**Chapter one**

**introduction**

**1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Social media have penetrated all levels of the information in the society and have catalyzed the process of democratization and political development. The media, a modern trend in information and knowledge dissemination, has taken communication beyond the limitations of the traditional way of communicating and socializing, making it an essential part of people’s lives; affecting their social, political and economic activities (Ekwueme, 2017, p. 16). While some decades ago, the Internet was considered a news media, societies now turn to social media as sources of information. One of the major applications of social media is social networks, where millions of people are connected to utilize an open domain for interacting with others and socializing with all types of media such as text, voice, images, or documents (Diamond, 2010).

The emergence of the Internet, which in turn gave birth to social networking sites, brought a paradigm shift in the electioneering process and radical transformation of the society where the populace is no longer passive in government activities; as the media provide new avenues for political engagement (Mohammad, 2019, p. 22). The platforms have exponentially multiplied the possibilities for the retrieval and dissemination of political information, thus affording any Internet user with a variety of supplemental access points to political information and activity that come at little cost in time, money and effort (Breuer and Grosbeak, 2014: 165). No wonder Diamond (2010, p. 70) refers to social media as a liberation technology that expands political, social and economic freedom. Milakovich (2010) also presents social media as a tool for increased citizen participation in the political environment. Unlike the other mass media, social networking media provide two-way and even multi-way forms of communication channels (Diamond, 2010; Milakovich, 2010), which enhance the feedback process and encourage interaction among users. It is this interactive nature of social networking media that creates opportunities for citizens to participate in online electioneering processes which Medimorec et al. (2011) referred to as electronic participation (e-participation).

Online political activities (e-participation) include writing emails to politicians, visiting politicians campaign websites, donating money online, electronic campaign, electronic voting and so forth. The many benefits of using social media for political participation include granting citizens the opportunity to participate actively and get involved fully in the political discourse by adding their voices on issues posted on social media sites. The platforms also afford electorates a friendlier avenue of assessing candidates for political offices and promoting transparency in governance, thus, advancing the tenets of participatory democracy that sees the media as debate avenues which aid tremendously the actualizing political involvement.

Social media also offer a range of potentials for innovating governance and finding new ways of governing by creating an opportunity of listening to citizen’s opinion pool online, thereby setting ideas about citizenry needs including the possible reaction of people towards public decision-making processes (Abubakar, 2012). The platforms equally provide politicians with the opportunity to be informally free with the public as politicians can reach the masses to assess the political atmosphere even before venturing into the campaign. This connection helps politicians to appeal to citizens, communicate their humour, and indicate their approachability, as well as accessibility to the public, thereby making them seem more personable and in constant contact with their supporters (Abdulrauf et al, 2015, p. 61).

The advantages associated with the use of social media, however, have made political leaders, all over the world adopt the platform to campaign during elections, solicit for votes, maintain closeness and transparency with citizens and mobilize citizens and candidates towards active participation in the political processes (Abdulrauf et al., 2015; Abubakar, 2012; Aharony, 2012; Ekwueme and Folarin, 2017; Unwuchola et al., 2017). This has been demonstrated in recent elections conducted in many countries. For instance, the report of the Pew Research Centre’s Internet & American Life Project by Smith (2009) found that social media platforms such as blogs, social networking sites and video-sharing sites played a key role in the United States of America’s 2008 elections as many people got information about candidates and campaigns through using the platforms. Not only did users get their news and campaign information from these media during the elections but they were also able to post their thoughts and comments, allowing them to play a more active role for citizens in the political process. Recognizing these benefits, Nigerian politicians also embraced and exploited the media for political campaigns during the 2011 presidential elections.

However, although social media are the platform which the governed and the government can now discuss issues of public importance. But the big question remains, has this really been actualized over the years in developing countries and Nigeria in specific? This calls for further exploration to test the effectiveness of social media usage in the political communication landscape of Nigeria. The thrust of this contribution is to examine the effectiveness of social media in facilitating dialogue among Nigerians and between Nigerians and their leaders.

**1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

It has been generally established that social media have enhanced communication process in the world. The media have made communication very fast, simple and cheap. Hence, social media have become a formidable force for political activities around the world. The media’s greatest strength is their potential to allow the mass audience to engage in interaction. However, the media is not without some serious challenges which can serve as an impediment to its ability to serve as a platform where members of a nation can share ideas about government policies and by extension influence government agenda. Even though the advent of social media in the political arena has drastically impacted the politicians and voters alike; the use of social media for political participation has its drawbacks. Misinformation, political harassment, rumours, fake news, propaganda and trolling are some of the problems of using social media for political participation. Besides, the topic of bots affecting the outcome of elections has recently become a mainstream topic during elections. Bots are used to leak fake news stories, spread dissension and create fake profiles on social media platforms that sow divide between people and political parties.

In Nigeria, social media landscape is often characterized with falsehood rumors, gossips, verbal attacks, political and religious fanaticism and hate speeches with the aim to malign, intimidate and discredit opponents. Thus, instead of positively serving the political system of the country, the media seem to be enhancing the existing political, religious and ethnic hatred and division that has bedeviled the country for long. Okoro and Nwafor (2013) observed that, there is social media war taking place on the various social media platforms in Nigeria, which could make many in the public lose confidence in social media as well as raise questions on the medium’s reliability and viability as an important tool for public discussion and means of reaching government officials in the country.

Nigeria had her first true test of social media use for political participation during the 2011 general elections. Many positive results were recorded. For instance, both the local and foreign observers rated the election as the best in the fourteen year history of unbroken democracy in the country. However, a Human Rights Watch report of April 18, 2011 said that although the elections were heralded as among the fairest in Nigeria’s history, they also were among the bloodiest. It’s reports further show that a total of not less than 800 persons were killed, more than 65,000 others displaced and over 350 churches either burnt or destroyed in the violence that precipitated the announcement of the 2011 general elections results in the northern states of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara by Muslim rioters. Adeyanju and Haruna (2011) believe that social media played a huge role in instigating and fuelling the violence. They argue that during the period, many Facebook pages were awash with false rumors and gossips that added to heating up the polity and creating unnecessary tensions. The GSM short message service (SMS) was used to spread false election results that differ from what INEC eventually announced. This made electorates believe that their votes did not count and that they were massively rigged. There was what Okoro and Adibe (2013) refer to as social media war on the various social media platforms, making use of all kinds of abusive languages, all manner of attacks and counter attacks among members and supporters of various opposition parties and groups. Several insulting and inciting messages flourished on Facebook and GSM SMS. These culminated in the violence and tensions witnessed before, during and after the elections in many parts of the country, with some states ordering non-indigenes to leave.

Many scholars have researched on social media and political participation with much emphasis on the importance of social media. Isabelle (2018) for instance maintained that social media have brought about transformation in political arena especially in the area of voting. Similarly Edison (2019) argues that Social media also offers the potential for being facilitators of political participation. However, there is little research on the lapses of social media in political participation and even fewer as it relates to Ikwo local government and Ebonyi State as a whole. In Ikwo for instance, the #Endsars political mobilization was given more teeth by social media. Moreover, political killings and politically attuned violence in Ikwo is in the increase including communal clashes and social media has contributed in no small measures in showing the killings and brutality with adverse effect on political participation. The truth remains that the use of social media tags have become a very useful tool for inspiring violent political activities. It is against these backdrops that this study investigates the effect of social media on political participation using Ikwo local government as a case study.

