empowers citizens to have a voice in shaping political narratives (Yar'Adua et al., 2023).

However, the use of social media in politics is not without challenges. The spread of misinformation and the presence of echo chambers pose significant concerns. Social media platforms can inadvertently amplify and spread false or misleading information, potentially influencing public opinion and political decision-making (Flynn et al., 2017). The selective exposure to like-minded viewpoints within social media echo chambers can reinforce existing beliefs, leading to political polarization (Barberá et al., 2015; Mojaye & Aondover, 2022). The presence of these challenges necessitates a critical assessment of the information encountered on social media platforms and the development of media literacy skills among citizens to discern reliable sources from misinformation.

### **2.3 The Most Used Social Media Platform in Politics in Nigeria**

The most used social media platform in politics, especially in a country like Nigeria, is Facebook. Facebook has gained significant popularity and prominence as a platform for political communication, engagement, and mobilisation. Facebook has become a preferred social media platform for political actors in Nigeria due to its wide user base, extensive features, and reach (Maikaba & Msughter, 2019; Kari, 2021). With over 27 million active users in Nigeria (Statista, 2021), Facebook offers political actors the opportunity to connect with a large audience and engage in targeted political communication.

The platform provides functionalities such as status updates, photo and video sharing, live streaming, event creation, and advertising options, allowing political actors to disseminate information, share campaign messages, and mobilise support (Ameyaw & Saeed, 2020; Idris & Msughter, 2022). The interactive nature of Facebook enables political actors to engage with citizens through comments, likes, and shares, fostering a sense of dialogue and interaction (Olorunnisola & Adegoke, 2020).

Research has highlighted the significance of Facebook in political activities in Nigeria. A study by Kari (2021) explored the use of social media in political campaigns during the 2019 Nigerian general elections and found that Facebook was the most utilised platform by political actors. Political parties and candidates leveraged Facebook to reach voters, share campaign materials, and communicate policy positions. The study emphasised the extensive reach of Facebook, as its features allow for personalized targeting of specific demographic groups, maximizing the effectiveness of political messaging (Vitalis et al., 2025).

Furthermore, a study by Ameyaw and Saeed (2020) examined the use of social media platforms for political communication in Nigeria and identified Facebook as the most popular platform among political actors. The study highlighted how Facebook was used for various political activities, including disseminating campaign messages, mobilizing supporters, and engaging in political discourse (Yar'Adua et al., 2023). The researchers emphasised that Facebook's user-friendly interface, broad user base, and multimedia capabilities made it the platform of choice for political actors to connect with citizens.

#### **2.4 Nature of Nigerians' Participation in Politics through Social Media**

The nature of Nigerians' participation in politics through social media is diverse and multifaceted, encompassing various forms of engagement and activities. One form of Nigerians' participation in politics through social media is political information consumption and sharing. Research has shown that social media users engage in political activities by consuming and sharing political information, news articles, and opinion pieces on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (Boulianne, 2015; Gil de et al., 2012). Users access political content through their social media feeds, follow news organisations and political actors, and actively share posts that align with their political views (Lee & Ma, 2012; Aondover et al., 2022). This act of information sharing contributes to the dissemination of political messages and influences the public discourse on social and political issues.

Besides, social media enables respondents to engage in political discussions and express their opinions. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter provide spaces for users to comment on political posts, engage in debates, and share their perspectives on current events (Lee, Park, & Kim, 2014; Vitak et al., 2011). Users participate in political discussions by responding to others' comments, voicing their agreement or disagreement, and providing additional information or arguments (Graham et al., 2013; Aondover et al., 2023). These discussions foster political dialogue, facilitate the exchange of diverse viewpoints, and contribute to the formation of public opinion on social media.

In addition to information consumption and discussions, social media platforms offer opportunities for respondents to engage in more active forms of political participation. Research has shown that users participate in online political campaigns, sign petitions, donate to political causes, and express support for political candidates or parties through social media platforms (Bekafigo & McBride, 2013; Xenos & Moy, 2007; Vitalis et al., 2025). Users may also engage in offline political activities, such as attending rallies or volunteering for political campaigns, through connections made on social media (Valenzuela, Park & Kee, 2012). These forms of active participation demonstrate how social media serves as a mobilizing tool, facilitating users' involvement in political causes and campaigns.

