

Empirical Assessment of Social Media in Mobilising Voters during the 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria

Kelvin Inobemhe
inobemhekelvin@gmail.com
Glorious Vision University, Ogwa, Nigeria

Comfort Ene Obaje
ene.obaje@uniben.edu
University of Benin, Nigeria

Ezekiel Asemah
asemahezekiel@yahoo.com
Glorious Vision University, Ogwa, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Social media platforms are increasingly being adapted into mainstream communication systems and are useful in politics, healthcare, social movements and more. Whether it is information dissemination or mobilisation and advocacy, the platforms are considered to be largely utilised in twenty-first century. The objective of this study was to examine social media platforms as tools for voter mobilisation during the 2023 presidential conducted in Nigeria. It was anchored on the uses and gratifications theory. The researchers adopted the cross-sectional descriptive research design relying on survey as instrument of data collection. The mixed-techniques of online survey link and in-person administration techniques were leveraged to carefully distribute the survey to a determined sample of 587 respondents from the population of 9,259,968 following the multistage sampling procedures which include purposive, stratification and simple random stages. The Statistical Packages for the Social Science (SPSS) version 26 was relied upon for analysing the survey data. Findings of the study showed that there was use of social media platforms during the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria and that Facebook, X, WhatsApp, Instagram were the most prominent. The study also demonstrated that there was a greater use of the platforms during the period. Furthermore, the study also showed that social media platforms were effective tools for mobilising voters to participate in the electoral process in the 2023 presidential election. The researchers concluded that the platforms are now greatly utilised due to their importance and recommended that political parties and their candidates leverage the access and use by younger voters to use social media in future elections to mobilise the electorate.

Keywords: Communication; Elections; Social Media; Politics; Voter Mobilisation

INTRODUCTION

In the continually digitised world, communication is dynamic and evolving. As communication processes increasingly become mediated so are the different purposes and intent. Communication within the political dynamics and context is an aspect that has seen the impact of technology and the continually-digitised world. Accordingly, digital platforms and tools are

adopted and utilised for voter mobilisation toward active participation in elections in different parts of the world including sub-Saharan Africa. Common examples of the digital platforms also include social media. In Europe and America, social media are greatly adopted for voter mobilisation and electoral participation for many citizens as voters and candidates interact and share ideas across the various platforms in which they have access (Garcia, 2025).

Elections in Nigeria have been characterised by the use of different avenues and channels for mobilisation that range from one-on-one to group and public spaces as seen in political rallies, conferences, congresses and more. During political rallies in Nigeria, politicians and their parties explore different tactics including the use of words and visuals involving paraphernalia and other objects which are symbolic to the desires and intentions (Ademilokun & Olateju, 2020). The implication of the foregoing is that rallies are integral aspects of voter mobilisation procedures where stakeholders are exposed to political messages through different means including objects and words. In political rallies, conferences and party congresses, words and objects are also explored to create a space of comfort and interests for citizens to participate in the electoral process. Different other mediated communication channels such as the media also dominate as avenues for engagement.

According to Piriya Santi and Phuengpha (2024), mass media earlier dominated the political space as tools for voter mobilisation but in ways that were not always positive due to their use for political propaganda through biased media reporting to manipulate public opinion. Furthermore, the researchers explain the introduction of social media as platforms which offer more impartial, diverse, comprehensive, and accurate space for political participation in modern era. In this part of the world, the dominance of social media platforms in election-related matters is quite novel as it has been traced to sometime around 2007 and 2011 when deployed for mobilisation of voters in Lagos, South of Nigeria. This is supported by the position of Ojekwe (2016) based on the assertion that social media platforms gained prominence in 2011 in the successful utilisation for voter mobilisation having being earlier used during the 2007 gubernatorial election in Lagos State.

Though social media platforms are not exact replacements for physical campaigns in form of rallies and grassroots mobilisation through town hall meetings, the platforms, however serve as new spaces for political mobilisation drive in the terrain of different countries in Africa including Nigeria. Ajaegbu and Ajaegbu (2024) lend credence with the observation that social media platforms are explored as platforms for mobilising voters to take part in the electoral process across countries in the continent. These platforms are increasingly being used as avenues for political discourse; a phenomenon that amplified voices of the underrepresented groups in different parts of the continent – groups such as the youth, women and even the civil societies.

In the recent elections conducted in Nigeria, social media were considered as instrumental in driving mobilisation and participation (Oni et al., 2023). Findings from this study conducted by the researchers and similar ones show that social media platforms were very effective channels for political participation during the election. For instance, Akporue and Efebeh (2025) affirm that social media were effective channels for mobilisation and participation during the 2023 election in Nigeria because the platforms enabled political engagement, particularly among the young voters, providing the space for political discourse and debates, real-time result update, and avenues for advocating transparent electoral processes. However, the researchers also demonstrate that as much as the platforms were used for mobilisation and participation, social media also enabled digital manipulation, polarisation and misinformation.

