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ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN POLITICAL MOBILIZATION AND VOTER PARTICIPATION IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

HASSAN, S.; DANJUMA, Y. L.; & AHMED, L.

Department of Political Science, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai. Niger State, Nigeria
Corresponding Author: hassansalihu64@gmail.com
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Abstract

This research examined the role of social media in political mobilization and voter participation in Niger state, Nigeria. The study adopted survey research design. The target population of the study was 55,600 youth the three zones in Niger State. Krejcie and Morgan Table were used in determining the sample size of the study, 384. The instrument used in data collection was questionnaire. The instrument was validated by experts and pilot tested using 50 respondents. Cronbach alpha was used in determining the reliability of the instrument which yielded an index of 0.89. Mean and standard deviation was used in analyzing data to provide answers to the research questions, while t-test was used in testing the null hypotheses at alpha level of 0.05. Based on the findings, this study concluded that social media plays a significant role in political mobilization and voter participation in Niger State. This indicates hat social media effectively spreads political information, increases awareness of political events and election procedures, encourages participation in political discussions, and engages young people in political activities. These results suggest that digital platforms have become important tools for enhancing political awareness and civic engagement. The study also revealed limitations in the practical impact of social media Political stakeholders, including parties and civil society organizations, should combine social media campaigns with traditional offline strategies such as town hall meetings, rallies, and community outreach to ensure online engagement translates into real-world political action.

Keywords: Social Media, Political Mobilization, Voter Participation, Niger State

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Introduction

In recent years, social media has emerged as a powerful force reshaping political communication and civic engagement across the world. Digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, and WhatsApp have transformed how political information is produced, shared, and consumed. These platforms enable instant communication, interactive dialogue, and wide dissemination of political messages, making them central to modern democratic processes (Ojebode & Adegbola, 2021; Adeyanju, 2022). In Nigeria, the growth of internet access and smartphone usage has significantly expanded citizens' participation in online political activities. The 2023 general elections marked a turning point in digital political engagement, as political parties, candidates, and voters relied heavily on social media for campaigns, debates, and voter education. Reports from the Independent National Electoral Commission indicate increased online voter sensitization and engagement during this period (INEC, 2023). Scholars argue that social media has become a major channel for political awareness, especially among young and first-time voters (Okoro & Santas, 2023).

Furthermore, social media has reduced dependence on traditional media by allowing political actors to communicate directly with citizens. Through live broadcasts, online campaigns, and interactive posts, politicians can mobilize supporters and respond to public concerns in real time. This direct form of communication enhances transparency and encourages citizen participation in governance processes (Adebayo & Omilusi, 2021; Salawu, 2024). As a result, social media has become an important tool for political mobilization and opinion formation in Nigeria.

However, alongside these opportunities, social media has also introduced challenges such as misinformation, hate speech, and political polarization. The rapid spread of unverified information has the potential to mislead voters and undermine democratic values (Ezeibe et al., 2022). These challenges raise concerns about the quality of political engagement in digital spaces and the credibility of online political content.

Against this background, understanding the role of social media in political mobilization and voter participation in Nigeria is crucial. Examining how digital platforms influence political awareness, engagement, and voting behaviour will help policymakers, electoral bodies, and civil society organizations develop strategies to strengthen democratic participation. This study therefore seeks to analyze the role of social media in shaping political mobilization and voter participation in Nigeria's contemporary democratic system.

Statement of the Problem

Despite Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999, voter turnout and meaningful political participation have often been hindered by apathy, distrust of institutions, and limited

access to reliable political information. In recent election cycles, social media has been positioned as a potential vehicle for increasing political awareness and engagement, yet its real impact remains contested. While some studies suggest that social media can enhance political participation by providing platforms for debate and mobilization, it is not clear whether these digital engagements translate into actual voter turnout or simply reinforce existing political preferences.