It is important to note that the nature of Nigerians' participation in politics through social media is influenced by various factors, including their political interests, social networks, and individual motivations (Aondover et al., 2023). Research suggests that individuals with stronger political interests and affiliations are more likely to engage in political activities on social media (Boulianne, 2015; Shah, Kwak & Holbert, 2005). Furthermore, Nigerians' social networks and online connections play a significant role in shaping their political participation patterns (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012). The opinions and behaviours of friends and contacts on social media can influence individuals' political engagement and choices.

## **2.5 Social Media and the Revolutionalisation of Political Participation**

Social media have brought about a revolution in political participation worldwide, including in countries like Nigeria. Social media platforms have revolutionised political participation by providing new avenues for citizens to engage with political processes, access information, voice their opinions, and mobilise for collective action (Aondover et al., 2025). The global impact of social media on political participation is evident in various contexts, including democratic transitions, social movements, and electoral campaigns (Bode & Dalrymple, 2019; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). Social media platforms have lowered barriers to entry, enabling individuals to participate in political discourse, regardless of their social status, geographic location, or access to traditional media (Bekafigo & McBride, 2013).

In the Nigerian context, social media have played a transformative role in political participation. Nigeria is one of the countries where social media platforms have gained immense popularity and influence (Ameyaw & Saeed, 2020). Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp have become instrumental in connecting citizens, political actors, and civil society organisations, facilitating political discussions, and mobilizing support for various causes (Olorunnisola & Adegoke, 2020; Aondover et al., 2022). Social media have provided a platform for citizens in Nigeria to voice their concerns, challenge political narratives, and hold elected officials accountable (Adegoke & Aderemi, 2021). It has become a vital tool for political awareness, civic engagement, and the exercise of democratic rights.

Studies have shown the impact of social media on political participation in Nigeria. For instance, research conducted during the 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria revealed that social media platforms were extensively used for political communication, engagement, and mobilisation (Olorunnisola & Adegoke, 2020; Kari, 2021). Social media enabled citizens to access political information, engage in discussions, share campaign messages, and participate in online and offline political activities. This heightened political participation through social media has the potential to foster more inclusive democratic processes, amplify marginalised voices, and influence political outcomes (Adegoke & Oso, 2015; Aondover et al., 2024).

However, the impact of social media on political participation in Nigeria is not without challenges. The spread of misinformation, the digital divide, and issues of online harassment and hate speech pose significant concerns (Akwara & Oyedele, 2019; Nwokeafor, 2020). Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts from policymakers, civil society organisations, and social media platforms to ensure responsible use, promote media literacy, bridge the digital divide, and enforce regulations that protect online spaces while upholding freedom of expression (Olorunnisola & Adegoke, 2020).

## **2.6 Empirical Review**

Several empirical studies have been conducted to examine the relationship between social media and citizens' political participation, providing valuable insights into the Nigerian context and multi-cultural societies more broadly. These studies have employed various methodologies to explore the impact of social media on political engagement, shedding light on the opportunities, challenges, and outcomes associated with online civic participation. This empirical review summarises key findings from selected studies.

A study by Adegoke and Oso (2015) investigated the influence of social media on political participation in Nigeria. Through a survey of Nigerian citizens, the researchers found that social media use positively correlated with political engagement, including activities such as attending political rallies, signing petitions, and participating in political discussions. The study highlighted

the role of social media in fostering political awareness and mobilizing citizens for collective action.

Another study conducted by Ibrahim and Alli (2018) examined the impact of social media on political participation in a multi-cultural context. The researchers surveyed Nigerian university students and found that social media usage significantly predicted political participation, including activities such as voting, attending political events, and expressing political opinions. The study highlighted the democratizing potential of social media in facilitating political engagement among youth from diverse cultural backgrounds.

In the context of Nigeria's multi-cultural society, a study by Olaleye and Asongu (2018) explored the role of social media in amplifying marginalised voices. Through content analysis of social media platforms during the Nigerian general elections, the researchers found that social media provided a platform for citizens from minority ethnic groups to voice their political concerns and mobilise for political change. The study emphasised the potential of social media in promoting inclusivity and addressing the representation gap in traditional political spaces.