Despite the negatives associated with social media use as platforms and channels for mobilisation and participation during the 2023 election in Nigeria, the platforms continue to serve as spaces for social and political engagements. Social media's impact on democratic societies extends beyond being tools for mobilisation to include real progress in participation across different levels. In fact, social media are known to drive positive participation in democratic governments (Igbashangev et al., 2023). Credence has been lent with the assertion that the growing popularity of social media created liberalised spaces wherein citizens have the freedom to express themselves (Ajaegbu & Ajaegbu, 2024). Furthermore, the researchers advance points to suggest that the social media phenomena also birthed new and unpopular political actors, and amplify calls against unjust system and advocacy for favourable policies of government. This means that the emergence of social media offered citizens the platforms for their voices to be heard at next-to-no-cost. For instance, the EndSARS movement demonstrated the power of social media in social mobilisation (Inobemhe & Santas, 2021).

In the political terrain, lack of communication with the electorate would mean that the political party or candidate has nothing to offer – at least in many climes including Nigeria. This is an angle to justify the growing use of social media as platforms for mobilisation. Another dimension is cost associated with media marketing and appearances as social media channels offer affordable alternatives to the mass media. According to Meiserli (2021), social media platform cut costs thereby enabling effective communication building between public officials and members of their various constituencies. This buttresses the notion that social media provide cost-effective platforms leading to saving cost that would have been expended on media relations. The platforms' ease-of-access and perceived usefulness in line with its technology acceptance model are some of the major factors for the adoption and use for different political and social purposes including political communication – at least from the prism of electioneering campaigns, policy information dissemination as well as mobilisation of the public to take part in social movements and protests.

In modern political communication, ignoring social media platforms provides grounds for excluding a segment of the society. This is especially the case with the younger voters who are upwardly mobile and move from one place to another holding mobile devices such as phones, tablets and related gadgets through which they access all types of information including politics-related aspects. Considering the interest in the use of social media platforms to capture the electorate through vigorous campaigns, their use remains crucial aspects of the political process in twenty-first century politics. This implies that politicians in Nigeria continue to explore the platforms which call for evaluation at every point of their utilisation. Interestingly, studies have shown that the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria recorded a greater use of social media for mobilisation and participation (Ekanem, 2023; Ezema & Ezema, 2023; Odukale, 2024; Okon et al., 2025). This study, therefore, assessed social media utilisation within the context of the election as it concerns the act of mobilising voters to participate in the electoral process in South-South zone of Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

On a general note, technology has greatly influenced communication between humans (Arandas et al., 2021). Political interactions which also include campaigns are not isolated of these impacts. Campaigns are integral aspects of the political process and they create avenues for political parties and candidates to present their manifestos, policy position and drive as well as political ideologies to the voting public. In modern society, technology has continually played a role in amplifying such motives (Dad & Khan, 2023; Gibson, 2023). Politicians

leverage the reach, access and effectiveness technology to approach the people, a bulk of which is the youth, prior to casting their votes on the day of election. The youth make up a higher percentage of the population of Nigeria and they have huge social media presence. In fact, of the 200 million plus estimated population of Nigeria, the youth is said to be 70 % (Akinyemi, 2023; Eremosele, 2022). Their social media use implies that the platforms could present good grounds to sell candidates and their manifestos to majority of the voting public.

An election without the use of social media would mean that a section of the voting public is excluded from political information required to shape their opinion about candidates, their political party and the entire process. This stems from the impactful use of social media platforms prior to the 2023 election in Nigeria and the impact on voters' consciousness. Several researchers show that the platforms were utilised to drive voter mobilisation and participation in the context of general elections in Nigeria (Okon et al., 2025; Oni et al., 2023) especially among youth in the country (Aideloje et al., 2024; Ezeigbo, 2024; Ezema & Ezema, 2023; Mohammed & Kirfi, 2024; Odukale, 2024). Despite the adoption and utilisation, Nigeria has continued to see declines in voter participation in recent times considering the figures of the voter turnout in elections conducted between 2007 and 2023 (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2019; Daniel, 2025; Hassan, 2024; Okafor et al., 2022). Therefore, the questions are whether these platforms are perceived as effective for such purposes; and what are those platforms utilised for voter mobilisation? Against this backdrop, this study sought to examine the use of social media during the period; identify the types of platforms utilised, the level of utilisation, and determine the effectiveness in voter mobilisation.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Ascertain the level of adoption of social media for mobilising voters to participate in the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria.
2. Identify the social media platforms adopted for mobilisation of voters during the election.
3. Determine the effectiveness of social media as tools for mobilisation during the presidential election.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Understanding Social Media

Social media is one of twenty-first century's technology inventions that remain a crucial aspect of the communication tools of the moment. Different conceptualisations of the concept exist with various perspectives that capture the essence of the term. According to Paljug (2025), the term refers to online platforms that enable users to share information as well as connect with virtual communities via photos, videos, text, and other content types. Examples of platforms identified as social media are Facebook, TikTok, Instagram (specially designed as applications or websites mostly for sharing messages) and Discord and Reddit (categorised as community forums) among others. This is a demonstration of the complexities and the multi-function and dynamic nature of platforms and websites categorised as social media. With these platforms, humans can socialise with friends, family, and acquaintances in unimaginable proportions.