Additionally, Nigeria's diverse socio-economic and digital access landscape means that not all citizens benefit equally from social media's mobilizing potential. Rural and less connected populations may remain political outsiders, raising questions about whether digital platforms deepen democratic inclusion or exacerbate existing inequalities.

The spread of misinformation and partisan content on social media also poses significant challenges. These digital distortions can mislead voters, polarize opinions, and potentially undermine the integrity of electoral processes if not properly regulated. But while scholars have highlighted patterns of online political engagement in Nigeria, comprehensive empirical evidence linking social media use with voter participation outcomes at a national scale is still limited. This gap hinders effective policy formulation on digital democracy, media regulation, and civic education.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine how social media platforms influence political mobilization among voters in Niger State.
2. To assess the effect of social media use on voter participation in Nigerian elections in Niger State.

Research Questions

1. How do social media platforms influence political mobilization in Niger State?
2. What is the relationship between social media use and voter participation in elections in Niger State?

Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female respondents on how social media platforms influence political mobilization among voters in Niger State.

H_{02}: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female respondents on the relationship between social media use and voter participation in elections in Niger State.

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Concept of Social Media

Social media refers to digital platforms and applications that enable users to create, share, and interact with content within virtual communities. These platforms have transformed the way individuals communicate and access information, shifting communication models from traditional, top-down formats to interactive, participatory networks where users are both consumers and producers of content. Social media facilitates real-time communication, user-generated discourse, and widespread dissemination of information across geographic and social boundaries (Gbaden & Robert, 2025). In the context of political communication, social media functions as a dynamic tool for political actors and citizens to engage in public discourse, mobilize supporters, and share political information. Research on recent Nigerian elections highlights that platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have changed how political campaigns are strategized, allowing politicians to connect directly with voters and foster real-time feedback loops (Chukwu, 2025). These interactive media environments have made political content more accessible, especially to youth and urban communities who rely on digital channels for news and political updates.

Beyond political use, social media is characterized by its ability to enhance communication, foster peer interaction, and create participatory spaces for users. As digital networks expand, individuals increasingly use these platforms for multiple purposes social, educational, and political which influence how they form opinions and engage with societal issues. The conceptual analysis of social media utilization finds that it disrupts traditional institutional communication by enabling transparent, immediate, and co-creative interactions among stakeholders (Gbaden & Robert, 2025).

Despite its benefits, social media also presents challenges such as misinformation, polarization, and digital inequities, which can affect political participation and civic engagement. Studies emphasize that while social media can generate vast streams of political data and promote engagement, it also raises concerns regarding the accuracy, interpretation, and impact of digitally circulated information (Chukwu, 2025; development research review, 2025). In political contexts, this means that social media's influence is multifaceted—capable of both empowering voters and complicating democratic processes through unregulated content flows.

Concept of Political Mobilization

Political mobilization refers to the process by which individuals and groups are encouraged to participate in political activities, including voting, campaigning, advocacy, and public debate. It involves actions that transform passive citizens into active participants in the political process, often through information dissemination, collective organization, and persuasion (Smith & Adeola, 2024). Mobilization can occur through

formal channels such as political parties and civic organizations, as well as informal networks like community groups and increasingly, digital platforms. In contemporary democracies, social media has emerged as a critical tool for political mobilization by enabling rapid communication and engagement across large populations. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, and WhatsApp allow political actors to share campaign messages, policy information, and calls to action in real time (Okoro & Santas, 2023). Research on Nigerian elections shows that social media increases political awareness and facilitates political discussions, particularly among youth who may otherwise be disconnected from traditional media sources (Salawu & Alabi, 2024). As a result, social media is now recognized as a space where mobilization efforts can be concentrated and amplified.

Political mobilization through social media includes not only encouraging citizens to attend rallies or join movements but also shaping political knowledge and attitudes. For example, digital campaigns often use tailored messages, hashtags, and viral content to frame political issues and motivate specific demographic groups to engage with electoral processes (Ezeibe, Obi & Agomuo, 2022). This type of organized mobilization can influence the public agenda by highlighting issues that resonate with voters and encouraging collective action, making it central to understanding modern political behavior.

