

**THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON VOTING BEHAVIOUR AMONG
YOUTHS IN ILORIN-WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KWARA
STATE, NIGERIA**

BY

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research work has been read and approved by the undersigned on behalf of the Department of Public Administration, Institute of Finance and Management (IFMS), Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin as meeting the requirement for the award of National Diploma in Public Administration.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Almighty God for His guidance, wisdom, and strength throughout this journey. Also, my parents Alh Taiye and my late mother, Hajia Lateefat

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I'm sincerely grateful to Almighty Allah, the most beneficent and most merciful, whose grace drove me to the end of this journey.

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ABSTRACT

Social media, a 21st century platform and a tool to help nation and its societies to create, express, exchange their thoughts and ideas widely. People of all age group are fascinated to use and make this tool as any other media, to connect it to the world with lesser time and energy. Social media technology is wide enough to include blogging, picture-sharing, wall posting, music-sharing, crowd sourcing and voice over IP, blogs etc, which today people are enjoying to utilize it to communicate with each other and also stimulate themselves to innovate more ideas and expressions. Social media, emerging as a hottest promotion tool during elections by the political parties to influence, connect and express their vision, objective to help them increase their visibility, or to gain majority. Today people live on social media, where even political parties want to reach out to hit them where they live. This study was intends to examine the impact of social media on voting behavior among youths in Nigeria. This study is guided by the following objectives; to finds out if social media influences voters' behaviour among youths in Offa Local Government, Kwara State, to determine the influence social media has on voters' behaviour in Offa Local Government, Kwara state and to find out other factors that influence voters' behaviour in Offa Local Government, Kwara state. The study employed the descriptive and stastical design; questionnaires in addition to library research are applied in order to collect data. Primary and secondary data sources were used and data was analyzed using the chi square statistical tool at 5% level of significance which is presented in frequency tables and percentage. The respondents under the study are 150 voters in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. The study proposed that social media is an influence on voters' behavior which affect their decisions and

judgements. It further suggests that campaigns on electoral process should be a continuous one on the social media with the right or positive intention.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The advent of internet and technology has exposed majority of the global population to different interactive platforms on which different kinds of information is exchanged which might significantly have impact on human behaviour, decision and judgment (CES, 2012). Social media are new information network and information technology using a form of communication utilizing interactive and user-produced content, and interpersonal relationships are created and maintained. The emergence of the Internet as the new mass medium of the 21st century now changes the mass media substantially. Information can be distributed at high speed, low cost, and broad scope and as a result, there is egalitarian access to the production and the consumption of news (Prat and Strömberg, 2011)

Today's social media has made the world a "global village", with the quick transfer of information overriding the challenges of time and distance (Friedman, 2007). Social media's has gradually become one of the important means of influencing the society and this influence is based exclusively on its social aspects of interaction and participation. As social media gains more popularity and scope, its impact on voters' political and cultural perceptions cannot be underestimated as social media practically influences the way users interact, communicate and make decisions on social, cultural, and political issues in today's world.

Voting behaviour is a form of political behavior exhibited by electorates which can be influenced by a lot of factors ranging from emotional, ethnicity, religion leading them to make certain decisions. Various factors such as gender, race, culture or religion go a long way in affecting the way a voter behaves and the decision he makes as regards selection of a candidate of his choice. However, key external factors may also influence a voter's behaviour such as political socialization, socio-cultural views, tolerance of diverse political views and the media, internet inclusive. The impact of these influences on voting behavior is dependent on attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and the source of available information to the voter.

The social media has become a powerful medium which may affect voting behaviour because of its potential to provide direct and cheap access to the production and consumption of current information at any part of the world without editorial filtering (Sunstein, 2001). Not only do social media provide information about political affiliations, candidates and their party manifestoes, it also provides a platform through which voters across cultural divides can relate and interact with themselves on issues about these candidates.

As evidenced by the recent March 28th Presidential elections in Nigeria, political parties, including the two prominent parties took to social media platforms such as online networking sites, blogs, mobile newspapers, news ads, etc. to campaign and mobilize not only youths but all class of internet users to vote for them. This brought about a variety of interesting news and drama online providing opportunity for users to read, respond,

interact, argue and trash out issues online. Twitter, facebook, blogs, online newspapers etc. became platforms for people to air their thoughts on various candidates, and sway others towards their line of thinking with various debates, hashtags and online campaigns. This brought all Nigerians together irrespective of political divide, ethnicity and religion on national issues.

Nearly every political party in the country used social media to campaign and advance its plans, message and manifestoes to supporters including advertising, mobilization and organizing in all the states of the federation, and even fundraising. Facebook, YouTube and especially Twitter were used to let voters know how each party or particular candidate felt about important national issues ranging from security to power. Hence social media became powerful enough to influence voter decisions and choices as many voters who had fixed their minds and conscience on voting a particular party or candidate began to change their minds based on certain information or idea they got online about the party or candidate. Information gotten by a particular voter was also not static, as the same voter would use several internet tools and buttons to broadcast same message to other voters like him through medium such as blogs, facebook, chat rooms etc. in order to influence them.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The use of emotional appeals in political campaigns to increase support for a candidate or decrease support for a challenger is a widely recognized practice and a common element of any campaign strategy (Brader, T. 2006). Campaigns often seek to

instill positive emotions such as zeal and hopefulness about their candidate to improve turnout and political activism while seeking to raise fear and anxiety about the opposition. Zeal tends to reinforce preference for the candidate and party, while fear and anxiety interrupt voter behavioral patterns and leads individual voters to look for new sources of information on divergent political issues (Marcus et al, 2000). Sources of information available to a voter vary widely including the traditional media, TV, radio and newspapers. However, with the advent of online social media forum, most voters can access information, debate on the information and also give feedback on his own views, opinions and expectations from the party and candidate.