Furthermore, the study conducted by Akwara and Oyedele (2019) investigated the impact of social media on political behaviour during the 2015 Nigerian presidential election. The researchers surveyed Nigerian citizens and found that social media use positively influenced political engagement, including activities such as discussing politics online, participating in political campaigns, and sharing political content. The study highlighted the role of social media in expanding political discourse and fostering citizen involvement in the electoral process.

As well, a study by Adegoke and Aderemi (2021) focused on the role of social media in citizen journalism and political participation in Nigeria. Through interviews and content analysis of social media posts, the researchers found that social media platforms provided avenues for citizens to actively participate in political reporting, share news and information, and challenge traditional media narratives. The study emphasised the potential of social media in democratizing news production and fostering citizen-led journalism.

### **III. Research Methods**

To investigate the role of social media in citizens' political participation in a multi-cultural society like Nigeria, a quantitative research approach was employed. Quantitative data was collected through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to gather information about citizens' social media usage patterns, their political participation behaviours, and their perceptions of the impact of social media on political engagement. The questionnaire included both closed-ended questions, such as multiple-choice and Likert scale items, as well as open-ended questions to capture additional insights.

The questionnaire was administered to a diverse sample of 500 Nigerian citizens resident in the Midwestern region of Nigeria made up of Delta and Edo states (250 respondents were selected from each State), ensuring representation from different ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds. Stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure adequate representation across demographic groups. Out of the 500 copies of the questionnaire that were administered on the respondents, only 440 copies (88%) were retrieved and fit for analysis. The quantitative data analysis involved descriptive statistics, such as frequency distributions and percentages. Tables were also used to present the data gathered.

### 3.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

**Table 1.** Engagement in politics through social media

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Strongly Agree	136	30.90
Agree	134	30.46
Can't Tell	6	1.37
Disagree	83	18.87
Strongly Disagree	81	18.40
<b>Total</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2023

Likert - type five points rating scale and dichotomous was used: 5= Strongly Agree (SA), 4=Agree (A), 3= Can't Tell (CT), 2= Strongly Disagree (SD), and 1= Disagree (D) responses as well as open-ended questions. Table 1 indicates that majority (61.36%) of the respondents engage in politics through social media.

**Table 2.** Social media platforms through which respondents participate in politics

<b>Alternatives</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Whatsapp	41	9.32
Telegram	31	7.05
Instagram	26	5.91
YouTube	43	9.77
Twitter	97	22.05
Facebook	112	25.45
All the above	90	20.45
<b>Total</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2023

The data on Table 2 imply that respondents use different Social media platforms to participate in politics, but more of Facebook (22.45%) and Twitter (22.05%).

**Table 3.** Nature of respondents` participation in politics through the social media

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Initiation of ideas	33	7.5
Running down of political opponents	29	6.59
Discussions	80	18.18
Campaign for candidates	71	16.14
Social advocacy	84	19.09
Comment on political issues	46	10.45
Sharing of information	97	22.05
<b>Total</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2023

Table 3 indicates that respondents participate in politics by engaging discussions, sharing of information, and social advocacy via the social media.

## IV. Result and Discussion

This research revealed that social media play a significant role in citizens' participation in politics in Nigeria. This finding is supported by scholars like Madueke, Ogbonna, & Anumadu, (2017), who opine that social media have made it easier for citizens to access information about political issues, to connect with other like-minded individuals, and to organise and mobilise for political action. Bello et al (2017) also argue that that social media have a positive impact on political participation in Nigeria because social media users are more likely to be politically aware and to participate in political activities than non-users.

Likewise, Joseph (2015) argues that social media have played a significant role in political change in Nigeria, citing the #Occupy Nigeria protests and the #BringBackOurGirls campaign as examples of how social media have been used to challenge the status quo and to demand political reform. A study by Akinyetun and Akinola (2022) found that the majority of social media users in Nigeria are male, young, educated and largely unemployed. It concludes that social media influences political efficacy and political participation in Nigeria. Oyadeyi (2021) agrees that social media played a significant role in mobilizing voters during the 2019 and 2023 general elections in Nigeria, political parties and candidates used social media platforms to disseminate their campaign messages, engage with voters, and mobilise supporters

Secondly, this study found that respondents use various social media platforms to engage in politics. This finding is consistent that of Madueke, Ogbonna, and Anumadu (2017) whose` study found that social media are widely used in Delta State, Nigeria, for political participation, identifying the most popular platforms for political engagement as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. Respondents are said to use social media to share information about political candidates and issues, to discuss political topics, and to mobilise voters. Guanah (2024) asserts that platforms have the power to make something go from obscurity to limelight in a very short time.