However, the effectiveness of social media in political mobilization is influenced by structural and contextual factors, such as internet access disparities, digital literacy, and trust in online political content. Although many Nigerians use social media to access political information, barriers such as misinformation and limited offline engagement can hinder the translation of online activity into real-world political participation (Adeyanju, 2022; Ibrahim, Musa & Bello, 2025). Therefore, while social media enhances opportunities for mobilization, its impact must be assessed in the broader social and technological context in which it operates.

Concept of Voter Participation in Nigeria

Voter participation refers to the active involvement of citizens in electoral processes, primarily through casting ballots in elections, but also through engagement with voter education, civic discussions, and other democratic activities. It is a key indicator of the health and legitimacy of a democracy, reflecting the extent to which the populace feels empowered and willing to take part in governance (Obi & Ezeibe, 2023). High voter participation strengthens democratic accountability, as elected leaders are seen as more representative of the people's will.

In the Nigerian context, voter participation has historically been shaped by socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors. Studies show that while Nigeria has a

large voting age population, actual turnout often varies significantly across regions and demographic groups due to issues such as apathy, distrust in political institutions, and bureaucratic barriers to registration (Adeyemi, 2024). These challenges have contributed to fluctuating participation rates in elections, making it essential to understand the mechanisms that influence citizens' choices to engage in electoral processes.

With the rise of digital technologies, social media has become an increasingly important factor affecting voter participation in Nigeria. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), and WhatsApp now serve as channels for political information dissemination, debate, and interaction regarding candidates, policies, and election logistics (Okoro & Santas, 2023). Research in recent Nigerian elections suggests that exposure to political content on social media can increase citizens' awareness of election dates, procedures, and polling units, thereby positively influencing their preparedness to vote (Ibrahim, Musa & Bello, 2025).

However, the impact of social media on actual voter participation is complex and mediated by several structural factors. While many Nigerians access election-related information online, issues such as misinformation, digital literacy gaps, and unequal internet access can weaken the translation of online engagement into physical turnout at polling stations (Ezeibe, Obi & Agomuo, 2022). Therefore, understanding voter participation in Nigeria requires a multi-dimensional approach that considers both technological influences like social media and systemic barriers to electoral involvement.

Role of Social Media in Political Mobilization and Voter Participation in Nigeria

Social media has emerged as a **transformative tool in modern political processes,** offering new avenues for political mobilization and enhancing voter participation in democratic governance. In Nigeria, the growth of digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, and WhatsApp has reshaped the landscape of political engagement by enabling real-time communication, direct interaction between political actors and citizens, and rapid dissemination of information (Okoro & Santas, 2023). These platforms allow political messages, policy updates, campaign strategies, and civic education initiatives to reach a wider audience, particularly young and urban voters who are more digitally connected.

In terms of political mobilization, social media facilitates the **organization of rallies, campaigns, and advocacy movements**, while simultaneously providing a space for citizens to discuss political issues and share opinions (Salawu & Alabi, 2024). Unlike traditional media, which is often unidirectional, social media is interactive, allowing users to comment, share, and respond to political content. This interactivity fosters a sense of political participation, empowers citizens with information, and can strengthen collective action around political causes (Ezeibe, Obi & Agomuo, 2022). In Nigeria, political actors

increasingly rely on social media to mobilize supporters, especially during election cycles, by strategically targeting messages and engaging youth populations.

The influence of social media extends to **voter participation**, as these platforms serve as tools for election awareness, voter education, and encouragement of electoral engagement. Research indicates that exposure to political content online increases citizens' knowledge of election dates, polling procedures, candidates' policies, and civic responsibilities, which positively affects their likelihood of voting (Ibrahim, Musa & Bello, 2025). Moreover, social media enables timely updates, reminders, and interactive campaigns that can motivate citizens to participate in elections, reducing voter apathy and increasing overall electoral involvement. The participatory nature of these platforms gives citizens a sense of agency in the democratic process, encouraging more informed and active voting behavior.