Another understanding of the concept of social media was the one offered by Inobemhe et al. (2022) that the mediums are not just for information-sharing but serve as platforms for social cohabitation where persons from diverse geo-political locations and backgrounds converge to

establish connection for varied purposes and reasons. This is an indication that social media platforms are converging points where users converge to discuss issues and exchange information on broader issues of concern. Such discourse may come as reaction to newsfeed posts or response to comments under the post made by another. Some other times, prominent and verified users of social media platforms can engage their followers through posts than range from relevant political topics or even cryptic content that elicit emotions and wide reactions from the followers with diverse backgrounds and from different locations within or outside a particular country.

Conceptualisation of Voter Mobilisation

This is a concept that has been widely discussed across the academic line on the grounds of its interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary nature. Voter mobilisation takes on a social and political perspective and in modern times, communication connotations as well. It is important in communication because the use of messages including exchanges of visuals, text and audio encompasses the concept of voter mobilisation. In essence, it is seen from the perspective of political communication – an interception between politics and communication. Against this backdrop, Wurst et al. (2023) describe voter mobilisation as a call for participation and this is based on the conceptualisation of different scholars that have debated the concept within the context of its use in political communication.

According to Wurst et al. (2023), the concept can also be conceptualised from the perspective of mobilisation in social media communication based on the growing relevance of platforms in modern society. Accordingly, the researchers note that citizens who are users of social media platforms can simply follow or like and share posts to indicate political support and interest online. This is crucial because it has significantly influenced political parties and candidates to fashion various mobilisation strategies to approach electorate in order to make them participate in elections especially across online mediums/platforms. This has been supported with the assertion that political parties and voters take actions aimed at mobilising during election campaigns toward reaching electorate to participate in the electoral process (Magalhães et al., 2018). The foregoing defines the essence of voter mobilisation and paints a picture of what it entails. As used in this study, voter mobilisation is mainly about galvanising support of the electorate in order to make electoral impact through their participation and support for a particular candidate or party.

Social Media within the Context of Voter Mobilisation and Participation

Scholarly attention has recently been drawn to the use of social media and various other strategies to mobilise voters toward participating in the electoral process. The growing interest stemmed from the 2008 success recorded during the campaigns for Barack Obama's election as U.S. first black president. The acknowledged place of online mobilisation during the campaigns remains a solid foundation and justification of their use in democracies across the world. Related studies have also been conducted in Nigeria – however, before delving into a review of some, let us consider scholarly positions on the different aspects of social media and their use in voter mobilisation in the twenty-first century political landscape and dynamics. This attention is appropriate because social media are significant communication possibilities of this age and time. Additionally, their widespread adoption has caused a paradigm shift in human communication and interaction (Hatamleh et al., 2023a).

According to Oni et al. (2024), social media have seen rapid development with the attendant influence on how users find and connect with other users who share same or similar interests with them. This position resonates with the assertion that social media are effective in enhancing social relationships with trust being a critical moderator of that relationship (Hatamleh et al., 2023b). The researchers further reveal that the interaction between such relationships and trust does not have significant impact on social relationships. This is an indication that trust may not be the major determinant of social interactions on social media platforms. The users of the platforms can choose what to see as truth or half-truth or outright falsehood depending on their various conceptions of the issues in discourse. It is on such notes that political messages whether true or false can be accepted across social media platforms without questioning their veracity.

In recent times, social media platforms have proven as important channels for communicating political messages. Agrawal (2022) lends credence with the notion that social media platforms gained more grounds as significant avenues for politically exposed persons to promote themselves and communicate with the electorate due to the increasing voting-eligibility of digital natives. The means that social media users are increasing attaining the age in which they are considered “eligible voters” and upon this knowledge, politicians target them using social media as tools/channels. It is also based on the knowledge that these individuals are upwardly mobile and are avid users of various social media platform; Facebook, X, Instagram, and TikTok among several other interactive mediums. The foregoing has been corroborated by Rashmitha and Maiya (2019) that the youth are the most avid users of social media.

Oni et al. (2024) also observe that during Nigeria’s last general election conducted in 2023, prominent politicians including Bola Tinubu and Peter Obi adopted the use of social media platforms and leveraged their presence therein to engage the electorate influencing their choices and direction of voting. Igbinedion and Ajisebiyawo (2023) take a similar position through the observation that the Obidient Movement being mainly urban middle-class Nigerians leveraged the social media to spread information about their movement. The use of social media by the group led Irede (2022) to liken the situation to the #EndSARS movement mobilisation. According to Inobemhe and Santas (2021), the #EndSARS marked a turning point in the use of social media for mobilisation and advocacy in this part of world demonstrating that the success achieved by the movement was due to the powers of digital activism as typified in twenty-first century’s social media use. This is an indication that social media are crucial tools for mobilising people to participate in social or political activities.