Although the social media has helped in increasing the popularity of candidates and their parties, it has the capacity to make or mar their chances and voter's perception of the party or candidates. Rumors, falsehood, propaganda and derogatory information about individual candidates or parties are commonplace online and spread faster than anticipated, often with disastrous outcomes. This is largely attributed to the lack of editorial filtering, and the anonymity of most online users. The internet encourages anonymity of its users, which means that those who write and comment often use nicknames or aliases. Hence, anonymity provides an excellent opportunity for writing false stories or spreading rumors about candidates and their parties and this often leads to rancor fear and anxiety about the opposition party.

This has a huge influence on voter behaviour, as most voters who read stories online have a tendency to believe such stories without crosschecking facts and take decisions

based on this propaganda. This is a widely known fact among political parties and they use it to their advantage in bringing down their opponents. Previous research has found that it is possible to influence a person's attitudes toward a political candidate using carefully crafted information about such candidate online, which in turn may influence the voter's behaviour towards the candidate. Social media can also be used by various parties to propagate false news and propaganda about the opposition in order to disfavor such party or candidate in the eyes of the electorates while exonerating theirs. This has a huge influence on voter behaviour as many voters make decisions based on such news they read online.

Furthermore, social media has made voters privy to any kind of information about politicians and their lives as there are no longer any isolated places or hiding holes. The private and public lives of society's most influential figures including politicians have been made public online. This is because in today's world, once a politician declares for a post, his entire life including his educational background, his family, his job and any past mistakes or excesses are made public on social media platforms for people to comment, discuss and publicly judge. Many politicians have been found in compromising positions with their words or phrase taken out of context and magnified to huge proportions by opposition parties in order to discredit them.

Many at times, people go to the extent of recording private conversations or actions of these candidates and make the recorded audio or video public on various social media platforms such as Youtube quickly, with a view to elicit response and vicious backlash

from voters and other online users. The belief is that it will go a long way in influencing voter's behaviour and turning such voter against the candidate since the voter can now judgmentally make decisions about the candidate based on what he said, did or other information about him or her. Even though, such information are refuted sometimes by the concerned party or individual, it remains valid in the minds of many voters who may have made up their mind already or simply are not aware of the true situation.

1.3 Research Questions

- i. Does social media influence voting behaviour among the youths in Offa Local Government, Kwara State?
- ii. What is the influence of social media on voting behaviour among the youths in Offa Local Government, Kwara State?
- iii. What are the factors that influence voting behaviour among the youths in Offa Local Government, Kwara State?

1.4 Aims and Objectives

The general objective of this study is to determine the impact of social media on voter's behaviour among youths in Offa Local Government, Kwara State. The specific objectives are;

- i. To find out if social media influences voters' behaviour among youths in Offa Local Government, Kwara State,
- ii. To determine the influence social media has on voters' behaviour among the youths in Offa Local Government, Kwara state,

- iii. To examine the role of some external factors such as political socialization, socio-cultural views, among others also influence voters' behaviour among the youths in Offa Local Government, Kwara state, and
- iv. To propose possible solutions to negative impact of social media on voting behaviour among the youths in Kwara State.

1.5 Hypotheses

In order to enable the researcher to assess the impact of social media on voting behaviour among the youths in Offa Local Government Area of Kwara state, the following hypotheses will be tested:

H₀: social media does not have any impact on voting behaviour among the youths in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara state.

H_A: social media has impact on voting behaviour among the youths in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara state.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study will help beam the searchlight on the impact of social media on voters' behaviour, the decisions they make and elections as a whole based on the information available to voters on the internet. It will also enlighten relevant stakeholders such as political parties, candidates, and even the civil society on how social media can bring about awareness and campaign opportunities if properly utilized.

This research study will help stakeholders understand that maintaining a good and healthy profile online with a cordial relationship between the party and voters can positively influence voters' behaviour. Lastly, this research work will add to the body of knowledge on the already existing scholarly materials on the impact of social media on voter behaviour.

1.7 Scope/Limitation of the Study

This study will examine the impact of social media on voting behaviour among the youths in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara state between 2015-2018 (3years) with special reference to the actual influence it has on voting behaviour among the youths which is the focus group, either positive or negative and the factors such as ethnicity, religion affiliation, socio-cultural views, political socialization, which determine the behaviour, attitudes and beliefs that an ordinary voter adopts based on available information gotten online,.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Voter: a person who has attained the voting age and has the right to vote for a candidate in an election

Social media: are computer mediated tools that allow people to create, share or exchange information, ideas and pictures/videos in virtual communities and online networks

Behaviour: is the range of actions and mannerisms made by individuals in conjunction with themselves or their environment.

Internet: an interconnected group of computer networks allowing for electronic communication.

Election: the formal process of selecting a person for public office or of accepting or rejecting a political proposition by voting.

Campaign: an organized effort which seeks to influence the decision making process within a specific group.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

The gradual switch from traditional media to social media use in mobilizing and campaigning to voters by politicians is a reality that has come to stay in today's modern world, and if taken advantage of, it can open up the possibility for politicians to structure their campaigns to address voters with different beliefs on a more personal level and consequently influence voter's attitude and behaviour offline. As social media use for political activities gradually increases in popularity and scope, it is of utmost importance to know if there are changes in voter attitudes and behaviour based on online information and interaction. It is also of necessity to investigate the influence of various political campaign sites and other social media sites over voters' political and cultural perceptions and the way that they communicate and act afterwards.