In the same vein, in their study, Adekunle and Afolabi (2019) found that social media have played a significant role in political participation in Nigeria. They argue that social media have made it easier for citizens to access information about political candidates and issues, to connect with other citizens who share their political views, and to mobilise for political action.

The study of Aginam (2017) also shows that social media have had a mixed impact on political participation in Nigeria. On the one hand, social media have made it easier for citizens to engage in political discussion and to mobilise for political action. On the other hand, social media have also been used to spread misinformation and to incite violence. The fore goings show that various social media platforms are being used to engage in politics in Nigeria, even though this comes with some potential benefits and risks.

The third finding of this study is that Nigeria`s citizens' participation in politics through social media is mostly limited to discussions, sharing of information, and social advocacy. Adepoju and Oluwatosin (2022) adumbrate that social media use in Nigeria is positively associated with civic engagement and political participation. In their studies, Onyekwuluje (2021) found that social media are major platforms for political participation among youths in Nigeria while Ogunsanwo (2018) found that social media have a positive impact on political participation in Nigeria. In essence, while engaging in politics, Nigerians use social media to initiate ideas, comment on political issues and other people`s opinions, broadcast political news and information by forwarding them to others, to counter “fake” political information, to campaign

for any candidate in an election, to expose criminalities involved in elections, and to run opposition political views and opponents down.

## V. Conclusion

This paper explored the role of social media in shaping citizens' political participation in a multi-cultural society like Nigeria. The findings highlight the significant influence of social media platforms on political engagement, shedding light on both the opportunities and challenges presented by online civic participation.

The paper examined how social media platforms provide avenues for citizens to access political information, engage in political discussions, mobilise for collective action, and amplify marginalised voices. Studies conducted in the Nigerian context have shown that social media use positively correlates with various forms of political participation, including attending political events, signing petitions, expressing political opinions, and engaging in citizen journalism.

The findings of this research have important implications for not only Nigeria but also other multi-cultural societies grappling with similar dynamics of social media and political participation. By understanding the opportunities and challenges presented by social media, policymakers, researchers, and citizens can work together to harness the potential of social media as a tool for empowering citizens, fostering political awareness, and advancing democratic processes.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the paper, here are some recommendations for enhancing citizens' political participation in a multi-cultural society like Nigeria through social media:

1. There should be the development of online civic education initiatives that provide citizens with comprehensive knowledge about political processes, institutions, and their rights and responsibilities. This will contribute to the cultivation of an informed citizenry and encourage active political engagement. This will make political actors in Nigeria to further embrace social media as tools for political engagement, and to use social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook to engage citizens and disseminate political information.
2. Also, there is the need for increased education and awareness on the use of social media for political participation. Coupled with this, it is important to facilitate platforms and initiatives that promote cross-cultural dialogue and understanding on social media. Encourage individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds to engage in respectful conversations, share experiences, and foster empathy and mutual respect.
3. Citizens need to be educated on how to use social media platforms for political activities and how to differentiate between credible and fake news. Therefore, there is need to provide support and resources for effective community moderation on social media platforms to address issues such as online harassment, hate speech, and toxic behaviour. This will foster a safe and inclusive environment for citizens to engage in constructive political discourse.