Social media use during the 2023 elections in Nigeria was significantly high as the various political parties did leverage platforms to approach the youth. Different researchers demonstrate the use of social media as platforms to engage the youth of Nigeria before, during, and after the most recent election conducted in the country, which is the 2023 general election (Agbim et al., 2023; Aideloje et al., 2024; Benaiah & Osuntoki, 2024; Odukale, 2024; Okon et al., 2025). Specifically, Ezeigbo (2024) highlights that before the election, the electorate mostly youth leveraged the platforms for political advocacy, awareness creation and campaigns. The researcher depicts the platform as channels through which other youth and eligible voters were encouraged to participate in the electoral process by registering, obtaining their permanent voters cards, and casting the ballot/vote on the day of the election.

Various social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (now X) were among the numerous other tools utilised for voter mobilisation during the period. A study by Odukale (2024) further shows that WhatsApp is the most prominent among social media platforms in Nigeria. With 39.7 % of social media users being on the messaging application, it is obvious

that Nigerians are familiar with it and significantly utilise the channel to exchange information. Closely following WhatsApp as prominent platform in Nigeria is Facebook with 17.4 % of social media users while others are 17.0 % users of Instagram, 12.2 % TikTok users, and 6.2 % X users respectively. The implication is that politicians can leverage any of the platforms to engage the electorate. However, Akporue and Efebeh (2025) identify Facebook as the most prominent platform used for voter mobilisation during the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. The impact is felt across board as the grassroots political relevance was also seen during the election – the electorate bypassed traditional media and connected with political actors in the digital sphere created by the social media (Ojebode & Adegbola).

Social media platforms are crucial tools in the political sphere. The tools' effectiveness is not in doubt. Social media are effective platforms for scrutinising the electoral process and may also prove useful as platforms through which public perception can be influenced (Smyth & Best, 2013, as cited Ajaegbu & Ajaegbu, 2024). Relatedly, Anyanwu and Orji (2020) establish that social media platforms were effective in political engagements in the South East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. During the 2023 election, same platforms were also found to be effective for voter mobilisation (Aideloje et al., 2024; Ezema & Ezema, 2023; Obiora & Okafor, 2023; Okon et al., 2024). In the Southernmost part of Nigeria, social media platforms were also effectively utilised to mobilise voters toward participating in election. For example, social media marketing and political participation of voters in Rivers state was a study conducted by Nwador et al. (2020) with another conducted by Ebitu et al. (2023) focusing on campaigns on social media and creation of awareness on voters in respect of the electoral process in Cross Rivers, both in the South-South geopolitical zone of the country. These studies highlight the use of social media for the purpose of political participation in different parts of Nigeria.

Empirical Studies on Social Media and Voter Mobilisation

Political communication researches are gaining grounds within the context of social, behavioural and communication sciences. These studies are attempts to situate the need for political communication. In the age of digital media and their impact, there seem to be a shift to the adoption and utilisation of technologies for political communication. This sub-area of research has also been greatly explored due to the relevance to voter mobilisation and participation across virtual spaces. In fact, a good number of researchers have also delved into various areas in the use of social media during the 2023 elections in Nigeria (Aideloje et al., 2024; Morah & Nwafor, 2024; Oni et al., 2024). Some of such empirical studies were attempts to ascertain the impact of the platforms, examining the influence on the outcomes of the elections. Several others also simply examined the influence of social media platforms on the voter behaviour within the context of the 2023 elections conducted in the country (Igbinedion & Ajisebiyawo, 2023; Okon et al., 2025). Additionally, researchers also explored the impact of various social media platforms on the decision of voters in different parts of Nigeria. Some of these empirical studies are reviewed under this section.

Onwe and Ekuma (2024) conducted a study with focus on the use of social media for mobilisation by Labour Party supporters during the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. The researchers geo-scoped the study and focused on Ebonyi State in South East Nigeria. Descriptive survey was relied upon with the use of questionnaire as instrument of data collection. Results show that the level of adoption and use of social media by LP groups in the state was high as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and Instagram were prominent platforms utilised. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that the political party supporters visibly used

social media for political communication, voter sensitisation, voter mobilisation, and dissemination of political campaign messages. Conclusion of the study is that social media were instrumental in engaging the electorate. The study and the one under review are similar based on the focus on social media but differ in scope.

In another study conducted by Benaiah and Osuntoki (2024), the aim was to assess the impact of social media on political mobilisation in Nigeria with a focus on the Obidient Movement. The researchers relied on the uses and gratification theory and demonstrate that despite the proliferation of misinformation and fake news across social media, platforms were effective tools for voter mobilisation for the movement as they relied on the platform to crowdfund, form alliances, interact with wider audience, and mobilise political support for their candidate – Peter Obi. The researchers conclude that social media was leveraged by the largely youth population to canvass support for the LP candidate through the Obidient movement. This study under review and the current one are similar on the grounds of the focus on the use of social media to mobilise voters but different because the one under review is strictly about the Obidient movement while the current one is on the general use of platforms in elections in the South of Nigeria.

