

Social media and political mobilization in rural environment in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: Social media have been used as a vital tool for political mobilization since its inception, and its impact on political communication cannot be overemphasized. This study examines the influence of various social media handles for political mobilization in Odogbolu Local Government Area. The main objective of this study was to determine the extent of social media influence on politics or political mobilization in Odogbolu Local Government Area. The study utilised Technological Determinism Theory as a theoretical framework, and its findings were derived from the survey research method with the distribution of 160 questionnaires to respondents through a multi-stage sampling technique. Data were analysed and interpreted using descriptive statistics. The findings of the study reveal that social media in rural settlements like Odogbolu Local Government Area are emerging as a substantial promotion tool during elections by political parties to connect with the electorates, express their agenda, influence voters, increase their visibility, and garner majority votes during elections. The authors recommended that government and political parties should resolve the challenges that confront people regarding the use of social media (e.g., poor network, erratic electricity supply, low internet literacy, and high illiteracy level) to enhance the maximum benefits of the use of social media for political mobilization in the Nigerian rural areas.

KEYWORDS: politician; rural settlement; digital media; political mobilization

1. Introduction

Liberal democracy, which is today's political practice in most parts of the world, was developed as a result of the bourgeois critique in early modern Europe and specifically the French Revolution of 1789, with its slogan of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity that both worked together to clamp down the divine leadership of the absolutist monarchies of European feudalism at the start, then the sequential transmission of the idea to other places of the world, including Nigeria. According to Kurfi et al.^[1] for capitalism to develop freely, there had to be freedom of thought and action for those with entrepreneurial skills and the wealth to use them. There had, therefore, to be freedom from the arbitrariness of absolute power, an end to the ideology of divine right, and recognition of the status of capital, earned in the marketplace rather than inherited. Consequently, the need for mass mobilization for ascension into leadership positions becomes necessary. That is, there is a need for whoever is interested in a leadership

position to convince the mass majority to make this dream come true. This means that the media constitute the conveyor belt for democracy, which helps in the supply of the required political information that electorates would base their decision on^[2].

Contemporary media development has made it efficient for everyone in all works of life to flaunt ideas through social media^[3]. This relationship between mass media and politics has continued to evolve, which cannot be easily separated because of the influence they have upon human life, daily activities, and the environment. According to Ufot and Onaopepo^[3], mass media are major players in electoral processes; hence, social media have doubled these efforts of the mainstream media to provide a platform that enables political parties and their candidates to dispense their messages to the public with the expectation of favourable response in return.

Through a medium whose potential is recognized as an integral driver of communication that facilitates two ways conversation^[4] political actors need to utilise media platforms that align with what their prospects use. Studies have revealed that Nigerians in Africa are the most populous users of the Web 2.0 technological platforms, using the phenomenon for many things, including social interaction, campaigns, escalation, mobilise support, and triggering sales, among others^[5,6]. Social media has become a powerful medium used to affect voting behavior 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^[7]. Not only does social media provide information about political affiliations, candidates, and their party manifesto, it also provides a platform through which voters across cultural divides can relate to and interact with themselves on issues about contenders^[8].

Evidently, in the 2015 and 2019 general 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 youth but all classes of internet users to vote for them^[3]. This brought 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 online campaigns, particularly in the urban societies of the country.

Nearly every political party in the country used social media to campaign and advance its plans, messages, and manifestos to supporters, including advertising, mobilization and organizing in most cities of the federation, and even fund-raising. Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Twitter, among others, were used to let voters know how each party or particular candidate felt about important national issues ranging from security to electricity power^[9]. To this end, Ufot and Onaopepo^[3] maintain that the transition into the era of communication overlapping makes it inherent for social media to build an interface with politics and become the trending media for propagating political ideas. In this era of globalization, the social media impact on the political mobilization process, especially in a democratic state, cannot be oversimplified.

This work attempts to fill a gap in the literature by concentrating on the usage of social media for political mobilization in the rural area, where most of the populace is illiterate and has limited access to the internet and social media, while most of the existing literature on the usage of social media for political mobilization focuses on the urban area, where most of the electorates are literate and need less political or voting orientation. It is against this backdrop that this study attempts to examine the political interface with digital media with a focus on the usage of various social media platforms for political

mobilization in the 2023 Nigeria general election in a rural Odogbolu Local Government Area of Ogun State.

2. Literature review

2.1. Social media

Given the wide range of qualities attributed to this genre of mass communication, social media is best described for conceptual clarification. This media, like the mainstream, performs various functions in society, ranging from communication to social awareness, education to mobilization, social interaction to entertainment, among others. This reflects the stance of Akpoveta^[10] when he said that the impact that today social media has on its users and specifically the engagement that its users have with the same is tremendous. It is because of the massive impact of social media on its users that today, be it a local election or the election on a larger scale, the campaigning is not deemed to be complete without considering the media.