* 1. **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. How has the role of social media affected political participation of the Ikwo People?
2. How has the use of social media enhanced peaceful political participation in Ikwo Local Government Area between 2011 and 2021?

**1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The general objective of this study is to assess the effect of social media on political participation in Nigeria. Specifically, the study was meant to:

1. To determine how the use of social media affected political participation of the Ikwo People
2. To examine whether the use of social media may enhance peaceful political participation in Ikwo Local Government Area

**1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Theoretically, the study is to assess the effect of social media on political participation in Nigeria. It will be an important source of secondary data for future researchers and enrich the existing literature on the subject area.

Practically, it will provide solutions to the negative effects of social media on political participation in Nigeria. It will sensitize the people of Ikwo towards effective and active political participation. Finally, it will provide useful guide to present and future policy makers and administrators towards ensuring effective political participation in Nigeria generally.

**1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The study is the effect of social media on political participation: a case study of Ikwo local government. The role of social media in the political participation of Ikwo people constitutes the scope of this study. The period of this study is 2011-2021. The researcher considers this period lengthy enough to investigate the nature and effect of social media in the political participation of people in Ikwo local government of Ebonyi State.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**2.1. SOCIAL MEDIA AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

It is fair claim that social media has its disadvantages too. For instance, Calder’s (2013) study argued that it is necessary to know the disadvantages of news media for political communication and we have to save political participation from this situation rather than to accept it (p. 66). Mahmud and Amin (2017) focused on the usage of online media in political activities among university students. The findings of the study show the relationship of online and offline political participation; however, compared with Facebook, email plays a small role in political discussion. Similarly, Schmiemann (2015) examined Social media and political participation and concluded that Facebook content shows a positive response regarding political participation.

Gibson and McAllister (2012) evaluated online social ties and political engagement and examined how online platforms increase political interaction. In addition, online interaction is enhancing similar bonds among unrelated bridging networks; they found that online social contact fosters offline participation. Following the trend in this research domain, Papagiannidis and Manika (2016) investigated political participation and engagement via different online and offline channels and found that social media and other online channels allow political participants to get involved in politics and express their opinion openly. Individual attitudes vary as do their digital media use and real-life political participation.

The use of Internet and all other e-activities improves the knowledge of online users about politics and spurs political engagement and participation. Cantijoch and his colleagues studied the use of social media, political engagement, and the impact of e-discussion, e-information, and e-political campaigning. Their findings claimed that e-campaigning directly connects and engages Internet users before and after elections (Cantijoch, Cutts, & Gibson, 2012). Marco, Robles, and Antino (2017) also observed this political attitudes and engagement in the case of individuals on digital platforms in Spain. Study findings show significance difference between cognitive and effective components of attitude.

Rainie, Smith, Schlozman, Brady, and Verba (2012) investigated social media and political engagement and found that 39% of adults in the United States used social media and one out of every eight adults used social media for civic and political purposes. Social media generated new trends for political participation and changed the patterns of political communication. Siluveru (2015) endeavored to dig out the facts about social and digital media in political communication and concluded that social media is being used for the purpose of social relations and updating the users about happenings.

Stieglitz, Brockmann, and Xuan (2012) analyzed the usage of social media for political communication and found a strong relationship among politicians and social media users. In addition to that, due to Social Networking Services (SNS) interaction between voters and politicians has improved significantly. Biswas, Ingle, and Roy (2014) examined the influence of social media in India, on voting behavior, their results show that social media unites people within political parties. Storck (2011) revealed that activists used social media for collective action. Hellweg (2011) examined politicians’ social media use to influence constituent perceptions and found that voters responded more positively to politicians’ personal content rather than to their professional content. Similarly, Kalsnes (2016) discussed Facebook as a unique platform for interaction between political parties and voters; the study provides best practices to link with voters for political engagement.

Raoof, Zaman, Ahmad, and Al-Qaraghuli (2013) studied social network systems as a tool for political change. Their findings clearly showed that social media was widely used as a communication network among candidates and voters. By providing information about politics, social media encourages participation and mobilization and plays a vital role in political education as well as the mobilization of the public in politics (Doris, 2014).

Social media, especially Facebook, plays an important role in political efficacy. Abdulrauf (2016) examined cognitive engagement and online political participation on Facebook and Twitter among youth in Nigeria and Malaysia and concluded that political knowledge and needs increased the political involvement and trust in young people. Abdu and his colleagues measured the role of Facebook and its use, interactivity, quality information, and political interest among youth. The study concluded that Facebook use, and political interest positively correlates with online political participation (Abdu, Mohamad, & Muda, 2017, p. 1).

Conroye and his colleagues found that online political groups are mutually connected with offline political participation; however, the relationship between online political groups and political knowledge is limited because of online group discourse, but the connection between online and offline participation is very strong (Conroye, Feezellb, & Guerreroc, 2012). Heiss and Matthes (2016) studied the effects of politicians’ participatory Facebook posts on young people’s political efficacy and revealed significant positive effects on those with high external and collective efficacy traits and low cynicism traits. Chan and Guo (2013) investigated Facebook use in political activities and concluded that social media use among youth can facilitate greater political and civic engagement, particularly for those who perceive that they have limited ability to participate and understand political affairs (Chan and Guo, 2013, p. 461).

**2.2 SOCIAL MEDIA AND ENHANCEMENT OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

The Internet and social media provide an opportunity to the young population for political discussion through various online groups, pages, and accounts. Bimber and Copeland (2011) emphasized on the role of news media for providing the platform for political participation and changing their political efficacy. Schulz’s (2005) study suggested that news media users are active in politics and political discourse. The Internet has developed the interests toward politics of its users and improved political efficacy of the respondent which create their online and offline political engagements. Jiang (2016) examined the effects of the Internet on online and offline political participation. He also investigated the Internet’s role in molding citizens’ perceptions of politics. This strong relationship creates political efficacy and election interest among Internet users and increases their political involvement (Jiang, 2016). The use of the Internet has become the main source of political efficacy and political participation, enhancing awareness about voting and campaigning. Social or digital media also increases the ratio of voters’ turnout among users. It develops the approach which helps in voting and donating campaign for politics (Larson, 2004). Users’ efficacy helps them to understand the political affairs in a better way through the acquisition of political information from social media. Kahne, Middaugh, and Allen (2014) investigated the youth, media, and the rise of participatory politics and concluded that media has given a platform to individuals for information and communication with large audiences and a means to participate in political activities. The above-mentioned studies have been conducted in developed countries and shared the similar findings. However, marginalized and rural areas youth have been excluded and neglected in the research domain. Our study focuses on rural active youth in political process through social media.

Considerable research over the decade has been produced on the impact of social media and Internet on online and offline political participation. For instance, Facebook has become one of the most significant platforms for online users to discuss politics and participate in politics offline. Njegomir (2016) examined the impact of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube on millennials’ political behavior and found that Twitter and YouTube were not used for political purposes; however, Facebook was used for political content and may have a negative effect on formal political participation in both developing and developed countries. Westling (2007) examined the expansion of the public sphere and the impact of Facebook on political communication. He interlinked the political communication strategies with public sphere expansion and found that Facebook was a valid platform for bridging political communication among public. Another study conducted by Marcheva (2008) found that there was a strong correlation between social media platforms and collective movements. Facebook helped in understanding the various impressions of political participation such as discussions of controversial issues.