Theoretical Underpinning

This study is anchored on the uses and gratification theory. Uses and gratification theory is based on an old concept of the motives behind the use of media platforms and the powers wielded by such platforms. Quoting Katz et al. (1973), Ruggiero (2000) observes that there are psychological and social benefits associated with exposure to the media. According to McQuail (1983), the approach of uses and gratification research is commonly explored to gain insights into why and for what purpose people use media. This is an indication that the theory systematises knowledge based on the reasons behind the use of media and towards what end such usage is premised. Rubin (2002) also notes that effective use of the media can only be when individual users understand the social and psychological context in which such use is premised.

Often times, media contents are consumed to fulfill the information needs of the audience (Hatamleh et al., 2023a). This is also based on a wide categorisation of the several needs that usually inform the use of media as categorised by Katz et al. (1973) and these are 1) affective needs (which includes emotion, pleasure, and feeling), 2) cognitive needs (acquiring information, understanding, and knowledge), 3) social integrative needs (interacting with family and friends), 4) individual integrative needs (credibility, status, and stability), and 5) tension release needs (such as escape and diversion). In the same vein, certain motives drive the adoption and use of social media one of which is the socialisation needs as people (users) use the platforms to maintain relationships and connect with other users (Hatamleh et al., 2023a).

Furthermore, Hatamleh et al. (2023a) also note that self-presentation and entertainment may also be important motivations to use social media. With the platforms, people are said to be enabled to construct and manage online identities, express their values and opinions and showcase their accomplishments. Buzeta et al. (2020) also identify information giving and information seeking as part of other motivations for social media use. Therefore, this theory provides the framework to understand the motive that informed the use of social media during the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. It also provides the foundation for understanding the gratifications derived from the use of the platforms within the context of the elections.

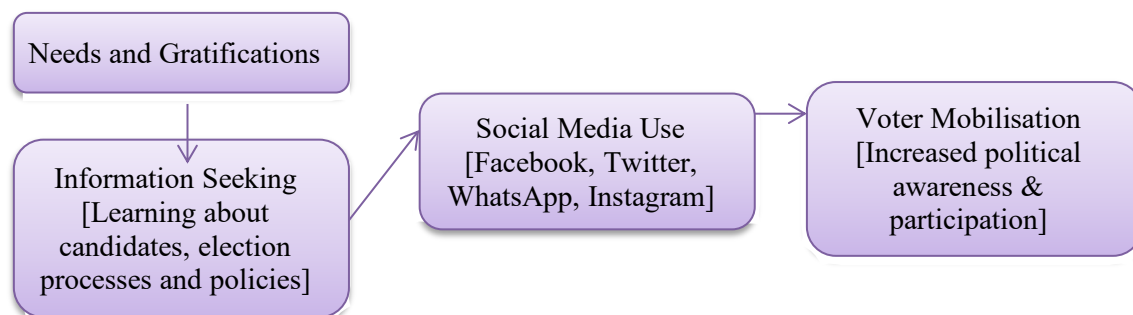


FIGURE 1. Theoretical Framework based on the Assumption of Uses and Gratifications Theory
Source: Adapted by the Researchers based on the Literature Review [Theory and Conceptual Review]

In the context of the theoretical framework in Fig. 1, voters in Nigeria rely on social media to satisfy specific needs and gratifications such as the needs to seek information and social interaction. The social media platforms are equally leveraged by politicians and political parties as avenues to engage voters. Consequently, voter mobilisation is influenced based on the frequency and the social media type adopted and utilised. The active status and engagement level of the user determines the likelihood of participation in the electoral process. Accordingly, the specific social media platforms with strong features for social interactions happen to be more effective in the context of voter mobilisation when compared with others with weaker social interaction features. Facebook and WhatsApp are the commonest examples of social media platforms with strong social interaction features as the two promote interactivity.

METHODOLOGY

This study considered the cross-sectional descriptive survey as its research design. The population of the study is comprised of voters in select states of South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. For this study, Edo, Delta, and Rivers were purposively selected from the six states in the zone. Figures released by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), show registered voters in these states to be 9,259,5968 million with a breakdown of the population distribution as: Delta (3,221,697), Edo (2,501,081), and Rivers (3,537,190).

Relatedly, the sample size of 587 was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination formula given as:

$$\text{Eq.1. } n = \frac{x^2 N P(1-P)}{e^2(N-1) + x^2 P(1-P)}$$

The multistage sampling technique was utilised to arrive at the final sample unit that took the survey for each state. The first stage involved purposive sampling technique to arrive at three South-South states of Delta, Edo, and Rivers. The main criterion was based on the high voting population figures of the state released by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). In the second stage, the researchers relied on judgemental sampling based on personal knowledge of the zone to select major cities (state capitals) in a process that yielded Asaba in Delta, Benin City in Edo, and Port Harcourt in Rivers State. The third stage involved the use of stratification of wards along the major roads in the cities selected in the second stage of sampling. In this stage, areas like West End in Asaba, New Benin in Benin City, and PH Township in Port Harcourt were selected. In the final stage, the researcher used simple random

sampling to select respondents in order to give everyone in the sample frame equal opportunity to take the survey.