Moreover, social media share the above-stated similarities with the traditional media; notwithstanding, the media platforms are recognized as an integral driver of communication that facilitates two-way conversation embodied with interactive platforms hosted on the internet that facilitate easy exchange of information and socialization among users^[11]. Branded with an endless array of multiple platforms and functions, in both universal and geo-specific capacity, will help actualize the essence of this interactive peculiarity.

Consequently, Obono in Rhodi^[12], grouped social media into the following categories: collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia), blogs and microblogs (e.g., Twitter), content communities (e.g., YouTube), social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), virtual game worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft), and virtual social worlds (e.g., SoundLife), among others.

2.1.1. Political mobilization in rural environments

In summary, the sensitization of the citizenry, increase, and improvements in their political consciousness to effect change in a political process is presented by Abubakar^[13] as the concept of political mobilization. From another point of view, Mustapha^[14] defines political mobilization as the simultaneous engagement of large masses of people in activities that have a predominantly social or collective objective. This entails all efforts from politicians and political parties with the use of aggressive political advertisement on various media of mass communication such as television, radio, social media, posters, billboards, transit media, and many other above-and-below-the-line media to assemble, inform, and persuade voters about various contenders for different public offices.

In rural areas, political mobilization transpires for the dwellers to be sensitized, informed, and motivated into taking desirable actions towards a given goal, in such a manner as to tilt the allocation of political values to the harbingers of such calculated engagement and mobilization of the people^[15,16]. Characterized with traditional political settings^[17], argue that radio, newspapers, and clandestine meetings are means of mobilizing people for political events and affairs in rural areas. Depending on the width of the rural area, people are coerced into attending socio-political gatherings where views and ideas are discussed, harvested, and disseminated through verbal methods and symbolic letters to get the people mobilized for the agenda.

2.1.2. Social media and political mobilization: Opportunities and threats

The evolution of social media has affected virtually every aspect of human endeavours, including politics. This is what it means when Binshad^[18] states that the time has come when the potential of the internet and social media is also being tapped in the field of politics. Social media, according to Vankanavath^[19] has changed traditional approaches to mobilization in terms of political member recruitment, increased the speed and interactivity of communication, and transformed the landscape of political engagements. Changing the face of political communication, Aondover^[20] posits that the various social media platforms are being used by politicians and political parties for new ways of interfacing with voters. In the same vein, Fatema et al. and Mojaye and Aondover^[21,22] assert that social media have come to expand the initial interface that the traditional media has built with political institutions.

Being a two-way communication channel, the social platforms have continued to meet needs in terms of political participation, assisting political institutions to propagate their views, and at the same time, allowing the audience to vocalize or share their views and opinions about political matters to the cognizance of the public, including political institutions^[23,24].

Nevertheless, through the media's various platforms, the global political arena has witnessed both beautiful and ugly experiences; gladiators in the system have risen, and some met their Waterloo in respect to the status conferral function of the media as also enshrined in this phenomenon. The rise in political agenda, particularly through social media, and its fundamental impact on electoral integrity have become an issue of global concern^[25,26]. Issues like virtual protests, highlighting economic disparities, and identifying targets of blame are among the symbolic change that has greeted the political institution.

2.1.3. Empirical review

There have been several studies on the effective use of social media for political mobilization in various capacities. Yusuf and Benjamin^[27] work on social media as a tool for political mobilization posits that social media has a significant impact on the lives of the citizens, especially in the areas of political mobilization, be it local elections or national elections. The campaigning is not complete without the use of social media. The study, which focuses on adolescents and youth between the ages of 15 and 24 years in India, observed that "social media allows the politicians and political parties to connect directly with the masses at a lesser cost and greater reach in comparison to the traditional media."

In another perspective, Mustapha^[14] work on the impact of mass media on the political mobilization process noted that in order to ensure efficient and unbiased political mobilization by the mass media, there should be total autonomy, which will in turn ensure a free and independent press. The study, which focused on Plateau State Radio Television Corporation, concludes that media in Nigeria as a whole will not achieve its basic objective, which is fundamental to the survival and growth of man as an apolitical being, if political mobilization is not carried out effectively.

Lal^[28] also observed that social media has changed traditional mobilization structures, which include how political parties' members are recruited, how communication takes place, how political party members interact, and what type of activities members engage in. The study, which is based on political mobilization, protest, and social media, posits that social media has increased the speed and interactivity of communication and has transformed the landscape of political protest. The study further enumerated that social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp, among others, can create a general identity and sense of solidarity, which allows people to develop a common sense of indignation, anger, and frustration as well as a perception of shared victimhood.

In a similar vein, Vankanavath and Deepak^[19] noted that social media platforms have made the dynamic landscape of communication undergo deep transformation, and their pervasive influence has also redefined the way individuals engage with political issues, transcending traditional boundaries and enabling unprecedented levels of participation and activism. Yusuf and Benjamin^[27] observed that social media networks are gradually becoming a critical component of civil engagement and an ideal mode of communication, as they generate virtual discourse among friends, acquaintances, groups with similar aspirations, and with whoever shares one's common interests.