It is a known fact that social media has significantly altered the accessibility and availability of information on political parties and candidates in recent times. Instead of gathering basic knowledge from news stories and websites, users of social media gather information, and at times, opinions, using interactive sites where communication is continuous between voters and politicians and where information flows directly from politicians' themselves to voters' via Facebook and Twitter pages etc. It therefore remains a fact that most voters are likely to change their minds, beliefs and behaviors based on information they get from these sites.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

2.2.1 Social Media

The relationship between social media and politics is rooted in the desire for change. Today the public at large is using the online information and networking access to find solutions to many challenges. Civil society with its rising frustration over political apathy, is trying to use social media for a change. This online revolution may be less about technology and more about the gradually changing human behaviour.

Social media connects people and gets them talking with the enabling of content sharing. Social media also becomes more meaningful because it allows politicians to know the voters, interact with them and listen to their views, suggestions and opinions. The social media has an immense impact on its target audience, with the creation of an enabling environment for people to participate. When some of these users actively engage in political debates, they become great tools in spreading the word and influencing other people's opinion. More and more Nigerians are getting on the social media bandwagon, and this will increase with time, According to the Nigerian Communications Commission NCC, the number of Internet users on the Global System for Mobile communications (GSM) networks in Nigeria had reached 81 million in January 2015. This implies that Nigerians are gradually embracing the use of social media as a powerful tool to manage their lives and stay in touch with happenings around them in different aspects of the economy, politics inclusive. This came into play in the 2015 elections in the country where

a lot of internet users participated in several online polls to select candidates, with a lot of political parties sponsoring online ads, campaigns and interactive forums.

Several politicians also had online sites, blogs and chat pages such as facebook, twitter, Youtube channels where people interacted with and discussed political issues including fervent emerging issues such as book haram, corruption, and insecurities etc. that changed the political landscape of the country. This contributed significantly to the way information passed round the country and influenced a lot of voter's behaviour and attitudes towards the elections.

Social networking sites can be described as networks of friends for social or professional interactions (Trusov et.al, 2009). Online social networks have completely changed the spreading of information by making it easy to share and digest information on the internet (Akrimi & Khemakhem, 2012). Social media has also influenced consumer behaviour from information acquisition to post purchase behaviour such as dissatisfaction statements or behaviours (Mangold & Faulds, 2009) and patterns of Internet usage (Laroche et al., 2012). These sites therefore act as a great medium for view mobilization. People feel free in sharing their thoughts on any issue and people are gradually raising their voices against social vices such as violation of Human Rights, corruption, Insecurity and other social issues.

2.2.1 Role of social media in influencing voter behaviour

It is believed that social media plays a very valuable role throughout an election process which goes a long way in swaying voter's opinions, beliefs and attitudes (Aindrila et al, 2014).

New and existing voters go online to seek information, address queries and, most importantly, to form opinions. The same is widely influenced by the social media chatter, information provided by political parties, the ability to participate in a dialogue with the voters, and the overall sentiment prevalent around the leaders up for voting. The interactions online also become an enabler for the undecided voter population to make informed choices and decisions. Hence, the information gathered from the social media have both positive and negative impact on the political consciousness of users.

2.2.2 i. Positive impact of social media on voters

- a. Access to new voters
- b. One on one platform for politicians to participate in a dialogue with citizens.
- c. Accessibility to all.
- d. Powerful platform to educate and inform on current issues.
- e. Transparent, fast and quick.
- f. Source of positive influence for political parties.

ii. Negative impact of social networking

- i. It is a medium that cannot be entirely controlled.
- ii. It is prone to hacking.

- iii. Slack or weak responses can lead to a vicious backlash from the audience.
- iv. Negative sentiments online can influence election.
- v. Misrepresentation of facts and publishing of propaganda

2.3 Review of Related Literature

2.3.1 Social Media and Voting Behaviour

Politicians, citizens and journalists are increasingly adopting new social media like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to support their political purposes, be it to engage other stakeholders in the political public sphere, campaign, disseminate and retrieve information, or contribute to rational critical debate (Sauter & Bruns, 2013). An overview of the Nigerian social media literature suggests that, there has been very little research on the impact of the social media on political campaign and voters' behaviour in particular.

Previous studies conducted on the impacts of social media use on political participation and influence on voter attitudes indicates that internet access and exposure may increase political knowledge and; as a result, increase participation among voters with a significant change in perception of candidates regardless of political affiliation or socio-economic status. Despite the internet's potential cost effectiveness for reaching diverse groups of voters, the challenge of effectively using it as a medium to influence voter attitudes and behaviour remains.

The influence of social media on political participation has been studied extensively in the United States (Chaffe & Kanihan, 1997; Golan & Wanta, 2001). In taking advantage of new communication platforms during the 2008 presidential election, Barack Obama

proved the benefit of using social media for political campaigns. Also, in a study conducted by Matthew James and Masahiro Yamamoto published in *Mass Communication and Society*, they provided insight into the social media habits of young people (adults under the age of 30), a demographic targeted by Obama in the 2008 campaign. The study found that young people tend to get political information from social media more than any other age group. It is becoming clear that online tools play a significant role in shaping public opinion and setting political agendas (Wallsten, 2007; Woolley et al. 2010).