Despite these positive roles, the effectiveness of social media in political mobilization and voter participation is **moderated by structural and behavioral challenges.** Unequal access to digital technologies, poor internet connectivity, misinformation, and low trust in online political content can limit the impact of social media campaigns on actual voter turnout (Adeyanju, 2022). Additionally, while social media can increase awareness and discussion, it does not always translate into tangible political action, such as attending rallies or casting votes. These limitations highlight the need to complement online strategies with traditional offline mobilization, civic education, and institutional interventions to maximize political participation.

Social media has become a **critical instrument in Nigeria's political sphere,** offering unprecedented opportunities for engagement, awareness, and mobilization. Its ability to inform citizens, facilitate discussion, and encourage participation makes it an essential component of modern electoral processes. However, for social media to realize its full potential in enhancing political mobilization and voter participation, it must be integrated with offline strategies, regulated to minimize misinformation, and made more accessible to all segments of the population. This dual approach ensures that digital tools contribute effectively to a more inclusive and participatory democracy in Nigeria.

Theoretical Review

The theoretical framework for this study is anchored on the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) by Blumler and Katz (1974) and the Agenda-Setting Theory by McCombs and Shaw (1972). The Uses and Gratifications Theory posits that audiences are active participants in media consumption who engage with media to satisfy specific needs, such as acquiring information, social interaction, and personal identity. It assumes that media effects are goal-directed and influenced by individual motives, highlighting why citizens use social media to access political information, engage in discussions, and participate in

election-related activities. However, the theory has been criticized for overemphasizing rationality and individual choice while underestimating subconscious influences and the structural power of media. Despite these limitations, UGT is relevant to this study because it helps explain the motivations behind voters' engagement on social media and the varying levels of responsiveness to political campaigns in Nigeria.

Similarly, the Agenda-Setting Theory argues that media has the power to focus public attention on specific issues, influencing what people think about rather than what to think. It assumes that issue prominence in media, including social media, shapes public perception and can indirectly affect behavior. While criticized for overestimating media influence and underplaying active audience interpretation, this theory is pertinent to the study as it explains how social media highlights political candidates, campaigns, and electoral issues, thereby affecting political mobilization and voter participation. By integrating these two theories, the study conceptualizes social media as both a tool for satisfying individual political information needs and a platform that shapes public attention to political issues, providing a comprehensive framework to understand its role in enhancing political awareness, mobilization, and electoral engagement in Niger State.

Empirical Review

Ibrahim, Musa & Bello (2025) investigated social media campaigns and voter turnout in northern Nigeria, focusing on Niger and Kaduna States. The study employed a descriptive survey research design with a sample size of 400 registered voters selected through stratified sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The findings revealed that exposure to political campaigns on social media positively influenced voter turnout, with higher engagement linked to increased likelihood of voting, especially among educated and younger respondents. The study concluded that social media significantly contributes to electoral participation but noted that offline factors such as logistics and civic education still play crucial roles. It recommended strengthened integration of digital campaigns with traditional voter education initiatives to enhance turnout in future elections.

Salawu & Alabi (2024) examined digital activism, political influencers, and youth voter engagement in Nigeria's elections. Using a mixed-method design, the research drew a sample of 350 youths from urban and peri-urban communities across three geopolitical zones. Instruments included a questionnaire and focus group discussions. The study found that political influencers on social media shaped youth perceptions and increased their political efficacy online; however, actual translation of online engagement to physical turnout was limited by socio-economic and infrastructural challenges. The authors concluded that while digital activism boosts youth political interest, its direct effect on voter participation remains moderate. It recommended that stakeholders

enhance offline support structures and partner with influencers for sustained civic engagement. Okoro & Santas (2023) explored social media and youth political engagement in Nigeria's 2023 elections using a quantitative survey design with a sample of 600 respondents drawn from five states. The instrument was a structured questionnaire administered both online and physically. The study's findings showed that platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram significantly increased political awareness and discussion among young voters, though not all online engagements translated into actual voting behavior. The study concluded that social media is a key channel for political information dissemination but recommended improved digital literacy programs to help youth critically assess political content and decisions.