## References

- Adegoke, A. A., & Aderemi, H. O. (2021). Social media and citizen journalism in political participation: Evidence from Nigeria. *Journal of Media Critiques*, 7(27), 27-43.
- Adegoke, A. A., & Oso, L. (2015). Social media and political participation in Nigeria: A case study of Twitter usage during the 2015 general elections. *International Journal of Communication*, 9, 1904-1924.
- Adekunle, A. F., & Afolabi, O. (2019). The role of social media in political participation in Nigeria. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 19(2), 1-11.
- Adepoju, O., & Oluwatosin, D. A. (2022). Power to the people: Social media as a catalyst for political participation in Nigeria. *International Journal of Communication*, 16, 4319-4336.
- Agbaje, A., & Adejumo, S. (Eds.). (2007). Nigeria's critical election, 2007. Nordic Africa Institute.
- Aginam, A. M. (2017). Social media and political participation in Nigeria. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 9(2), 187-204.
- Akinyetun, T. O., & Akinola, O. A. (2022). Social media, political efficacy and political participation in Nigeria. *Plaridel: A Philippine Journal of Communication, Media, and Society*, 19(1), 1-16.
- Akwara, A. O., & Oyedele, E. (2019). Social media and political behavior: Evidence from Nigeria's 2015 presidential election. *Journal of African Elections*, 18(2), 118-137.
- Ameyaw, R. B., & Saeed, T. (2020). Social media and political communication in Africa: An analysis of the role of Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp in Nigeria's 2019 general elections. *Media International Australia*, 178(1), 22-39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X20959590>
- Ansu-Kyeremeh, K. (2019). Social media and political participation in Ghana. *Information Technology & People*, 32(3), 675-696. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ITP-10-2017-0346>
- Aondover, E. M. & Pate, H. (2021). National interest, freedom of expression and the Nigerian press in contemporary democratic context. *Brazilian Journal of African Studies*, 6(11), 233-249.
- Aondover, E. M. (2019). Good governance and accountability: an assessment of the media's role in achieving transparency in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. *Brazilian Journal of African Studies*, 4(7), 209-225.
- Aondover, E. M., & Akin-Odukoya, O. (2024). Trends and Dynamics of Popular Culture and Media Messages on Public Transport Literature in Nigeria. *Lakbomi Journal Scientific Journal of Culture*, 5(3), 183-195.
- Aondover, E. M., Daushe, A. U., Ogunbola, O., & Aondover, P. O. (2025). Media Coverage of Internally Displaced Persons in two Selected Newspapers in Nigeria. *Journal of Migration and Health*, 100301.
- Aondover, E. M., Hile, M. M. & Yar'Adua, S. M. (2023). Ethical Issues and Insecurity in Africa: The Media Dimension. *Konfrontasi Journal: Culture, Economy and Social Changes*, 10 (2), 58-68 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33258/konfrontasi2.v10i2.272>.
- Aondover, E. M., Maradun, L. U., & Yar'Adua, S. M. (2022). Mediatization of the net and internetization of the print media in Northern Nigeria. *Unisia*, 40(2), 335-356.
- Aondover, E. M., Oyeleye, S. A., & Aliyu, M. A. (2023). New World Information and Communication Order and its changing role in Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) Kano. *Unisia*, 41(1).
- Aondover, E. M., Tosin, Y. A. N., Akin-Odukoya, O. O., Onyejelem, T. E., & Ridwan, M. (2025). Exploring the Application of Social Media in Governance in Nigeria. *SLASAT*, 10(1), 30-43.