Furthermore, research from PEW Internet Research Center showed that in 2008, a record-breaking 46% of Americans used the internet, email or text messaging on their mobile devices to gain information about campaigns, share opinions and mobilize others (Rainie & Smith, 2008). Obama's supporters made up a substantial amount of this group. A notable 39% of voters are using the Internet to get unfiltered campaign materials, including videos of debates, speeches, announcements, political position papers and transcripts.

In addition, the 2008 US presidential elections integrated other media that was not previously used in the campaign process. During the months leading up to the election, 35% of Americans said they had watched political videos online, 6% of Americans had made a political contribution online and 10% said they had used social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter to gather information about candidates and become involved in their campaigns. Internet users under 30 include an important part of this group: Two-thirds

of them have a social networking profile and of those, half use their sites to engage in the political process or obtain information.

Voters mobilization experiments (Gerber, et al, 2008; Bryan et al, 2011; Nickerson, 2008) have shown that most methods of contacting potential voters have small impacts (if any) on turnout rates, ranging from 1% to 10%. However, the ability to reach large populations online means that even small impacts could yield behavioural changes for millions of people. Furthermore, as many elections are competitive, these changes could affect electoral outcomes.

In a randomized controlled trial of political mobilization messages delivered to 61 million Facebook users during the 2010 US congressional elections, results show that the messages directly influenced political self-expression, information seeking and real-world voting behaviour of millions of people. Furthermore, the messages not only influenced the users who received them but also the users' friends, and friends of friends. The impact of social transmission on real-world voting was greater than the direct impact of the messages themselves, and nearly all the transmission occurred between 'close friends' who were more likely to have a face-to-face relationship. These results therefore suggest that strong ties are instrumental for spreading both online and real-world behaviour in human social networks. These findings thereby show that online political mobilization can have a direct impact on political self-expression, information seeking and real-world voting behaviour, and that messages including cues from an individual's social network are more effective than information only appeals.

2.3.2 Influence of Social Media on Voters' Behaviour in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, dearth of literature exists on the subject matter of relationship between the social media and voting behaviour. However, in recent times there has been an increasing evidence that information gotten from social media goes a long way in helping potential voters make decision and form opinions about candidates and their party as evidenced by the conducted presidential election on March 28th 2015, where the social media was impressively and massively used by several political parties in Nigeria to advance the cause of their candidates and reach millions of online voters.

The social media is been seen as a marketing tool by corporate, government, and various organizations to communicate, connect and attract its followers wide across, also this new form of connectivity has changed the way people think and relate with each other. Thus, it is expected that social media will play a huge role and will continue to influence the coming elections of the country to a great extent. As Nigeria is just getting over a most significant round of state elections in her states such as Kwara; The question people are asking is how much of a role social media is playing in Nigeria elections. In the run up to general elections 2019, this question will gain more importance. According to a report released in October this year, "Social Media in Nigeria 2018", by the Internet and Mobile Association of Nigeria and IMRB, social media users in Nigeria are expected to grow by 19% between January and March 2019. The report also says that 19.8 million users access social media platforms via their mobile phone in urban Nigeria. The report claims that based on the number of eligible voters, and the data of actual voter turnout from the

Independent National Electoral Commission and field interviews, there could be a vote swing of 34 percent in 24 states –where the internet users are sizeable. The swing indicated is considerable. However due to the absence of other data the report has not clarified whether the influence is due to pure social media, or other factors such as avenues of traditional communication.

Social media today has become more vibrant, dynamic and youth-centric in nature, in order to facilitate the people to communicate well across borders. India has become the third-largest internet base globally with more than 238 million users. The widely used media is now becoming an everyday activity for its consumers to share their thoughts, feelings, experiences among themselves. The popularity of social media is also because of its multiple roles which include: interaction, live chat, status update, image and video sharing, thus connecting all our sense organ into it. The media is not only confined to users like us to meet and communicate but even the politicians of various parties are using it to grab attention of its voters to communicate its vision, objective etc.

According to digital media experts, there are about 100 million first-time voters active on social media and the main target of the political parties to enlarge their audience reach. Social media users are expected to grow by 19% between January and March 2019. The report also says that about 19.8 million users access social media platform via their mobile phone in urban Nigeria (According to IMRB report in October 2018). If people are

consuming content on social media it will reflect in their perception about the Political Parties or candidates (Chetan Mahajan, Managing Director of 20:20)

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This research study is situated within the limit of Media Systems Dependency Theory

2.4.1 Media Systems Dependency Theory

Considering the impact of social media on the public and the public's relationship with social media, it becomes clear that social media have become a part of the way we talk, socialize and spend our time; social media has begun to take precedence over other communication and traditional media outlets due to its heightened accessibility and usability. Hence, dependence on social media to provide individuals with rewarding interactions has become greater over the years. This makes social media a particularly effective communication tool, enabling succinct communication with individuals who have already expressed an interest. More importantly it enables public figures “to build deeper relationships” with the public on a more personal level (Comm, 2009) with clients, partners and individuals, creating an easy, far-reaching campaign tactics for modern day politicians.

Media system dependency theory (MSD), developed by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin Defleur in 1976 is a theory grounded in classical sociological literature which posits that, media and their audiences should be studied in the context of larger social systems (Wikipedia.com, 2015). MSD ties together the interrelations of broad social systems, mass media, and the individual into a comprehensive explanation of media impacts. According to Baran and Davis, the media systems dependency theory posits that “the more an

individual depends on having needs gratified by media use, the more important the media's role in the person's life, and therefore the more influence on his or her attitude and behaviour" (Baran & Davis, 2006).