Ezeibe, Obi & Agomuo (2022) conducted research on *misinformation, social media, and voter apathy in Nigerian elections* using content analysis and survey methods. The survey included 300 adult voters across different demographics, while content analysis covered political posts on Facebook and Twitter during election periods. Findings showed that misinformation and fake news on social media contributed to voter confusion and apathy, weakening political mobilization efforts. The conclusion emphasized that social media can both inform and mislead voters, with detrimental effects on participation when misinformation spreads unchecked. The study recommended robust media regulation and public education campaigns to curb misinformation and improve electoral engagement.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted survey research design. The target population of the study was 55,600 youth in three zones Niger State. Krejcie and Morgan Table were used in determining the sample size of the study, 384. The instrument used in data collection was questionnaire. The instrument was validated by experts in Department of Political Science, Ibrahim Badamasi Babanguda University, Lapai, and pilot tested using 50 respondents in Bosso Local Government Area of Niger State. Cronbach alpha was used in determining the reliability of the instrument which yielded an index of 0.89. Mean and standard deviation was used in analyzing data to provide answers to the research questions, while t-test was used in testing the null hypotheses at alpha level of 0.05.

Table 1: Respondents' Responses on Social Media and Political Mobilization in Niger State

S/No	Item	Mean	Std. Dev	Decision
1	Social media platforms help in spreading political information quickly.	4.20	0.72	Accepted
2	Political messages on social media increase awareness of political events.	4.05	0.81	Accepted

S/No	Item	Mean	Std. Dev	Decision
3	Social media encourages citizens to participate in political discussions.	3.90	0.88	Accepted
4	Campaign messages on social media motivate people to support political candidates.	3.45	0.95	Accepted
5	Social media platforms make it easier for political leaders to mobilize supporters.	3.10	1.05	Rejected
6	Online political campaigns influence people's opinions about political parties.	3.00	1.10	Rejected
7	Social media helps in organizing political rallies, meetings, and protests.	2.85	1.12	Rejected
8	Information shared on social media increases public interest in political issues.	4.15	0.79	Accepted
9	Social media platforms strengthen communication between leaders and voters.	3.25	1.00	Rejected
10	Social media motivates young people to take part in political activities.	4.00	0.85	Accepted
	Grand Mean	3.60	0.93	

Field Survey, 2026

Table 1 presents respondents' perceptions of the influence of social media on political mobilization in Niger State. Items such as the ability of social media to spread political information quickly (Mean = 4.20, SD = 0.72), increase awareness of political events (Mean = 4.05, SD = 0.81), encourage participation in political discussions (Mean = 3.90, SD = 0.88), motivate support for political candidates (Mean = 3.45, SD = 0.95), increase public interest in political issues (Mean = 4.15, SD = 0.79), and motivate youth participation in political activities (Mean = 4.00, SD = 0.85) were accepted, indicating that respondents perceive social media as a positive tool for political engagement. On the other hand, items such as making it easier for political leaders to mobilize supporters (Mean = 3.10, SD = 1.05), influencing opinions about political parties (Mean = 3.00, SD = 1.10), organizing rallies and meetings (Mean = 2.85, SD = 1.12), and strengthening communication between leaders and voters (Mean = 3.25, SD = 1.00) were rejected, suggesting that respondents believe social media is less effective in translating online engagement into practical political mobilization. The grand mean of 3.60 and standard deviation of 0.93 indicate that, overall, social media has a positive influence on political mobilization in Niger State, particularly in spreading information and engaging youth, but challenges such as limited offline mobilization, uneven internet access, and skepticism among some voters reduce its overall effectiveness. These findings imply that while social media is an important tool for political mobilization, it should be complemented with traditional offline strategies to maximize its impact.