Survey was the instrument of data collection for the study. The instrument was modeled in line with the 5-point Likert and it was validated using face validation and a reliability test conducted to determine its internal consistency. Accordingly, the Cronbach alpha coefficient ($\alpha = 0.88$) was recorded in the test proving internal consistency and reliability of the instruments for data. The mixed method of data collection adopted for this study involved in-person administration of copies of the survey instrument in Edo and Delta States, and the use of Google Forms with the link shared randomly to members of the major political parties that participated in the 2023 presidential election in Rivers State, Nigeria. Data analysis was done using SPSS version 26 to determine the frequencies and percentages. This was after proper coding of the instrument and data. The analysis is based on descriptive statistics that include simple percentages.

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics

TABLE 1. Demographic Data

Variable/Parameter	Frequency	Percent [%]
Gender		
Male	231	42.2
Female	317	57.8
Age		
18-25	220	40.1
26-35	187	34.1
36-45	103	18.8
46 & above	38	7.0
Education		
O'Level	151	27.6
BSc/HND	264	48.2
MSc	66	12.0
PhD	67	12.2
Total	548	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Data in Table 1 above demonstrate the gender composition of the respondents implying that respondents who are females were more than male. They make up 57.8 % of the sample respondents. On the other hand, the male respondents amount to 231; a representative of 42.2 % of the number of persons that took the survey. This has no significant impact on the outcome as there is no specific gendered aspect that the study sought to determine. Additionally, the age distribution of the respondents show that individuals between ages 18 and 25 were majority among respondents that took the survey. Their number being 220 is a representative of 40.1 % highlighting that a superior majority are youth who make up a vast majority of the Nigerian electorate. It implies the appropriateness of the demographic as they are familiar with the subject of enquiry which is social media and voter mobilisation. Furthermore, data show that majority of respondents are holders of Bachelor of Science degree or the Higher National Diploma. Respondents that fall under this category of educated persons number 264 which represent 48.2 %. Significantly, the study also demonstrates that a significant percentage of respondents possess higher educational qualification such as 12.0 % with MSc degrees and 12.2 % with PhDs. This highlights that they knowledgeable enough to take the survey.

Survey Data based on Research Objectives

TABLE 2. Political parties used social media for voter mobilisation in South-South Nigeria during the 2023 presidential election

Variable/Parameter	Frequency	Percent [%]
Strongly disagree	39	7.1
Disagree	43	7.8
Can't tell	17	3.1
Strongly agree	211	38.5
Agree	238	43.4
Total	548	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

In Table 2, data show that there was use of social media for voter mobilisation as 42.4 % being majority agreed to the notion. The implication is that there was greater use of the platforms among the respondents who are electorate in the South-South region.

TABLE 3. To what extent did political parties use social media for voter mobilisation in South-South Nigeria during the 2023 presidential election?

Variable/Parameter	Frequency	Percent [%]
Very low	8	1.5
Low	27	4.9
Can't tell	165	30.1
Very high	147	26.8
High	201	36.7
Total	548	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Data in Table 3 based on the position of 36.7 % respondents demonstrate that the extent of the use of social media by various political parties was high implying that the parties considered that the different platforms were useful to get voters mobilised to take part in the process.

TABLE 4. What political parties mostly used social media channels for voter mobilisation in South-South Nigeria during the 2023 presidential election?

Variable/Parameter	Frequency	Percent [%]
Peoples Democratic Party	107	19.5
Labour Party	285	52.0
APC	156	28.5
Total	548	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

As seen in Table 4, data show that the Labour Party (52.0%) was seen to have deployed social media for mobilisation the most. The party was followed by APC and the PDP least utilised the platforms among the three major political parties that fielded candidates during the polls.

TABLE 5. What social media channels were mostly used by the political parties for voter mobilisation in South-South Nigeria during the 2023 presidential election?

Variable/Parameter	Frequency	Percent [%]
X [Formerly Twitter]	10	1.8
WhatsApp;Instagram;X [Formerly Twitter]	1	.2
WhatsApp;Facebook;YouTube	2	.4
WhatsApp;Facebook;X [Formerly Twitter]	29	5.3
WhatsApp;Facebook;Others	1	.2
WhatsApp;Facebook;Instagram;YouTube	2	.4
WhatsApp;Facebook;Instagram;X [Formerly Twitter];YouTube	7	1.3
WhatsApp;Facebook;Instagram;X [Formerly Twitter]	46	8.4
WhatsApp;Facebook;Instagram	1	.2
WhatsApp;Facebook	6	1.1
WhatsApp	73	13.3
Others	37	6.8
Instagram	1	.2
Facebook;X [Formerly Twitter]	220	40.1
Facebook;Instagram;Others	1	.2
Facebook;Instagram	2	.4
Facebook	109	19.9
Total	548	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Data in Table 5 show that Facebook and Twitter (Now X) were the platforms mostly utilised by political parties for voter mobilisation during the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. This is based on the notion of 40.1 % respondents that took the survey who had access to the two social media platforms and possibly came across messages targeted at the electorate within the period under review.