This dependency on media emerges from three major relationships (Andreadis & Chadjipadelis, 2005)

i. Relationship between society and the media; in this relationship, media access and availability are regarded as the preceding factor to an individual's experience with the media. The kind of media dependence on societal systems widely varies and cuts across political, economic, and cultural strata.

ii. Relationship between media and the audience; This relationship constitutes the key variable in this theory because it affects how the public might use a mass medium and this relationship varies across media systems. The more significant the information needs are, the stronger the motivation to seek for related information hence greater dependency on the medium of sourcing for the information. Thus, the more likelihood for the media to affect the audience.

iv. Relationship between society and the audience; every society influences consumers' needs and motives for media use; and provide norms, values, knowledge, and laws for its members. Social systems can function as an alternative to the media by performing roles of the media.

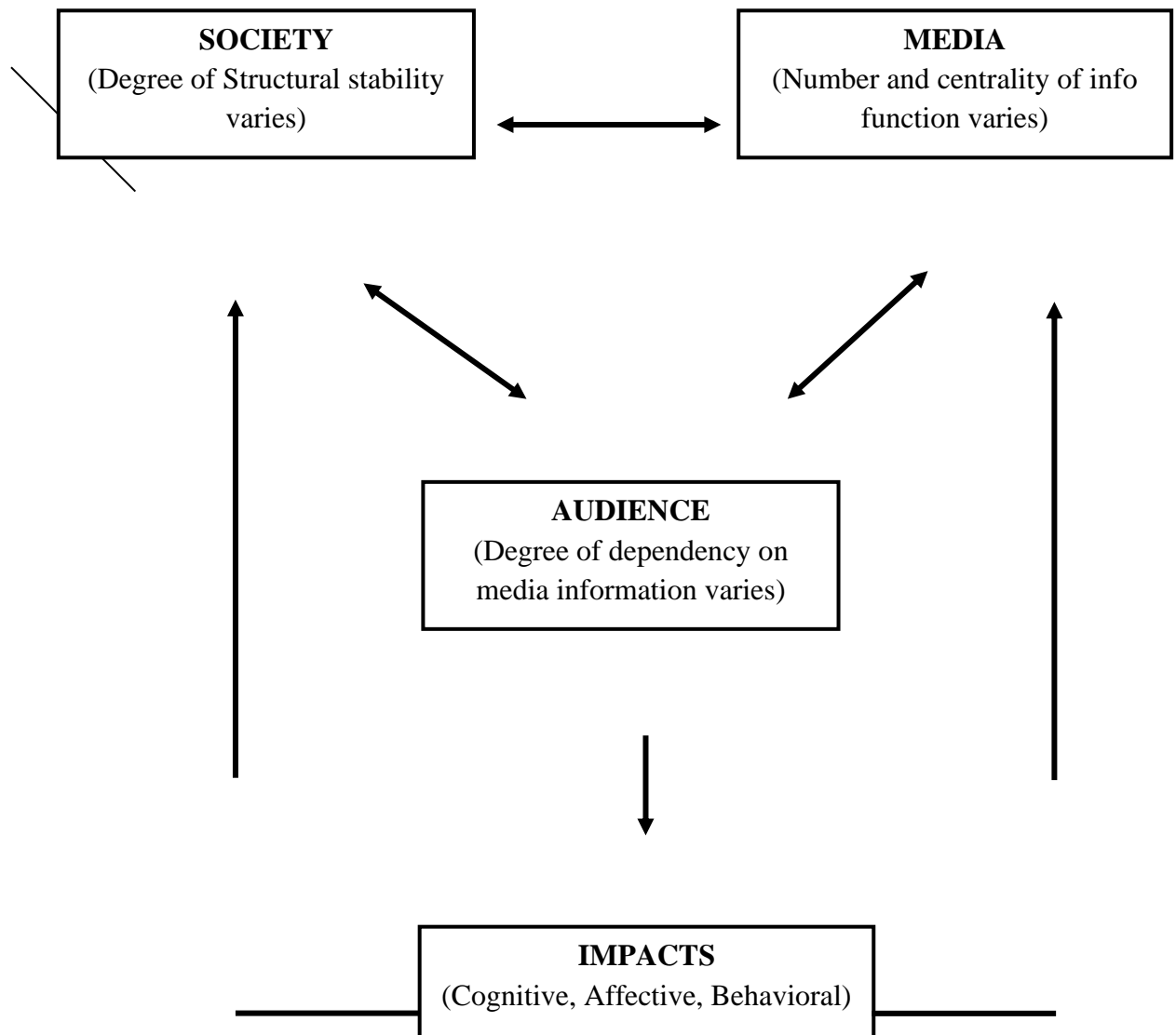


Fig 2.1.1 Social systems functioning as Media

Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur suggested that the cognitive, behavioral and affective consequences of media use are based on characteristics of both the individuals and their immediate social environment (Ladd & Lenz, 2011). There are five types of cognitive

impacts that can be exerted on an audience, first is the creation and resolution of ambiguity. Ambiguity occurs when audiences receive inadequate or incomplete information about their immediate social world. High level of ambiguity creates and audiences are more likely to turn to mass media to resolve ambiguity. Ambiguity tends to be prevalent during times of major social change or conflict such as election periods.