Researchers have developed multiple scales to study the impact of Internet on campaign and political messages. Due to the monolithic nature of the medium, it is difficult to assess the effects of social media on citizens. Political participation on Facebook is robust during elections. Rustad and Sabo (2013) found that politicians use Facebook to connect with citizens and keep them updated about their agenda and political activities. Borah (2014) presented his paper at the annual conference in International Communication Association on the use of Facebook amid the presidential campaign and found that posts promoting the candidate increased political participation in individuals whose party affiliation is congruent with the post (p. 1). Similar to that, Vitak et al. (2009) observed the usage of Facebook and political involvement in the 2008 election. They concluded that there are possible effects to change the usage of social media among applicants and political organizations.

Hanson, Haridakis, Cunningham, Sharma, and Ponder (2010) revealed that social media usage shows negative predictions for political cynicism. Andersen and Medaglia (2009) found that the online sphere is popular among voters because they know about their political candidates through various means of party organization. Gerodimos and Justinussen (2014) found that Obama’s campaign in 2012 utilized Facebook as a tool for promotion; this online campaign highlighted Obama’s personality as a strategy which motivated followers to acts rather than to become empowered. Stumpel (2010) has given insight in his thesis on politics of social media (Facebook) and argues that discursive processes and counter protocological implementations should be an essential political factor which governs user activities on social media. Based on the extensive amount of literature which has been devoted to social media and political communication, we can argue that published literature shows the opportunities and challenges of social media in politics in various countries across the globe.

Many studies have been conducted on social media and political participation. But majority of these works have focused only on the advantages of social media. Odoemelam and Chibuwe (2012) observe that:

*‘The value of the communication experience has undergone a sea-change; from the need to share it, to the need to share in it. Technology and social media in particular have brought power back to the people; with such technologies, established authorities are now undermined and users are now the experts (Odoemelam and Chibuwe (2012)’.*

Udejinta (2011) observes that one remarkable thing about the 2011 general elections was the adoption of social media especially the facebook by the politicians, the political parties and the electorates as a platform for political participation. The importance attached to social media in the 2011 general elections was better explained by President Goodluck Jonathan decision to declare his intention to run for the highest political office in the land on facebook.

**2.3 GAP IN LITERATURE**

Although the reviewed literatures were analytical and apt, the scholars could not discuss on how the role of social media affects political participation of the Ikwo People. Also, there is dearth of literature on the use of social media to enhance peaceful political participation in Ikwo Local Government Area, particularly between 2011 and 2021. It is these identified gaps that this study seeks to fill.

**2.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is anchored on the Uses and Gratifications theory. This theory is associated with the works of Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch (1974). It belongs to the limited or indirect effect theories of mass communication. The theory according to Anaeto, Onabanjo and Osifeso (2008) is concerned with what people do with media instead of what media do to people. The assumption is that people influence the effects media have on them. That is to say that uses and gratification theory takes a more humanistic approach to media use and effect. It assumes members of the audience are not passive but play active role in interpreting and integrating media into their own lives. The theory suggests that people use media to fulfill specific gratifications. Adeyanju and Haruna (2011) note that the main thrust of the theory is that audience members have certain needs which make them to be selectively exposed to, attend to, and retain media messages because of the perceived gratifications derivable from such messages. Thus, this theory emphasizes the fact that people are important in the process of communication because they choose content, make meaning and act on that meaning (Akinwumi, 2011).

Applying the uses and gratification theory to this study, users of social media are intentional seekers of such messages. They are able to select and use the technology in ways that suit their purpose. Thus, they as the audience are active and not passive. Similarly, political candidates are also able to select and use media of choice and message content of their choice during electoral campaigns and other electioneering activities.

**2.5 CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION**

**2.5.1 Social Media**

Social media refers to those Internet-based tools and services that allow users to engage with each other, generate content, distribute, and search for information online. In other words, the social media are interactive web-based media platforms that offer citizens opportunity and place to connect, share opinions, experiences, views, contacts, knowledge, expertise, as well as other things like job and career tips. They belong to a new genre of media that focuses on social networking allowing users to express themselves, interact with friends and share information with greater freedom as well as publish their views on issues on the World Wide Web. Chatora, (2012) observes that it is this interactive or collaborative nature of these tools that makes them social. Mayfield (2008) describes these media as “online platforms that promote participation, openness, conversation and connectedness”. Nation (2010) sees them as “social instruments of communication which are different from the conventional instruments like newspapers or magazines. They are online content, created by people using highly accessible and scalable publishing technologies to disseminate information across geographical boundaries, providing interaction among people (Adibe, Odoemelam and Orji 2012 information producers and consumers. Social media emerged with the advent of the internet and the World Wide Web. They are usually associated with the term “web 2.0” which is used to describe). They support democratisation of knowledge and information, thereby making the people both websites that provide opportunity for a user to interact with the sender of a message. Nwabueze (2012) observes that “Web 2.0” refers to the state of the web from 2004 till date; a period when interactive websites emerged as opposed to “web1.0” which describes the state of the web prior to 2004. Web-based communities, social networking sites video-sharing 2011).

**2.5.2 Political Participation**

Political Participation: In a simple approach, political participation is citizens’ involvement in the acts, events or activities that influence the sites, Wikis, and blogs, are among examples of web 2.0 sites (Allen, Ekwugha & Chukwulete ), Selection of and/or the actions taken by political representatives. It refers to the various mechanisms through which the public express their political views and, and/or exercise their influence on the political process (Chatora 2012).

Abubakar (2011) sees it as the involvement of people, (not necessarily active) in any political process before a collective decision is arrived. In other words, political participation entails citizens’ engagement in the discourse of socio-political and economic issues which serve as yardsticks for choosing would be leaders. It may also include assessing the capabilities of the incumbencies and advocating ways of ameliorating societal ills for a more prosperous country. Political participation include such activities like political discourse, political campaigns, voter registration, the actual voting, writing and signing of petitions, attending of civil protests, joining interest groups that engage in lobbying, political advocacy, monitoring and reporting of cases of violation of the electoral process such as frauds, rigging, intimidation, violence, monetary inducements, underage voting, etc

Before the advent of the social media, political campaigns and other electioneering activities blossomed in the traditional media. Olajide (2002) cited in Onwukwe (2011) notes that prior to this period, political rallies, personal contacts and speeches were popularly used for mobilising electorates’ support on political issues, and that this was greatly propelled by the mass media force. At that time, political participation was more risky, expensive and required a great deal of investments from individuals willing to engage in political activities. The process was quite demanding as far as time, money, knowledge and information are concerned. The endemic poverty in Africa prevented citizens from attending political meetings, and sometimes, from travelling to exercise their voting rights.