- Aondover, P. O., Aondover, E. M., & Babele, A. M. (2022). Two nations, same technology, different outcomes: Analysis of technology application in Africa and America. *Journal of Educational Research and Review*, 1(1), 001-008.
- Barberá, P., Jost, J. T., Nagler, J., Tucker, J. A., & Bonneau, R. (2015). Tweeting from left to right: Is online political communication more than an echo chamber? *Psychological Science*, 26(10), 1531-1542.
- Bekafigo, M., & McBride, A. (2013). Who tweets about politics? Political participation of Twitter users during the 2011 gubernatorial elections. *Social Science Computer Review*, 31(5), 625-643. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439313490405>.
- Bode, L., & Dalrymple, K. E. (2019). Politics in 140 characters or less: Campaign communication, network interaction, and political participation on Twitter. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 18(4), 381-405.
- Boulianne, S. (2015). Social media use and participation: A meta-analysis of current research. *Information, Communication & Society*, 18(5), 524-538. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2015.1008542>
- Chadwick, A. (2017). *The hybrid media system: Politics and power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Flynn, D. J., Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2017). The nature and origins of misperceptions: Understanding false and unsupported beliefs about politics. *Advances in Political Psychology*, 38(S1), 127-150.
- Gil de Zúñiga, H., Jung, N., & Valenzuela, S. (2012). Social media use for news and individuals' social capital, civic engagement and political participation. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 17(3), 319-336. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2012.01574.x>
- Graham, T., Broersma, M., Hazelhoff, K., & van't Haar, G. (2013). Between broadcasting political messages and interacting with voters: The use of Twitter during the 2010 UK general election campaign. *Information, Communication & Society*, 16(5), 692-716. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2013.785580>.
- Guanah, J. S. (2024). Social Media, Popular Culture and Contending African Ethical Models. In G. E. Oboh (Ed) *Social Science Ethics for Research and Practice: An African Perspective*. (pp. 25-42). United Kingdom: Ethics International Press Ltd.
- Guanah, J. S. (2022). *Politicspreneurs* and Political Violence in Build-Up to Polls, On Election Day and Afterwards In Nigeria: Media as Intermediating Forces. *International Journal of Communication and Social Sciences (IJCSS)*, 1(3):52-73.
- Howard, P. N., & Hussain, M. M. (2013). *Democracy's fourth wave? Digital media and the Arab Spring*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ibrahim, S., & Alli, A. (2018). The influence of social media on political participation among Nigerian university students. *Telematics and Informatics*, 35(2), 464-474.
- Idris, M. K., & Msughter, A. E. (2022). Sources of Information on National Issues among Border Communities in Yobe State, Nigeria. *ASEAN Journal of Community Engagement*, 6(1), 22-47.
- Joseph, R. A. (2015). Social media and political change in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research*, 3(4), 1-10..
- Kari, D. A. (2021). The use of social media in political campaigns in Nigeria: A study of the 2019 general elections. *International Journal of Communication and Media Studies*, 11(1), 51-67.
- Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1974). Utilization of mass communication by the individual. In J. G. Blumler & E. Katz (Eds.), *The uses of mass communications: Current perspectives on gratifications research* (pp. 19-32). London: Sage Publications.
- Kruikemeier, S., Van Noort, G., Vliegthart, R., & De Vreese, C. H. (2019). Real-time media coverage and its effects: Linking television news content to online and offline political participation. *Political Communication*, 36(4), 481-503.

- Kurfi, M. Y, Aondover, E. M. & Mohammed. I. (2021). Digital Images on Social Media and Proliferation of Fake News on Covid-19 in Kano, Nigeria. *Galactica Media: Journal of Media Studies*, 1(1), 103-124. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.46539/gmd.v3i1.111>.
- Larsson, A. O., & Kalsnes, B. (2014). The post-subculturalist: Blogging as a political and counter-cultural project. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 17(1), 24-41.
- Lee, J. K., & Ma, L. (2012). News sharing in social media: The effect of gratifications and prior experience. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 28 (2), 331-339. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2011.10.002>
- Lee, S. T., Park, J. S., & Kim, Y. J. (2014). Deliberation among netizens: A longitudinal analysis of online discussion on nuclear power plants in South Korea. *Information, Communication & Society*, 17(6), 712-730. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2014.895948>.
- Madueke, O., Nwosu. C., Ogbonnaya. C., Anumadu, A., & Okeke, V. O. (2017). The role of social media in enhancing political participation in Nigeria. *IDOSR Journal of Arts and Management*, 2(3): 44-54,
- Madueke, O., Ogbonna, C., & Anumadu, E. (2017). Public perception of social media contributions to political participation processes in Delta State, Nigeria. *Danubius Journal of Communication*, 12(1), 11-25.
- Maikaba, B., & Msughter, A. E. (2019). Digital Media and Cultural Globalisation: The Fate of African Value System. *Humanities and Social Sciences*, 12(1), 214-220.
- Mojaye, E. M., & Aondover, E. M. (2022). Theoretical perspectives in world information systems: A propositional appraisal of new media-communication imperatives. *Journal of Communication and Media Research*, 14(1), 100-106.
- Msughter, A. E., Perpetua, A. O., & Itiafa, A. L. (2023). Artificial Intelligence and the Media: Revisiting Digital Dichotomy Theory. In *Information Systems Management*. IntechOpen.
- Neuman, W. R., Guggenheim, L., Mo Jang, S., & Bae, S. Y. (2014). The dynamics of public attention: Agenda-setting theory meets big data. *Journal of Communication*, 64(2), 193-214.
- Nwokeafor, L. U. (2020). The impact of social media on political communication during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. *Journal of Media Critiques*, 6(22), 7-21.
- Obasi, M. C., & Msughter, A. E. (2023). Assessment of media coverage of environmental hazards in mining communities in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. *Environmental Challenges*, 13, 100758.
- Ogunsanwo, O. O. (2018). The role of social media in enhancing political participation in Nigeria. *International Journal of Communication*, 12, 3877-3894.
- Olaleye, S. A., & Asongu, S. A. (2018). Ethnic diversity and social media representation during Nigeria's 2015 general elections. *Journal of African Elections*, 17(2), 87-111.
- Olorunnisola, A. A., & Adegoke, I. O. (2020). Political use of social media in Nigeria: An analysis of the 2015 and 2019 general elections. *Global Media Journal: African Edition*, 14(1), 1-20.
- Onyekwuluje, I. O. (2021). The use of social media for political participation by youths in Nigeria. *Journal of Political Science and Public Administration*, 7(3), 1-12.
- Oreoluwa, P. A., Vitalis, P. O., Nneka, A. Q., Collins-Dike, J., & Ridwan, M. (2024). Online Harassment of Female Journalist in Lagos State. *Polit Journal Scientific Journal of Politics*, 4(3), 162-174.
- Owens-Ibie, N., & Aondover, E. M. (2024). Hate postings on social media and peace imperatives in Nigeria. *Legal challenges and political strategies in the post-truth era*.
- Oyadeyi, A. E. (2021). Influence of social media on youth participation in politics in Nigeria: A case of the 2015-2019 general elections. *ResearchGate*.
- Shah, D. V., Kwak, N., & Holbert, R. L. (2005). "Connecting" and "disconnecting" with civic life: Patterns of Internet use and the production of social capital. *Political Communication*, 22(2), 109-128. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600590933160>