Agenda-setting which is the second impact is another reason why dependency theory is often referred to as a “comprehensive” theory of media impacts. This is because it incorporates the entire theory of agenda-setting within its theoretical framework. Like any other impact, media agenda-setting impacts are heightened during times when the audience’s needs and dependency on media are high.

Third is attitude formation. Media generally exposes the audience to completely new people and new ideas, such as political figures and celebrities, physical objects such as car safety mechanisms etc that the audience will eventually come to form attitudes about. Dependency does not suggest that the media is rigidly fixed or set in its ability to influence attitudes, but the theory argues that media plays a role in selecting objects and people for which the audience eventually form attitudes about. If an individual is experiencing greater media dependency, it is therefore expected that such person will form more complex attitudes about these people, objects etc than individuals with low media dependency (Ladd & Lenz, 2011).

The media also has the potential cognitive impact of expanding people's belief systems over time. Media creates a kind of "expansion" of citizen's beliefs by disseminating

information about other people, places, and things. Enlargement of people's belief systems implies a broadening or enlarging of individual beliefs in a certain category or aspect of the society. These beliefs eventually meet with and are incorporated into an already existing value system regarding religion, free enterprise, work, ecology, patriotism, recreation, and even family values.

Lastly, is value clarification and conflict by the media. The media clarify values such as equality, freedom, honesty, forgiveness etc often by precipitating information about value conflicts. When conflicts, play out in the mass media, the value conflicts are identified, resulting in the audience forming their own value positions and beliefs. Such a position may be painful to articulate because it can force a choice between mutually incompatible goals and the means for obtaining them. However, in the process of trying to decide which is more important in a particular case, general value priorities can become clarified.

Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur mentions several possible affective media impacts that are more likely to occur during times of heightened dependency (Panagopoulos, 2010). First is desensitization, which posits that prolonged exposure to violent content on the media can have a "numbing" impact on audiences, promoting insensitivity or the lack of desire toward helping others when violent encounters happen in real life.

Second, exposure to news messages or TV dramas that portray crime-ridden cities can increase people's fear or anxiety about living in or even traveling to the particular city. Media can also have impacts on morale and feelings of alienation. The degree of positive

or negative mass media depictions of social groups can cause fluctuations in people's sense of morale in belonging to that group or in their sense of alienation from that group.

Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur identified two broad categories of behavioral impacts of the media on the audience(Putman et al, 2010). The first broad category is referred to as the "activation" impacts, which implies instances in which media audiences do something they would not otherwise have done as a consequence of receiving media messages on a particular issue or event. Behavioral impacts are largely thought to work through cognitive and affective impacts. For instance, a woman who read a news story about sexism in the workplace might form an attitude toward sexism which will create a negative emotional state, eventually resulting in her joining a women's rights march in her local community.

The second broad category of behavioral impacts is referred to as "deactivation," and refers to instances in which audiences would have otherwise done something, but don't do it as a consequence of media messages received. For instance, primary presidential campaigns are usually longer and have increasingly used more media including social media to target the audience. As such, primary campaigns might elicit negative attitudes toward the electoral process and negative affective states such as boredom or disgust that in turn might make the electorates not turn out to vote.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 The Research Design

The research design to be used in this study is the descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey research design involves collecting data from existing phenomena in a natural setting, in order to test hypotheses and answer research questions raised in the study. According to Nachemas et al. (1989:75), a research design can be described as the logical model of proof that allows the researcher draw inferences concerning relationships among the variables under investigation. This case study was designed; using, self-administered questionnaires as the data collection instrument. The study method produced accurate information from respondents through personal interaction.

3.2 Population of the Study

Every citizen that has attained the voting age of 18 years and above as stipulated by the Nigeria Electoral law and has all other rights that qualifies him or her to vote and be voted for in the country. Specifically, youths in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara state form the population of this study. And One hundred and fifty (respondents) voters that were randomly selected in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara State using simple random sampling.

3.3 Sources for Data Collection

The instrument for the study was questionnaire. The questionnaire was tagged “Impact of social medial on voters behavior in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara State”. The questionnaire was made up of two sections. Section ‘A’ designed to seek the demographic factors while Section ‘B’ was a four point Likert Scale type designed to elicit voters opinions on the main subject of impact of social media on voter’s behaviour. The survey instrument for this study, that is, the questionnaire was handed over to each voter to fill in their responses. The survey was conducted in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara State. The respondents were informed to be anonymous; that the data gathered is purely for academic purpose alone and that all the information given in the questionnaire would be treated in strict confidence. All the questionnaires were collected on the spot, after the respondents have finished filling them.

3.4 Method of Data Analysis

Having gathered the data through the administration of questionnaire, the collected data will be coded, tabulated, and analyzed according to the research question and hypothesis. In order to analyze the data collected effectively and efficiently for easy management and accuracy, the simple percentage method was the analytical tools used for this research project and a sample size of one hundred and fifty (150) will be represented by 100% for easy analysis of the responses. Furthermore, Statistics Package for Social Science (SPSS) will also be used for the purpose of hypothesis testing.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the data collected were being analyzed and the result presented. The obtained results are discussed and the analysis are in two forms. The first is based on the personal data of the respondents, while the other is based on the research questions examined and relevant hypothesis will be tested.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentages %
Male	58	38.67
Female	92	61.33
Total	150	100

Source: Fieldwork 2025

The data in table 1 shows the distribution of respondents by sex. Out of 150 respondents to the questionnaires, 58 which indicate 38.67% were male while 92 which indicate 61.33% were females. Hence, the population of female respondents is more than that of the male