**2.5.3 Social media and politics**

The arrival of social media has greatly enhanced all aspects of human communication. The new technology due to the participatory, interactive and cost-effective nature has barely made everyone who can use it a mass communicator. This brings to fruition the prediction of Marshal McLuhan in 1964 that the world would someday become a “global village” where what happens in one part of the world would be known instantly and simultaneously worldwide. Today, one can stay right in his bedroom and access information, entertainment, events and enjoy full interaction with the world just by processing a button. Writing on this development, Adibe and Odoemelam (2010) observe that the new media of communication have in no small measure helped human society to be aware of each other. This agrees with the submissions of Baran (1998) that: … as the media shrink the world, people will become increasingly involved in one another’s lives, and as people come to know more about others who were hitherto separated from them by distance, they will form new beneficial relationships. Baran’s argument is relevant to this discourse as it draws attention to what social media is doing in the area of human communication today, especially as it concerns the fostering of relations and interaction among people.

In many parts of the world today, individuals, groups, organisations and even nations are taking advantage of the opportunities provided by social media and other e-media platforms to mobilize millions of people to support and advance their course. In the political sphere it has become a veritable tool for interacting and mobilizing citizens towards active participation in the political process and democratic projects. This agrees with the submissions of Okoro and Dirim (2009) that it is through the media that people are able to participate freely in discussions relevant to public good. Adelabu (2011) notes that the success of President Obama’s Presidential campaigns in 2008 and his eventual emergence as first black president of the United States was largely credited to his active use of facebook to mobilize millions of volunteers, and voters.

Politics has indeed greatly evolved in recent decade with the advent of the new technology. With it, information sharing has greatly improved, allowing citizens to discuss ideas, post news, ask questions and share links. With social media, politicians reach the masses with the aim of assessing the political atmosphere even before venturing into the campaign. Social media is perhaps the best tool to assess the popularity of a candidate especially by the young people and craft the best language to use as a campaign slogan.

Social media also provides a politician with the opportunity to be informally free with the public. This free connection through social media helps politicians to communicate their humour, indicating their approachability and accessibility to the public. With social media, politicians appeal to citizens; this makes them seem more personable and gives them advantage of keeping in constant contact with their supporters. Social media grants many people the chance to participate actively and get involved fully in the political discourse by adding their voices on issues posted on the social media sites. Thus, advancing the tenets of participatory democracy that sees media as a debate avenue and aids tremendously in actualizing public-sphere journalism. It affords electorates a friendlier avenue of assessing candidates for political offices and promoting transparency in governance.

**2.6 THEORETICAL EXPLANATION**

According to Brooks (1970) as cited by Ohaja (2003) "knowledge does not exist in a vacuum. In every discipline there is a body of theories that provides the explanation for observable phenomena in that field." This study explains the usefulness of social media vis a vis political participation using the following theories:

**2.6.1 Agenda-Setting Theory**

The Agenda-setting theory propounded by Maxwell Mc Combs and Donald Shaw states that the media sets the agenda for public discourse by determining which events/issues are put in the front burner at any given time. The media determine which issues are regarded as important or not for the populace. As Ben Cohen (1963) once stated "The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about".

It is no coincidence that most times, issues/topics being discussed in offices, markets, schools and other public places are news headlines, commentaries, editorials and other editorial matters carried by the mass media that morning. This study shall .examine if the social media Facebook and Twitter are veritable tools that can be used to set agenda for Nigerian youths, especially as regards awakening their political consciousness for them to participate in the electoral process.

**2.6.2 Diffusion of Innovations Theory**

According to Rogers (1995), 'Diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over a period of time among the members of a social system. An innovation is an idea, practice or object that is perceived to be new by an individual or other unit of adoption. Communication is a process in which participants create and share information with one another to reach a mutual understanding'. The diffusion of innovations theory centers on how an idea/practice/opinion disseminated to a given set of people may be adopted or rejected due to several factors. Rogers (ibid) posited "Diffusion of innovation theory predicts that media as well as interpersonal contacts provide information and influence opinion judgment." This leads to the related Two-Step flow theory which describes how some people with exposure to media message or information relay same to other people who have less exposure to the mass media. It was observed that the people exposed to the media messages (known as opinion leaders) were not only relaying the information to their "followers" but were also shaping and interpreting such information. In this study's context electoral participation campaign messages is diffused by say, National Orientation agency (NOA), through Facebook/Twitter. Youths of eligible age who see this message may then relay such messages to their friends, colleagues, neighbors, parents, etc who may not have Facebook/Twitter accounts.

**2.7 HISTORICAL FACT/ INFORMATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

**2.7.1 Facebook: History and Functionalities**

Facebook is a social networking site that was created by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004 while he was still a student at Harvard University. It was initially restricted to Harvard students only but was later extended to include other Universities/Colleges and then later high schools in the U.S. (www.wikipedia/en/history\_of\_Facebook).

The popularity of Facebook became worldwide and it was eventually opened up to anyone with an email address to join and create a profile. Facebook has grown at an astronomical rate from its humble beginning as a Harvard campus networking site to a global internet giant boasting of a whooping 1.5 billion active users, making it the biggest social networking site in the world. To put it in other words, if Facebook were a country it would be the most populous country in the world ([www.statista.com/264810](http://www.statista.com/264810)).

Facebook can be accessed through www.facebook.com and all a prospective user needs' to open an account and create a profile is a valid email address or cell phone number. He or she provides some basic information about himself /herself such as name, sex, date of birth, and town of residence. A picture of the user is optional but encouraged by Facebook. A profile page is created for each user that registers and it contains all the information about the user as provided by the user. Some of the functionalities of Facebook available to users are Walls (where information can be posted for friends to see), Messages (for private emails), Status (to post any kind of information for the public to view), Pictures & Videos uploading links, groups of political, social, religious or whatever leaning can be created for followers to join. Chat which is an instant messaging application is one of the major features on the website. It also comes with inbuilt search capabilities which are used to search for long lost or new friends on the social networking site by inputting their names. Online games like Scrabble, Farmville, Mafia wars etc have proved to be major attraction for users of Facebook as it is free of charge ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)).

Needless to say, with all the aforementioned applications and features, Facebook has become a very popular "hot spot" where the youth especially "hang out" to socialize and get informed, entertained and even educated.

**2.7.2 Twitter: History and Functionalities**

Twitter is a free micro-blogging, social messaging service that allows people to communicate brief message (140 words) called "tweets" in real time. (Dominick, 2011). When you sign up with twitter on www.twitter.com you can use the service to post and receive messages to a network of contacts. Instead of sending a dozen emails or text messages, you send one message to your twitter account, and the service distributes it to all friends or "followers". Members use twitter to organize impromptu gatherings, carry on a group conversation or just send a quick update to let people know what's going on. (Strickland, 2011).

Twitter was founded in 2006 by the trio of Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams and Biz Stone who were all programmers that were interested in creating a micro- blogging social network that could be updated via short message service (SMS). Despite the fact that a "tweet" is limited to a maximum of 140 words, Twitter has grown at an astronomical rate since its inception. Exact numbers are hard to pin down but according to Picard (2011) there are between 200-250 million users on twitter while about 460,000 new accounts are opened daily, with about 140 million tweets sent daily.