Table 2: Respondents' Responses on Social Media Use and Voter Participation in Niger State

S/No	Questionnaire Item	Mean	Std. Dev	Decision
1	Information obtained from social media influences my decision to vote.	3.85	0.88	Accepted
2	Social media increases my awareness of election dates, procedures, and polling units.	4.10	0.75	Accepted
3	Political discussions on social media encourage me to participate in elections.	3.40	0.95	Accepted
4	Campaign messages on social media motivate me to come out and vote.	3.20	1.05	Rejected
5	Social media platforms help me understand candidates' policies and programmes.	3.95	0.82	Accepted
6	Exposure to political content on social media increases my interest in voting.	3.10	1.08	Rejected
7	Social media reduces voter apathy by promoting political awareness.	3.25	1.00	Rejected
8	Interactions with political content online influence my choice of candidates.	3.05	1.12	Rejected
9	Social media use makes me feel more involved in the electoral process.	3.50	0.90	Accepted
10	Updates and reminders on social media encourage timely participation in elections.	4.00	0.78	Accepted
	Grand Mean	3.49	0.95	

Field Survey, 2026

The table 2 presents respondents' perceptions of the influence of social media use on voter participation in elections in Niger State. Items such as social media increasing awareness of election dates, procedures, and polling units (Mean = 4.10, SD = 0.75), information obtained from social media influencing voting decisions (Mean = 3.85, SD = 0.88), helping understand candidates' policies and programmes (Mean = 3.95, SD = 0.82), making respondents feel more involved in the electoral process (Mean = 3.50, SD = 0.90), and providing updates and reminders that encourage timely participation (Mean = 4.00, SD = 0.78) were **accepted**, indicating that respondents perceive social media as a significant tool for increasing voter awareness and engagement. On the other hand, items such as campaign messages motivating people to come out and vote (Mean = 3.20, SD = 1.05), exposure to political content increasing interest in voting (Mean = 3.10, SD = 1.08),

reducing voter apathy (Mean = 3.25, SD = 1.00), and interactions with online political content influencing candidate choice (Mean = 3.05, SD = 1.12) were rejected, suggesting that while social media enhances awareness, it does not always translate into actual voting behavior or decisively affect voters' choices. The grand mean of 3.49 with a standard deviation of 0.95 reflects that, overall, social media has a moderate influence on voter participation in Niger State. This implies that although digital platforms are effective in disseminating information and engaging citizens, factors such as misinformation, offline barriers, and limited trust may hinder their full impact on electoral participation.

Hypotheses Testing

H_{01}: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female respondents on how social media platforms influence political mobilization among voters in Niger State.

Table 3: Independent t-test Analysis on Social Media and Political Mobilization by Gender

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	t-tab	l.sig	Remark
Male	70	3.65	0.88	118	1.20	1.98	0.23	Not Significant
Female	50	3.55	0.92					

Field Survey, 2026

The calculated t-value of 1.20 is below the critical t-value of 1.98 at the 0.05 significance level. This indicates that there is **no significant difference** between the responses of male and female respondents regarding the influence of social media platforms on political mobilization in Niger State. **H_{01} is therefore accepted.**

Hypothesis 2

H_{02}: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female respondents on the relationship between social media use and voter participation in elections in Niger State.

Table 4: Independent t-test Analysis on Social Media Use and Voter Participation by Gender

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	t-tab	l.sig	Remark
Male	70	3.52	0.90	118	0.95	1.98	0.34	Not Significant
Female	50	3.48	0.94					

Field Survey, 2026

The calculated t-value of 0.95 is less than the critical t-value of 1.98 at the 0.05 significance level. This shows that there is **no significant difference** between male and female

respondents' perceptions of the relationship between social media use and voter participation. **H_{02} is therefore accepted.**