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by education qualification

Sex	Frequency	Percentages %
PHD	1	0.67

Masters	7	4.67
First Degree	18	12
HND	22	14.67
NCE	32	21.33
DIPLOMA	30	20
SSCE	40	26.66
Total	150	100

Source: Fieldwork 2025

From the Table 2 above showing the distribution of respondents by academic qualification indicates that out of the 150 respondent, 1 which represent 0.67% is a PhD holder, 7 which represent 4.67% have masters degree, 18 which represent 12% have their first degree, 22 which represent 14.67% are HND holders, 32 which represent 21.33% have their NCE qualification 30 which represent 20% are Diploma Qualifications while the remaining 40 which represent 26.66%. It revealed that respondents with SSCE have the highest frequency while the respondents with PHD has the lowest frequency

Table 3: Distribution of respondents by age range

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentages %
18-24	73	48.66
25-29	40	26.67

30-35	37	24.67
Total	150	100

Source: Fieldwork 2025

Result in table 3 shows the distribution of respondents by age range and 73 which represent 48.66% fall to the category of 18-24 years, 40 which represent 26.67% fall into the category of 25-29 years while 37 which represent 24.67% fall into 56-65 years category. It shows that respondents between the age of 30-35 years has the highest number of frequency.

4.2 Analysis of Research Questions

WHAT IS THE IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON VOTERS BEHAVIOUR IN ILORIN-WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KWARA STATE?

TABLE 4:

S/N	Variables	SA	A	UD	D	SD	TOTAL
1	Majority of the population of voter in Offa local government have access to social media.	72 (48%)	56 (37%)	20 (13%)	2 (1.3%)	0 (0%)	150 (100%)
2	Social media is an interactive platform which at as major source of information for voters in Offa local government.	95 (63.33%)	37 (24.67%)	13 (8.67%)	3 (2%)	2 (1.33%)	150 (100%)
3	Voters in Ilorin-West Local Government Area are exposed to all kinds of political advertisement on the social media.	102 (68.33%)	43 (28.67%)	3 (2%)	2 (1.3%)	0 (0%)	150 (100%)

4	Unverified information and various political propaganda are posted to the public through the social media.	122 (81.33 %)	28 (18.67%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	150 (100%)
5	Social media can influence the behaviours of voters in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara state.	112 (74.67 %)	31 (20.67%)	7 (4.67 %)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	150 (100%)
6	Information on social media can bring about change of choice of candidate to be voted for in an election.	121 (80.67 %)	24 (16%)	5 (3.33 %)	0	0 (0%)	150 (100%)
7	Voters in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara state have access to all the personal information and bio-data of aspirant contesting election through the use of social media.	97 (64.67 %)	38 (25.33%)	15 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	150 (100%)
8	Social medial can cause a spread of political information and rumors among voters in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara state.	120 (80%)	28 (18.67%)	0 (0%)	2 (0%)	0 (0%)	150 (100%)
9	Social media can increase the popularity of aspirant contesting in an election among voters in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara state.	92 (61.33 %)	50 (33.33%)	8 (5.33 %)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	150 (100%)
10	Social media has enhanced the interaction and communication between political aspirants and citizen (voters)	96 (64%)	40 (26.67%)	14 (9.33 %)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	150 (100%)
11	The use of social media in Ilorin-West Local Government Area in Kwara state can make voters to	95 (63.33 %)	30 (20%)	24 (16%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	150 (100%)

	believe and trust the politician and also have the belief in the democratic process.						
12	Social media has created platform for new voters to be informed about the political process and history.	113 (75.33%)	20 (13.33%)	17 (11.33%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	150 (100%)
13	Social media provide education and information for voters in Offa local government on topical and current issues.	94 (62.67%)	35 (23.33%)	20 (13.33%)	1 (0.67%)	0 (0%)	150 (100%)
14	Social media brings information in transparent and fast manners to voters thereby useful in exposing political fraud and violence.	93 (62%)	49 (32.67%)	8 (5.33%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	150 (100%)
15	Negative sentiments on social media can influence voters behavior in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara state.	117 (78%)	20 (13.33%)	13 (8.66%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	150 (100%)

Source: Fieldwork 2025

4.3 Test of Hypotheses

H₀: Social media does not have any impact on voter behaviour in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara state.

H_A: Social media has impact on voter behaviour in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara state.

Table 5: One Way ANOVA to determine the impact of social media on behaviour

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	41.357	4	10.345	6.688	.000
Within Groups	176.923		1.527		
Total	215.300		100		

Source: Field Survey, 2025

In this table we find the significant values is .000 which less than 0.05, so H₀ is rejected and null hypothesis is accepted. Hence Social media has impact on voter behaviour in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara state

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	150	100.0
	Excluded	0	.0
	Total	150	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

4.4 Discussion of Findings

All the above tables show that 150 questionnaires were administered and the analysis was done by making use of statistical package for social science [SPSS]. The data in table 1 shows the distribution of respondents by sex. Out of 150 respondents to the questionnaires, 58 which indicate 38.67% were male while 92 which indicate 61.33% were females. Hence, the population of female respondents is more than that of the male.