Some of the reasons why Twitter has become a huge hit among internet users are because of its simplicity and easy- to- use format. Twitter is also accessible both from laptops with internet connection and mobile devices like mobile phones, PDA's, smart phones, ipad , etc Twitter has really proven to be the mobile social media. Many well known personalities have Twitter accounts that they use for political, social, informational, educational, mobilizing, canvassing purposes.

Upon opening an account on Twitter, a user will be allotted a profile page which will contain basic information like names of the user, the city or country where he/she is based; users are also encouraged to upload at least one of their pictures as a profile picture. Favourite quotes or sayings can also be included in the profile page. The next step after setting up a profile page is to invite or search for friends/contacts (called "followers") to "follow". To do this there is an inbuilt 'search' application which is used to search for followers on Twitter. Those not on twitter already can also be invited to join via emails .There's no limit to the number of followers a 'tweeter' can follow and some prominent personalities like President Barack Obama are known to have over 9 million followers. (www.twitaholic.com). The 'Timeline' is similar to the Wall application on Facebook, where Tweets (messages) from all of one's followers are displayed to be read. These tweets from followers can also be "Retweeted" by an individual so that the tweet is seen by other tweeters on the individual's network of followers. Even though twitter is meant to be a micro-blogging site it nonetheless can be used to upload and post picture and also links to videos or pod casts. Many tweeters tweet and back such tweets with pictures to lend credence to it. There is also a section called trends where the top ten most tweeted issues on Twitter are listed. Usually current events taking place in the world dominate this list. Some other times it may be about natural disasters happening somewhere, while at other times celebrities in the news make the trending list. Twitter can be used to keep up with news by 'following' any of the several media houses that now tweet most of their stories - usually the Headlines and Leads.

According to the latest statistics from www.internetstats.com as at January, 2015 there are about 1.5 billion active Facebook users globally, of which about 15 million are Nigerians. Twitter is estimated to have about a quarter of a billion active users globally. These numbers continue to grow at an astronomical rate daily as more people get to know the benefits of social media.

**CHAPTER THREE**

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The objective of this chapter is to extensively discuss the procedures used in collecting and analyzing the data relevant to this study which is the effect of social media in political participation in Ikwo local government: focusing on the prospects. Relevant areas which would be addressed in the chapter include research design, sample size, structuring of research instrument, data validity and its method of administration as well as the procedure for processing data.

Research design

Population of the study

Sampling technique

Sample size

Research instruments

Method of data collection

Method of data presentation and analysis

## **3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The descriptive survey method was adopted for this study. The purpose of using descriptive research is to determine the situation, as it existed at the period of study and to interpret out the findings in the questionnaires. It also aided in simplifying the work through drawing of inferences about the target population from investigation of the few. As observed by Benjamin (2010), with descriptive methodology, one is able to examine a given situation and presents its result as it is; it exposes the major elements and characteristics of any phenomenon or attributes. With descriptive research, therefore, people's attitudes, actions, behaviour or opinions towards situations are assessed (Ojo, 2003, p. 16). Calmorin (1995) averred that this approach is appropriate wherever the objects of any class vary among themselves and one is interested in knowing the extent to which different conditions obtain among these objects (Calmorin, 1995, p. 9). Descriptive research, therefore, enables the study to look at the problem by exploring the views of different sets of respondents, as well as by exploring different works of literature related to the study.

**3.2. area OF THE Study**

People of Ikwo local government of Ebonyi state constitute the study population. The effect of social media on political participation in the local government remains the specific focus. Ikwo local government area of Ebonyi State constitutes the area of the study. Ikwo is the largest Local Government Area in Ebonyi State. It is situated on the eastern part of the state. The city and local government area has a land mass of approximately 500 square kilometers and shares a border with Abakaliki, Izzi and Ezza Local Government Areas as well as Cross River State. Ikwo is the home to Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike Ikwo (FUNAI) One of the Universities established by ex-President Goodluck Jonathan. Ikwo also plays host to Ebonyi State College of Education, Ikwo at Ndufu Echara. The study is an investigation into the effect of social media on the political participation of Ikwo people.

## **3.3 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE**

Sampling is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals represent the larger group being referred to as the population. The purpose of sampling was to gain information about a population. If a sample is well selected, research result based on it would **be** generalised to the population. The sampling technique that was adopted for the purpose of this study is stratified sampling technique; a total of 133 persons were selected. Stratified sampling design helped in the easy administration of questionnaire according to their groups and irrespective of the samples educational qualification and also gave equal opportunity for the opinions of various members of the sampling frame to share their opinions. The questionnaire was will be administered personally by the researcher and collected on an individual basis.

A sampling technique is a plan specifying how elements will be drawn from the population. (Nworgu, 1991, p.70). To effectively study the variables, the researcher will use multi-stage sampling technique for this study. According to Chukwuemeka (2002, p.111) and Creswell (2002, p.167), multi-stage sampling technique requires the researcher to choose a sample in two or more stages for ensuring true representation especially when the population is large and complex. Therefore, this is done in stages.

***Stage 1***

First, the population of the study (Ikwo local government) is already in a cluster known as one of the 13 local government areas in Ebonyi State. Ebonyi State hosts Ikwo local government area, which the researcher used for this study, has 13 local governments; Afikpo-North, Afikpo-South, Ezza-North, Ebonyi, Ezza-South, Ohaukwu, Ivo, Ikwo, Izzi, Abakaliki, Ishielu, Onicha, Ohaozara.

These local governments are in clusters.

***Stage 2***

From the local governments or clusters chosen (Ikwo), three communities were selected including, Echa-Alike, Nnoyo-Alike and Ndufu-Alike at random.

**3.4 Sample size determination**

This is the working or accessible population to be chosen for the purpose of sampling. Out of each of the three Ikwo communities selected through simple random sampling, One Hundred and Thirty Three (133) persons were picked at random to represent the entire population of the state. Therefore, the sample size was Four Hundred (400) persons. Because of the largeness of the study population, a representative sample size was drawn using Yaro Yammane formular.

C:\Users\PARAMO~1\AppData\Local\Temp\ksohtml\wps58C9.tmp.pngThe formular states that; n=

Where: n=

Desired sample size N=

population size under Study e =

level of significance or limit of tolerable error chosen to be 5% or 0.05

1 = unity (always constant) in value calculation.

N=600,000

1+ 600,000 ( 0.05)2

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## C:\Users\PARAMO~1\AppData\Local\Temp\ksohtml\wps58DB.tmp.jpg

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## **3.5 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION**

To achieve success in work as this, data plays a significant role in achieving desired result. It is to be noted however, that there are a number of means by which data may be collected for a research work as this one. Consequently the data obtained in this study are primary and secondary sources which are the two main sources of data collection.

**Primary Data:** These data can been described as the original or main source from where data could be generated for the purpose of the study at hand. The use of questionnaire was employed. However, primary data was adopted in order to know the opinion of the public.

**Secondary Data:** This is another method of collecting data which involves the compilation of already existing data for other purposes; it could be administrative or otherwise like textbooks, journals, newspaper articles, statistical bulletin, unpublished project works and online web pages. In respect to this research, both primary and secondary data were employed. Secondary data however complimented the primary source toward arriving at a reasonable conclusion.