TABLE 6. Social media platforms were effective for voter mobilisation in South-South Nigeria during the 2023 presidential election

Variable/Parameter	Frequency	Percent [%]
Strongly disagree	50	9.1
Disagree	51	9.3
Can't tell	19	3.5
Strongly agree	197	36.0
Agree	231	42.2
Total	548	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

In Table 6, data show that social media were effectively used as platforms for voter mobilisation during the election conducted in 2023 in Nigeria. The effectiveness of the platform was confirmed by 36.0 % who strongly agreed to the notion and 42.2 % respondents who simply highlighting the importance of place of social media platforms in political parties mobilisation efforts during the election.

TABLE 7. How will you rate the effectiveness of the use of social media for voter mobilisation in South-South Nigeria during the 2023 presidential election?

Variable/Parameter	Frequency	Percent [%]
Not effective	1	.2
Less effective	36	6.6
Undecided	74	13.5
Very effective	192	35.0
Effective	245	44.7
Total	548	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Data in Table 7 reveal the rating of respondents as per the effectiveness of platforms adopted for the purpose of voter mobilisation. Accordingly, data show that 44.7 % rated the social media platforms as effective channels used by politicians and their parties to mobilise the electorate to participate in the 2023 presidential election in the geopolitical zone in focus – the South-South.

DISCUSSION

Social media was greatly utilised among political parties that fielded candidates during the 2023 presidential election. This was demonstrated by 211 (38.5 %) who strongly agreed to the notion and 238 (43.4 %) who simply agreed to it. The implication of this result is that there was utilisation of social media platforms. The results align with previous studies that demonstrated the utilisation of social media platforms during elections conducted at different periods in the Nigerian electoral history. A study conducted by Apuke and Tunca (2018) shows that social media platforms were greatly used during the 2015 general elections in the country. Relatedly, researchers like Obono (2016) and Zoaka (2021) also present similar results of the use of social media during the same electoral period. Bello et al. (2019) further demonstrate the use of platforms during the 2019 presidential election while Oni et al. (2024) show that social media platforms were used for mobilisation in 2023 election.

Furthermore, results from this study also show that political parties highly utilised social media platforms as channels for mobilising voters to participate in the election. As seen in Table 3 data, 201 (36.7 %) respondents are of the opinion that the use was high just as 147 (26.8 %) believe the extent of the usage was very high. This is an indication that there was a high level of social media utilisation during the 2023 presidential elections among the major political parties that fielded candidates. This result mirrors findings of similar studies one of which was conducted by Morah and Nwafor (2024) where the researchers reveal that social media featured prominently and highly as platforms used to enhance participatory democracy and for providing the electorate with information. Additionally, Igbinedion and Ajisebiyawo (2023) show in their study that social media was significantly used to enhance participation and eventually influence the outcomes of the election.

Findings of this study demonstrate that among the major parties, Labour Party happened to be the political institution with the highest attention to the use of social media as channels for voter mobilisation during the election under review. On a similar note, Onwe and Ekuma (2024) demonstrate that Labour Party greatly utilised social media to mobilise voters during the 2023 presidential election in Ebonyi State. This is in line with the uses and gratifications theory as political parties adopted platforms to mobilise the electorate for support. On the most prominently utilised social media platforms, findings of this study demonstrate that Facebook and Twitter (Now X) were mostly used for voter mobilisation and this is based on the opinion

of 40.1 % respondents. Notably, 19.9 % also think that Facebook was more prominent, 13.3 % selected WhatsApp, 8.4 % opined that X, WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram were jointly utilised as prominent platforms. This implies that the major political parties used various social media platforms to mobilise voters during the 2023 election. The use of different social media platforms has also been validated by findings from earlier studies (Ezeigbo, 2024; Ngoka et al., 2024; Odon, 2024).

Data from the online survey also show that social media platforms were effective for the mobilisation of voters during the election. As seen in Table 6, 197 (36.0 %) strongly agreed to the notion on effectiveness of social media while 231 (42.2 %) simply agreed to it implying that they are of the opinion that platforms were effective. Respondents were also asked to rate the effectiveness and result demonstrates that of effectiveness based on the opinion of 44.7 %. Earlier study conducted by Onwe and Ekuma (2024) also reveals that social media were effectively utilised to mobilise voters to vote for certain candidates during the 2023 presidential elections. Oni et al. (2024) also reveal that social media were effective as tools for mobilising voters to participate in the 2023 election. This is an indication that as channels or platforms for mobilising voters to participate in the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria, social media were highly effective.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Consequent upon the findings and discussion above, the researchers conclude that as modern-day technological innovation that enabled interactivity, social media are effective tools for communication. In the same vein, these social media platforms are important channels and tools for mobilising people to participate in social and political causes. This is an indication that political mobilisation for participation can be enhanced through the instrumentation of various social media platforms as further demonstrated during the 2023 presidential election. The use of X, Facebook, Instagram and various other platforms by the different political parties and their candidates represents the realisation of their usefulness coupled with the access and use by majority of the young voters in Nigeria. Therefore, the researchers recommend that:

1. Political parties and their candidates should leverage access to social media platforms and the greater use of platforms by citizens to ensure priority attention is given to their use as means of mobilisation in future elections.
2. The electoral umpire should now consider social media as viable platforms for vigorous pursuit of voter education. This should be a priority to ensure that the younger generations of voters who are users of the platforms are included in the net of persons targeted for important information about the electoral process in Nigeria.

REFERENCES

- Adegbami, A. (2020). Elections and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. *Journal of African Political Studies*, 15(2), 133–149.
- Adebayo, P. (2021). Media influence and public opinion in Nigerian politics. *International Journal of Communication Studies*, 7(3), 41–52.
- Adeosun, A. B. (2014). Nigeria's democratic experience since 1999: Challenges and prospects. *Journal of Political Science and Leadership*, 2(3), 12–21.

- Afonne, C., & Uzodike, U. (2022). Youth participation and electoral reforms in Nigeria. *African Governance Review*, 4(1), 77–90.
- Agbim, K. C., Etumnu, C. A., & Iredibia, O. (2023). Social media and Nigeria's electoral behaviour: A 2023 general election review. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 41(2), 255–271.*
- Aideloje, A., Yusuf, O., & Ibrahim, W. (2024). Voter engagement and political mobilisation in sub-Saharan Africa. *African Journal of Electoral Studies*, 9(1), 85–101.*
- Ajaegbu, O. O., & Ajaegbu, C. (2024). Fake news, online propaganda and the 2023 elections: Impacts on Nigerian political communication. *Journal of Media and Politics in Africa*, 12(1), 1–17.*
- Akinsanmi, A. (2023). Electoral disinformation and its security implications in Nigeria. *West African Security Review*, 18(2), 63–78.*
- Bello, A., Inuwa-Dutse, I., & Heckel, R. (2019). Detecting internet trolls using sentiment analysis. In *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Internet Science* (pp. 1–10).
- Eze, C. (2023). Online political mobilisation and youth engagement in Nigeria. *African Social Science Review*, 34(1), 121–139.*
- Hatamleh, M. M., Amjad, M., Mohammed, R., Othman, A., Amer, R., & Rahima, M. (2023a). Political discourse and online misinformation in developing democracies. *Global Journal of Political Communication*, 5(2), 89–104.*
- Hatamleh, M. M., Amjad, M., Mohammed, R., Othman, A., Amer, R., & Rahima, M. (2023b). Electioneering, trust, and public perception: Social media insights. *Journal of Mass Media Studies*, 8(4), 211–227.*
- Igbinedion, V. I., & Ajisebiyawo, B. (2023). Voters' trust and electoral transparency in Nigeria: A social media perspective. *Nigerian Journal of Communication Research*, 5(1), 44–59.*
- Independent National Electoral Commission. (2023). *INEC press statement on the 2023 general elections*. INEC.
- Inobemhe, G., & Santas, J. (2021). Political misinformation and online radicalisation among Nigerian youths. *African Journal of Digital Behaviour*, 3(2), 50–66.*
- Inobemhe, G., Santas, J., & Udeh, P. (2022). Social media algorithms and election misinformation in Nigeria. *Journal of Online Behaviour Studies*, 6(1), 75–92.*
- Kaur, J., & Thapar, S. (2022). The impact of fake news on political decision-making. *International Journal of Media Literacy*, 9(1), 33–47.*
- Ojebode, A., & Adegbola, T. (2022). Media consumption patterns and political behaviour among young voters in Nigeria. *Journal of African Communication Research*, 14(3), 101–118.*
- Obiora, C., & Okafor, J. (2023). Social media influencers and voter persuasion in Nigeria's 2023 elections. *African Digital Politics Journal*, 2(1), 55–70.*
- Paljug, K. (2025). Understanding political communication in the digital age. *Journal of Digital Society*, 11(1), 1–12.*
- Piriyasanti, S., & Phuengpha, P. (2024). The role of misinformation during election periods in Southeast Asia. *Asian Journal of Political Communication*, 7(2), 95–112.*
- Premium Times. (2023). *Nigeria: Fact-checking claims during the 2023 presidential debates*. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/>
- Punch Newspaper. (2023). *INEC releases preliminary 2023 election report*. <https://punchng.com/>
- Reuters. (2023). *Nigeria 2023 election: Observations and reports*. <https://www.reuters.com/>

Sahara Reporters. (2023). *Social media reactions to Nigeria's 2023 presidential election*. <https://saharareporters.com/>

ThisDay. (2023). *Analysing campaign promises: Fact-checking Nigeria's political class*. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/>