From the Table 2 above showing the distribution of respondents by academic qualification indicates that out of the 150 respondent, 1 which represent 0.67% is a PhD holder, 7 which represent 4.67% have masters degree, 18 which represent 12% have their first degree, 22 which represent 14.67% are HND holders, 32 which represent 21.33% have their NCE qualification 30 which represent 20% are Diploma Qualifications while the remaining 40 which represent 26.66%. It revealed that respondents with SSCE has the highest frequency while the respondents with PHD has the lowest frequency.

In table 3 shows the distribution of respondents by age range and 73 which represent 48.66% fall to the category of 18-24 years, 40 which represent 26.67% fall into the category of 25-29 years while 37 which represent 24.67% fall into 30-35 years category. It shows that respondents between the age of 30-35 years has the highest number of frequency. From the study conducted the hypothesis H0 shows that social media does not affect voting behavior of voters in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara State. This assertion command valid with the outcome of the test hypothesis two which proven positive as stated above we find the significant values is .000 which less than 0.05, so H0 is rejected and null

hypothesis is accepted. Hence Social media has impact on voter behaviour in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara state. Finding from this study revealed that:

1. Social media influences the voter behaviour in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara state and can affect their decision and judgment about the choice of whom to be voted for.
2. Social media passes across fast and transparent information to voters in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara State which has exposed corrupt practices in the democratic process boosting the citizen confidence about the process.
3. False information and negative sentiments posted on the social media can influence voter's behaviour.
4. Social media has contributed to increased interaction and closeness between political class and the voters in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara State.
5. Rumors on social media can contribute to the cause of voters apathy as the information posted on the media cannot be entirely controlled by constituted authorities.
6. Social media has created an orientation and education platform for new voters in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara State.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

In the course of this research work which is divided into five chapters, these chapter deals with aspects related to the topic of the study.

The first chapter is opened with an introduction; it is followed by the statement of the problems, research objectives, scope of the research and significance of the study and definition of some relevant terms as used in the study were also part of chapter one.

Chapter two is wholly concerned about review of related literatures to the research study and theoretical framework. An extensive review of relevant literatures on this research work has revealed and acknowledged the fact that social media has positive impact on voting behaviour among youths in Offa Local Government, Nigeria.

In chapter three, the research methodology used in this study is discussed. For the gathering of the necessary data, One hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed to citizens/youths in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara State, which were completed and returned. Thereafter, data gathered through the questionnaires were presented and analyzed.

Chapter four gives a clear presentation and analysis of the data collected from the respondents through the use of simple percentage in tabular form and its analysis was also

done to substantiate data gathered through questionnaires. This chapter also involved the discussion of the findings.

Chapter five marked the last lap of this work. It gave a synoptic overview of the entire project and specified the steps taken in the work. It would provide the summary, conclusion and recommendation.

5.2 Conclusion

Forman (2010) ones observed as cited in Nwosu (1992) that for better for worse, we live in an age which is characterized by the widespread use of various channels of communication. These include traditional mass media and the internet for a broad range of political and other purposes. Traversing the political landscape of any country reveals that electorate are getting more and more enlightened. What is wholly or in part responsible for this are the social media. Whatever may be the contributions of other entities such as civil societies, Idiong (2010) argues, the fact remains that the social media carry the greater responsibility for providing awareness and education about our pluralist political life. They are effective means of enlightening electorate on the qualities of individual candidates, political parties and their programmes and the entire election process at all times.

From the analysis and interpretation it is clear that social media play a significant impact on voting behavior of voters. Political parties will be successful in influencing the people of the metros city like Kwara State and semi urban cities. Social media is replacing the traditional media but in remote areas traditional media still has significant impact in

creating awareness among people. Social media provides platform to the people to get connected to parties they favour. It became an important marketing tool to reach to target audience in minimum time and within less cost Online banners, ads and other form of advertising has a significant impact on young voter specially students which not only influence them but also help in shaping their behaviour.

People use social media platform to keep track of political development, technology play a vital role in giving first-hand information in less time. Also, this study was based on one broad objective that is to identify the impact of social media on voting behaviour. Majority of respondents are young in the age group of 18 to 35 years and literate; pursuing graduation or post-graduation also they were very active on social media. The results from the analysis reveal that the social media has significant impact on voting behaviour of respondent especially young people. Social media considered to be the useful source of information and helping people to know about politician personality that will help them to decide to vote or not to vote that candidates. One important finding of this research is that the respondents voting behaviour highly influenced by the comments/tweets/remarks made by politicians on social media. Hypothesis has been formulated to check the difference on the basis of age and education on voting behaviour.

5.3 Recommendations

This study makes the following recommendations:

1. Campaigns about the electoral process should be a continuous one on the social media without posting lies. This will get the electorate greatly acquainted with all the requirements and process that make one to be eligible. Ones empowered they can freely exercise their mandate with utmost ease.
2. Government agencies like the National Orientation Agency, NOA and other stakeholders should avoid overreliance on the mass media and make use of social media to rekindle the confidence of the citizens. Interpersonal communication which establishes direct relationship with electorate should be used to complement mass media messages. This is where civil society can play a pivotal role by exhibiting drama to rural communities that need greater awareness.
3. With intensive empowerment, community voting should be replaced with individual voting so as not to disenfranchise voters. Community voting obviously promotes godfatherism. Absence of this strengthens and affirms our democracy as electorate feel fulfilled they freely casted their votes to those they wanted as against being manipulated by Chiefs and god fathers.
4. Voters should realize that whoever they vote will impact on their lives in future. Therefore, they should continue with the gesture of wisely casting their votes free from ethnic, religious and social ties as well as other trivial considerations with retrogressive tendency.

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