## **3.6 DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES**

All data collected was analysed by using simple tables and percentages. The technique that was adopted is the statistical descriptive method; the overall responses were ascertained and recorded with statistical tools like response, frequency, percentage, and total. The presentation was done in simple tables and percentages, under which analysis each question was done. Both primary and secondary data gathered were then used in answering the research questions of this study.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

**4.1 DATA PRESENTATION**

This chapter presents and analyzes the data collected from the respondents through the structured questionnaire. The hypotheses were also tested using data gathered from the respondents.

**Table 1: Questionnaire Administered to Respondents**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Options | No of Respondents | Percentage |
| Distributed | 400 | 100 |
| Returned | 380 | 95 |
| Unreturned | 20 | 5 |

Source: Author’s field work, 2021.

From the table above, it can be seen that out of 400 copies of questionnaire distributed, 380 copies of the questionnaire were returned, representing 95% while 20 copies of the questionnaire were not returned, representing 5%. The researcher ensures that all questionnaire**s** were distributed to the respondents guiding them appropriately on how to fill the questionnaire. In some cases, the researcher collect the questionnaire immediately the respondent complete his or her own. Others who could not fill their questionnaire immediately; the researcher has to come back and collect it. At the end of the questionnaire only twenty questionnaires were not returned, three hundred and eighty were returned.

**Table 2: Sex Distribution of Respondents**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Options | No of Respondents | Percentage |
| Male | 170 | 44.8 |
| Female | 210 | 55.2 |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

Source: Author’s field work, 2021.

The table above shows that 170 respondents, representing 44.8% were male while 210 respondents, representing 55.2% were female. The researcher having distributed the questionnaire to both male and female in order to ascertain their views on the subject matter which after distribution the female counter are greater than the male counter.

**Table 3: Age distribution of Respondents**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Options | No of Respondents | Percentage |
| 18-25 years | 75 | 19.7 |
| 26-35 years | 85 | 22.3 |
| 36-43 years | 120 | 31.5 |
| 45 and above | 100 | 26.4 |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

Source: Author’s field work, 2021.

Table 3 above shows the age distribution of respondents. From the analysis of the table above it shows that 75 respondents, representing 19.7% were of the age bracket of 18-25 years; 85 respondents, representing 22.3% were of the age bracket of 26-35 years; 120 respondents, representing 31.5% were of the age bracket of 36-43 years while 100 respondents, representing 26.4% were of the age bracket of 45 and above.

From the above table therefore, the majority of the respondents are between the age bracket**s** of 36-43 years.

**Table 4: Marital status of Respondents**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Options | No of Respondents | Percentage |
| Single | 200 | 52.6 |
| Married | 180 | 47.4 |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

Source: Author’s field work, 2021.

The table above shows that 200 respondents, representing 52.6% were single while 180 respondents, representing 47.4% were married.

From the above table therefore, the majority of the respondents were single due to the fact that they are the one that participate fully during election and as politicians use youth to achieve their aim during election period.

**Table 5: Educational Qualification of respondents**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Options | No of Respondents | Percentage |
| WAEC | 150 | 39.5 |
| OND/NCE | 150 | 39.5 |
| B.sc/HND | 40 | 10.5 |
| M.sc | 30 | 7.8 |
| Others | 10 | 2.6 |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

Source: Author’s field work, 2021.

Table 5 above shows that 150 respondents, representing 39.5% are with WAEC/GCE; 150 respondents, representing 39.5% are with OND/NCE; 40 respondents, representing 10.5% are with B.sc/HND; 30 respondents, representing 7.8% are with M.sc while 10 respondents, representing 2.6% are with other certificate.

From the above table therefore, it can be seen that the majority of the respondents are with WAEC/GCE and OND/NCE respectively.

**Table 6: The Role of social media has affected political participation of the Ikwo People**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Responses | No of Respondents | Percentage |
| Agree | 281 | 73.9 |
| Strongly agree | 66 | 17.4 |
| Undecided | 18 | 4.8 |
| Disagree | 10 | 2.6 |
| Strongly disagree | 5 | 1.3 |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

Source: Author’s field work, 2021.

Table 6 above shows the respondents view on whether role of social media affects political participation of the Ikwo people. From the analysis of the above table, it showed that 281 respondents, representing 73.9% agreed; 66 respondents, representing 17.4% strongly agreed; 18 respondents, representing 4.85 were undecided; 10 respondents, representing 2.6% disagreed while 5 respondents, representing 1.3% strongly disagreed

Based on the analysis of the above table, the majority of the respondents are of the opinion that role of social media has affected political participation of the Ikwo people.

**Table 7: Use of social media enhanced peaceful political participation in Ikwo Local Government.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Responses | No of Respondents | Percentage |
| Agree | 100 | 26.4 |
| Strongly agree | 160 | 42.2 |
| Undecided | 20 | 5.2 |
| Disagree | 80 | 21.1 |
| Strongly disagree | 20 | 5.2 |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

Source: Author’s field work, 2021.

Table 7 above shows the views of respondents on whether use of social media enhance peaceful political participation in Ikwo Local Government. From the above table, 100 respondents, representing 26.4% agreed; 160 respondents, representing 42.2% strongly agreed; 20 respondents, representing 5.2% were undecided; 80 respondents, representing 21.1% disagreed while 20 respondents, representing 5.2% strongly disagreed.

From the above table therefore, it can be seen that the majority of the respondents were of the view that use of social media enhance peaceful political participation in Ikwo Local Government.

**Table 8: Social media educate people of Ikwo on voter’s registration**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Responses | No of Respondents | Percentage |
| Agree | 300 | 78.9 |
| Strongly agree | 40 | 10.6 |
| Undecided | 21 | 5.5 |
| Disagree | 19 | 5 |
| Strongly disagree | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

Source: Author’s field work, 2021.

Table 8 above shows the view of respondents on whether social media educate people of Ikwo on voter’s registration. From the above table, 300 respondents, representing 78.9% agreed; 40 respondents, representing 10.6% strongly agreed; 21 respondents, representing 5.5% undecided; 19 respondents, representing 5% disagreed.

From the table above, one can rightly observed that social media educate**d** people of Ikwo on voter’s registration. This view was gotten from the majority of the respondents.

**Table 9: Social media help on political interest of people of Ikwo**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Responses | No of Respondents | Percentage |
| Agree | 290 | 76.3 |
| Strongly agree | 5 | 1.3 |
| Undecided | 0 | 0 |
| Disagree | 80 | 21.1 |
| Strongly disagree | 5 | 1.3 |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

Source: Author’s field work, 2021.

Table 9 above shows the views of respondents on whether social media help on political interest of people of Ikwo. From the above table, 290 respondents, representing 76.3% agreed; 5 respondents, representing 1.3% strongly agreed; 0 respondent, representing 0% were undecided; 80 respondents, representing 21.1% disagreed while 5 respondents, representing 1.3% strongly disagreed.

From the above table therefore, it can be seen that the majority of the respondents are of the view that social media help on political interest of people of Ikwo

**Table 10: Social media is used for online campaign which helped in political participation of people of Ikwo**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Responses | No of Respondents | Percentage |
| Agree | 202 | 53.1 |
| Strongly agree | 5 | 1.3 |
| Undecided | 40 | 10.3 |
| Disagree | 113 | 29.7 |
| Strongly disagree | 20 | 5.2 |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

Source: Author’s field work, 2021.