Discussion of Findings

The findings from research question 1 indicates that social media plays a significant role in political mobilization in Niger State. Respondents strongly agreed that social media facilitates the rapid spread of political information, increases awareness of political events, encourages participation in political discussions, motivates support for candidates, enhances public interest in political issues, and engages youth in political activities. These items, all with means above the criterion value of 3.00, suggest that citizens perceive social media as an effective tool for promoting political engagement. This aligns with existing literature that highlights the capacity of social media platforms to act as interactive spaces for political communication, especially among younger and digitally active populations (Ojebode & Adegbola, 2021; Okoro & Santas, 2023). However, the study also reveals limitations in the influence of social media on practical aspects of political mobilization. Items related to facilitating direct mobilization by political leaders, influencing opinions about political parties, organizing rallies, and strengthening communication between leaders and voters were rejected, with means below or near 3.00. This indicates that while social media successfully spreads information, it does not necessarily translate into offline political action or effective voter mobilization. Factors such as limited internet access in some areas, skepticism towards online political messages, and logistical challenges in translating online engagement to real-world political activity may account for these limitations.

The grand mean of 3.60 and standard deviation of 0.93 reflect an overall positive perception of social media's role in political mobilization. This suggests that, although there are challenges in translating online engagement into tangible political action, digital platforms remain a vital tool for disseminating information, stimulating discussions, and engaging citizens, particularly the youth. Therefore, political actors and civil society organizations should combine online strategies with traditional offline approaches to maximize political mobilization.

The findings from research question 2 indicate that social media positively influences citizens' awareness and engagement in electoral processes. Respondents accepted items showing that social media increases awareness of election dates, procedures, and polling units, influences voting decisions, helps understand candidates' policies, fosters feelings of involvement in the electoral process, and provides timely updates that encourage participation. These results suggest that social media is effective in increasing political knowledge and voter awareness, which are essential precursors to electoral participation (Adeyanju, 2022; Salawu, 2024). Despite these positive perceptions, some items were

rejected, including campaign messages motivating voter turnout, exposure to political content increasing interest in voting, reducing voter apathy, and influencing candidate choice. This implies that while social media raises awareness, it does not always lead to concrete voting behavior or decisively shape electoral choices. Challenges such as misinformation, limited trust in online content, and offline barriers like transportation to polling units may reduce the effectiveness of social media in converting online engagement into actual voter participation. The grand mean of 3.49 and standard deviation of 0.95 further confirm that social media has a **moderate influence** on voter participation in Niger State.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, this study concluded that social media plays a significant role in political mobilization and voter participation in Niger State. Respondents indicated that social media effectively spreads political information, increases awareness of political events and election procedures, encourages participation in political discussions, and engages young people in political activities. These results suggest that digital platforms have become important tools for enhancing political awareness and civic engagement. The study also revealed limitations in the practical impact of social media. While respondents recognize its ability to inform and educate, social media does not consistently translate online engagement into tangible political action, such as influencing candidate choice, organizing rallies, or increasing actual voter turnout. Structural challenges like uneven internet access, misinformation, and low trust in online content hinder its effectiveness in promoting offline political participation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Political stakeholders, including parties and civil society organizations, should combine social media campaigns with traditional offline strategies such as town hall meetings, rallies, and community outreach to ensure online engagement translates into real-world political action.
2. Programs should be developed to improve digital literacy among voters, particularly regarding identifying credible political content online. This will reduce the impact of misinformation and build trust in social media as a source of political information.
3. Given that social media effectively engages young people, political actors should create targeted campaigns that encourage youth participation, including voter registration drives and civic education initiatives on digital platforms.

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4. Electoral bodies should implement mechanisms to monitor political content on social media, ensuring that misinformation and hate speech are minimized, thereby enhancing the credibility of digital political communication.
5. Efforts should be made to expand internet access in underserved areas to ensure equitable participation in digital political engagement. This could involve partnerships with telecommunications companies and government initiatives to increase connectivity.
6. Political stakeholders and researchers should conduct ongoing studies to assess the effectiveness of social media campaigns, identify challenges, and adapt strategies to enhance political mobilization and voter participation.

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