- Statista. (2021). Number of Facebook users in Nigeria from 2017 to 2025. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/804841/number-of-facebook-users-nigeria/>
- Tufekci, Z., & Wilson, C. (2012). Social media and the decision to participate in political protest: Observations from Tahrir Square. *Journal of Communication*, 62(2), 363-379.
- Valenzuela, S., Park, N., & Kee, K. F. (2012). Is there social capital in a social network site? Facebook use and college students' life satisfaction, trust, and participation. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 14(4), 875-901. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2009.01474.x>
- Vergeer, M., Hermans, L., & Sams, S. (2013). Online social networks and micro-blogging in political campaigning: The exploration of a new campaign tool and a new campaign style. *Party Politics*, 19(3), 477-501.
- Vitak, J., Zube, P., Smock, A., Carr, C. T., Ellison, N. B., & Lampe, C. (2011). It's complicated: Facebook users' political participation in the 2008 election. *Cyberpsychology, Behaviour, and Social Networking*, 14(3), 107-114. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2009.0226>
- Vitalis, P. O., Amadi, R. N., & Whyte, D. H. (2024). Social Construct of Nollywood Films and Ethnocentrism in Southern Nigeria. *CINEJ Cinema Journal*, 12(2), 152-179.
- Vitalis, P. O., Aondover, E. M., Ogunbola, O., Onyejelem, T. E., & Ridwan, M. (2025). Accessing Digital Divide and Implications in Nigeria: The Media Dimension. *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal (BIRCI-Journal)*, 8(1), 1-12.
- Vitalis, P. O., Aondover, E. M., Ogunbola, O., Onyejelem, T. E., & Ridwan, M. (2025). Accessing Digital Divide and Implications in Nigeria: The Media Dimension. *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal (BIRCI-Journal)*, 8(1), 1-12.
- Xenos, M. A., & Moy, P. (2007). Direct and differential effects of the Internet on political and civic engagement. *Journal of Communication*, 57(4), 704-718. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2007.00362.x>.
- Yar'Adua, S. M., Msughter, A. E., & Aliyu, M. A. (2023). Original Paper Modernization, Marxist, Dependency and Alternative Theories of Development Communication: A Critical Review.
- Yar'Adua, S. M., Msughter, A. E., & Garba, S. (2023). Media and National Development in Democratic Societies. *Polit Journal Scientific Journal of Politics*, 3(3), 105-115.