Table 10 above shows the response of respondents on whether social media is used for online campaign which helped in political participation of people of Ikwo. 202 respondents, representing 53.1% agreed; 5 respondents, representing 1.3% strongly agreed; 40 respondents, representing 10.3% were undecided; 113 respondents, representing 29.7% disagreed while 20 respondents, representing 5.2% strongly disagreed From the above table therefore, it can be seen that the majority of the respondents agreed that social media is used for online campaign which helped in political participation of people of Ikwo.

**Table 11: Social media stimulate offline political participation among people of Ikwo**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Responses | No of Respondents | Percentage |
| Agree | 181 | 47.7 |
| Strongly agree | 170 | 44.8 |
| Undecided | 20 | 5.2 |
| Disagree | 9 | 2.3 |
| Strongly disagree | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

Source: Author’s field work, 2021.

Table 11 above shows the views of respondents on whether social media stimulate offline political participation among people of Ikwo. From the table above, 181 respondents, representing 47.7 % agreed; 170 respondents, representing 44.8% strongly agreed; 20 respondents, representing 5.2% were undecided; 9 respondents, representing 2.3% disagreed while 0 respondents, representing 0 strongly disagreed.

Based on the analysis in table 11, it was discovered that the majority of the respondents were of the view that social media stimulate offline political participation among people of Ikwo.

**Table 12: Social media stimulate voting exercise of people of Ikwo**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Responses | No of Respondents | Percentage |
| Agree | 190 | 50 |
| Strongly agree | 0 | 0 |
| Undecided | 35 | 9.2 |
| Disagree | 35 | 9.2 |
| Strongly disagree | 120 | 31.6 |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

Source: Author’s field work, 2021.

Table 12 above shows the respondents view on whether social media stimulate voting exercise of people of Ikwo. Table 12 indicated that 190 respondents, representing 50% agreed; 0 respondents, representing 0% strongly agreed; 35 respondents, representing 9.2% were undecided; 35 respondents, representing 9.2% disagreed while 120 respondents, representing 31.6% strongly disagreed

From the above table, the majority of the respondents were of the view that social media stimulate voting exercise of people of Ikwo.

**Table 13: Social media desisting from hate speech enhance peaceful political participation in Ikwo Local Government**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Responses | No of Respondents | Percentage |
| Agree | 113 | 29.7 |
| Strongly agree | 202 | 53.1 |
| Undecided | 40 | 10.3 |
| Disagree | 5 | 1.3 |
| Strongly disagree | 20 | 5.2 |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

Source: Author’s field work, 2021.

Table 13 above shows whether social media desisting from hate speech enhance peaceful political participation in Ikwo Local Government. In item number 13, 113 respondents, representing 28.7% agreed; 202 respondents, representing 53.1% strongly shared the same view; 40 respondents, representing 10.3% were undecided while 5 respondents, representing 1.3% disagreed while 20 respondents, representing 5.2% strongly disagreed.

From the above table, it can be seen that the majority of the respondents were of the view that social media desisting from hate speech enhance peaceful political participation in Ikwo Local Government.

**Table 14: Using social media in monitoring and reporting electoral malpractices enhances peaceful political participation in Ikwo Local Government Area**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Responses | No of Respondents | Percentage |
| Agree | 300 | 78.9 |
| Strongly agree | 20 | 5.2 |
| Undecided | 20 | 5.2 |
| Disagree | 20 | 5.2 |
| Strongly disagree | 20 | 5.2 |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

Source: Author’s field work, 2021.

Table 14 above shows that 300 respondents, representing 78.9% agreed that use of social media in monitoring and reporting electoral malpractices enhances political participation in Ikwo Local Government Area; 20 respondents, representing 5.2% strongly shared the similar view; 20 respondents, representing 5.2% were undecided; 20 respondents, representing 5.2% disagreed while 20 respondents, representing 5.2% strongly disagreed.

From the above table, it can be seen that the majority of the respondents were of the view that use of social media in monitoring and reporting electoral malpractices enhances political participation in Ikwo Local Government Area.

**Table 15: Social media engaging on constructive information helps in peaceful political participation in Ikwo Local Government Area**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Responses | No of Respondents | Percentage |
| Agree | 290 | 76.3 |
| Strongly agree | 10 | 2.6 |
| Undecided | 40 | 10.5 |
| Disagree | 20 | 5.2 |
| Strongly disagree | 20 | 5.2 |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

Source: Author’s field work, 2021.

Table 15 above shows that 290 respondents, representing 76.3% agreed that social media engaging on constructive information helps in peaceful political participation in Ikwo Local Government Area; 10 respondents, representing 2.6% strongly agreed; 40 respondents, representing 10.5% undecided while 20 respondents, representing 5.2% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

From the above table therefore, the majority of the respondents were of the view that social media engaging on constructive information helps in peaceful political participation in Ikwo Local Government Area

**Table 16: Fake news on political activities through the use of social media affects peaceful political participation in Ikwo Local Government**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Responses | No of Respondents | Percentage |
| Agree | 150 | 39.5 |
| Strongly agree | 150 | 39.5 |
| Undecided | 0 | 0 |
| Disagree | 40 | 10.5 |
| Strongly disagree | 40 | 10.5 |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

Source: Author’s field work, 2021.

From the above table, 150 respondents, representing 39.5% agreed that fake news on political activities through the use of social media affects peaceful political participation in Ikwo Local Government; 150 respondents, representing 39.5% strongly agreed thus sharing the same view; 0 respondent, representing 0% undecided; 40 respondents, representing 10.5% disagreed while 40 respondents, representing 10.5% strongly disagreed.

From the above table it can be seen that the majority of the respondents were of the view that fake news on political activities through the use of social media affects peaceful political participation in Ikwo Local Government

**Table 17: The use of social media to report political harassment enhance peaceful political participation in Ikwo Local Government Area**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Responses | No of Respondents | Percentage |
| Agree | 199 | 52.3 |
| Strongly agree | 155 | 40.8 |
| Undecided | 24 | 6.3 |
| Disagree | 2 | 0.6 |
| Strongly disagree | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

Source: Author’s field work, 2021.

Table 17 above shows that 199 respondents, representing 52.3% agreed thatthe use of social media to report political harassment enhance peaceful political participation in Ikwo Local Government Area; 155 respondents, representing 40.8% strongly agreed that; 24 respondents, representing 6.35% were undecided; 2 respondents, representing 0.6% disagreed while 0 respondent, representing 0% strongly disagreed. From the above table, the majority of the respondents were of the view that the use of social media to report political harassment enhances peaceful political participation in Ikwo Local Government Area.

**Table 18: The use of social media helps in electing candidates with more experiences in politics and credible in delivery of good governance in Ikwo Local Government**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Responses | No of Respondents | Percentage |
| Agree | 281 | 73.9 |
| Strongly agree | 66 | 17.4 |
| Undecided | 18 | 4.8 |
| Disagree | 10 | 2.6 |
| Strongly disagree | 5 | 1.3 |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

Source: Author’s field work, 2021.

From the data collected in table 18, 281 respondents, representing 73.9% agreed that the use of social media helps in electing candidates with more experiences in politics and credible in delivery of good governance in Ikwo Local Government; 66 respondents, representing 17.4% strongly agreed; 18 respondents, representing 4.8% were undecided; 10 respondents, representing 2.6% disagreed while 5 respondents, representing 1.3% strongly disagreed.

From the above table, the majority of the respondents were of the view that the use of social media helps in electing candidates with more experiences in politics and credible in delivery of good governance in Ikwo Local Government

**4.2 Discussion of Findings**

Having discussed the data collected through the use of questionnaires, the researcher therefore discusses the following findings:

1. That the use of social media affects political participation of the Ikwo People: from the view of the respondents, the majority are of the opinion that social media educate people of Ikwo on voter’s registration, political interest, online and offline political participation and voting exercise of people. In supporting of respondents views, Okoro and Nwafor (2013) noted that Nigerian politicians and organizations actively utilized social media to participate in politics. Organizations like Enough is Enough Nigeria, Reclaim Naija, Wango Net, and IamLagos established platforms enabling citizens to report election-related incidences with pictures, videos, text messages and voicemail. In another development, another group known as “Reclaim Naija”, who used text messages and e-mail reports to compile a live online map of trouble spots. There were also “Twitter activists” whose job was to look out for rigging and spread warning about bombings at polling stations. Omenugha (2011) in Okoro and Nwafor (2013) observed that this massive use of social media culminated in the success of the 2011-2015 general elections in Nigeria.

Starndberg (2013) supported when he noted that the use of Facebook and Twitter generates great effect to engage in politics. Social media users, who lack interest and motivation to participate in politics, would be more feasible to access political contents consciously through social media. He added that in general elections**;** social media use for political activities is one of the predictors of political participation mainly for turnout and voting

2. That use of social media may enhance peaceful political participation in Ikwo Local Government Area. From the view of the respondents, the majority of the respondents established that social media desisting from hate related speeches enhance political participation; monitoring and reporting electoral malpractices through the use of social media enhances political participation, social media engaging on constructive information helps to enhance political participation, the use of social media to report political harassment enhance political participation and the use of social media helps in electing candidates with more experiences in politics and credible in delivery of good governance. Supporting the view of the respondents, Ani (2018) asserts that the use of social media specifically during the elections first became noticeable in the preparations for the 2011 general elections. In a review of these elections, the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre documented at least three main ways in which Nigerians were using social media; first, to share information relating to the elections. This included the development of novel technologies that allowed people to access data and information in real time. One example was Revoda, a mobile application which enabled a parallel vote count, access to polling unit results, transmission of collected results and additional information about the entire electoral process (Williams, 2016). Second, social media platforms were used by political parties, candidates and governmental organisations for campaigning and raising awareness. The Independent National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (INEC) used the opportunity to develop its communication channels and engage with citizens through Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. INEC’s Situation Room was established, enabling people to directly contact the organisation to report misconduct and concerns about the poll. The Commission received about 4,000 tweets in the three days during the presidential election.

Finally, Nigerians used social media “to improve the efficiency of election observation”. Citizens were able to share information and pictures such as results from their polling units. Although this may not have prevented malpractice and falsification of results, it meant that the public was aware of the trends in different locations and more likely to challenge any falsified results. Civil society organisations were also instrumental in leading campaigns for transparency and accountability, as demonstrated by projects such as Reclaim Naija, an election incident reporting system that allowed feedback to be easily aggregated and analysed. This allowed Nigerians to report incidents of violence and electoral malpractices through text messages. Between the National Assembly elections of 9 April 2011 and the presidential election of 16 April 2011, citizen observers submitted 6,000 incident reports to the platform. Another project, The Social Media Tracking Centre, harvested social media reports from the elections before mapping incidents and monitoring the process of the polls over time. 20 At the end of that election, the INEC’s chair Attahiru Jega stated that the use of social media enhanced transparency in the electoral process and made the INEC more accountable to the public in the conduct of elections. By 2015, citizen journalism and observation were often finding their way into the mainstream news as media organisations increasingly invited their subscribers to report on online platforms. One noticeable feature was the expanded use of hash tags as flashpoints for political discussion and advocacy. On the eve of the 2015 elections, between 40 to 50 active hash tags linked to Nigerians actively discussing the elections were identified. ‘Hash tagging’ in this way also became a way of identifying political affiliation and support for candidates among the electorate**s**.

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**5.1 SUMMARY**

Having analyzed the effect of social media on political participation, using Ikwo local government as a case study; the researcher therefore summarizes as follows: The study adopted descriptive survey method that carried two research questions and research objectives were indicated. The study made use of gratification theory as propounded by Elihu in 1974. Data collected with the use of structured questionnaires which responses were collected from the respondents and was subjected to statistical analysis using simple percentage -square. The responses from the respondents revealed that:

The study revealed that social media has affected political participation of the Ikwo people. The study also revealed that majority are of the opinion that social media educate people of Ikwo on voter’s registration, political interest, online and offline political participation and voting exercise of people. The voting exercise of people are paramount in electing credible candidates that will see the affairs of the state; and this cannot be possible when political parties, supporters and the flag bearers of any party candidate make effective use of social media to educate people on voter’s registration, conduct debate that will enhance people interest towards participating in an online and offline campaign capable of ensuring massive turn out of voters during voting exercise.

It was also revealed that use of social media enhance peaceful political participation in Ikwo Local Government. Social media users such as political parties, supporters of political parties etc desisting from hate speech, fake news and engaging in constructive information that will increase peoples interest in participation in voting exercise during general elections which hitherto will help in electing credible candidates with more experienced capable of delivery good governance to its people. It is pertinent to note that use of social media helps in monitoring and reporting electoral malpractices such as fraud, rigging, intimidation, violence, money inducements and underage voting capable of undermining electoral integrity and invariably affecting peaceful political participation.

**5.2 CONCLUSION**

Based on the ease of accessibility, the participatory, interactive, flexible, and affordable nature of the internet, it has made it easy for people to express their views on political matters freely**.** Social media is boosting political involvement, activities, and participation amongst people in Nigeria especially during election period, though post-election use of social media for political purposes is still minimal. However, social media has promoted political communication and participation among its users. Okoro and Nwafor (2013) noted that whereas many use the social media wisely to campaign for their various candidates, interact with candidates, and electorates one-on-one during election and electioneering periods; others used them to attack opponents, spread false rumors, hate and inciting messages, digitally manipulate images, messages and videos, hack into people’s accounts to commit all manner of frauds resulting in several data and identity thefts. Based on this, it is instructive to note that the relevant government authorities, educational institutions, and other sponsors have to take good measures to ensure that they are aware of how and why they need to use social media to participate in politics in a manner that is devoid of tension, hatred, rancor, and that will enhance modesty, civility and political participation.

**5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the finding, the study recommends as follows:

1. Political parties should ensure that social media is use wisely to educate the electorate on the need to participate in politics in order to enhance credible election

2. Candidates contesting for election**s** should desist from hate speech through the use of social media in order to enhance political participation of people.

3. Fake news should be avoided by supporters of any political party in order to enhance political participation of people.

4. Social media should be used for election monitoring and reporting of electoral malpractices in order to ensure confidence of voters towards participating in politics.

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