2.1.4. Theoretical framework: Technological determinism model

This theory is attributed to Thorstein Veblen between 1857 and 1929, who invented the causative relation between technology and society. The theory proposes that technology is the principal influencer of a society's transformation, which could be classified as either hard or soft determinism^[29]. This is because societies are shaped and influenced by technological development, which they have to adjust and adapt for progress. The significance ascribed to the general effects of technological advancement in the societal context is reflected in the categorisation of some societies as first-world and others as second- and third-world societies. The theory assumed that social changes are controlled by technological innovation, communication, and the media, which alter the way people think and interact. As such, the introduction and use of new technologies are seen as part of social order.

Vankanavath and Deepak^[19] observed that we live in a communication era with rapid expansion in the reach of mass media and improved techniques for the interpersonal exchange of ideas. Accordingly, Msughter^[16] asserts that societies are, therefore, modelled by technical changes created by societies. Consequently, she refers to it as a dimension and not an external force of society. Thus, political affairs affect all members of the societies, and the actors must, as a matter of necessity, adjust to the technological influences in the society, particularly those ones who rely on numbers for their emergence. The model, therefore, postulated that in this period of communication overlapping and the continued acceptance of technological developments synonymous with global trends, including the media industry, social media have continued to serve the political system objectively by making information, discussion, and consideration of public affairs accessible.

3. Methodology

In this study, a survey was adopted, which is primarily based on quantitative data. Therefore, data collection was carried out through the administration of a questionnaire instrument served to eligible voters residing in Odogbolu Local Government Area. The instrument became appropriate for this study because of its relevance in the field of social research. Among others, it enables a wider audience to be reached, which helps in gathering authentic and detailed information on the topic under study. Anchored on the cluster sampling technique, four settlements or areas, which are Ososa, Okun-owa, Odogbolu, and Ikangba, were selected based on the presence of central political wards, and these areas constituted the rural parts of the selected local government out of the 95,530 total registered voters and the 24,041 accredited in the 2023 gubernatorial election^[30].

Consequently, the wards of the two major political parties (APC and PDP) were considered for the distribution and collection of relevant data. It is instructive to note that these are the two political parties prominent in the area of study. More so, forty (40) respondents were selected in each of the selected settlements and allotted with forty questionnaires. Thus, 160 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, and 156 were returned and validated for final analysis, making up a 94 percent return rate. The questionnaire items consisted of open-ended, closed-ended, contingency questions in the typical Likert

scale response style. Descriptive statistics was employed for the data analysis using frequencies, percentages, tables, and value counts. This was used because it provides a mathematical method for organizing, summarizing, and analyzing data that have been collected and measured.

4. Data analysis

A total of 160 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, and 156 were returned and validated for final analysis, making up 94 percent of the of the return rate.

Table 1 shows the various professions of the respondents. The table showed that 29 respondents representing 18.6% were students, 27 respondents (17.3%) were politicians, 26 respondents representing 16.7% were traders, 34 respondents representing 21.8% were artisans, and 40 respondents, which represents 25.6%, were farmers.

Table 1. Table of respondents by profession.

Profession	Respondents	Percentage
Students	29	18.6
Politicians	27	17.3
Traders	26	16.7
Artisans	34	21.8
Farmers	40	25.6
Total	156	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Table 2 shows whether the respondents are users of social media platforms; 126 respondents, which represent 80.8%, chose yes, while 30 respondents, which represent 19.2%, chose no.

Table 2. Table of response of respondents to whether the respondents are users of social media platforms.

Social media platforms user	Respondents	Percentage
YES	126	80.8
NO	30	19.2
Total	156	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Table 3 shows the various social media platforms the respondents have access to. The table shows that 55 respondents representing 35.3% chose Facebook, 41 respondents (26.3%) chose WhatsApp, 4 respondents representing 2.6% chose Twitter, 6 respondents representing 3.8% chose Telegram, 13 respondents, which represents 8.3%, chose TikTok, 7 respondents representing 4.5% chose Instagram, and 30 respondents, which represents 19.2%, chose others. The result shows that the majority of the respondents (35%) of the sampled population uses Facebook more than any other handle on the social media platform. This is closely followed by WhatsApp (26%).

Table 3. Table of response of respondents to the various platforms the respondents has had access to on social media.

Social media platforms	Respondents	Percentage
Facebook	55	35.3
WhatsApp	41	26.3
Twitter	4	2.6
Telegram	6	3.8
TikTok	13	8.3
Instagram	7	4.5
OTHERS	30	19.2
Total	156	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Table 4 shows the devices used to access social media accounts. The table shows that 5 respondents representing 3.2% chose laptop, 1 respondent (6%) chose desktop, 128 respondents representing 82.1% chose smartphone, and 22 respondents representing 14.1% chose others.

Table 4. Table of response of respondents to the device used to access their social media accounts.

Device used in accessing social media accounts	Respondents	Percentage
Laptop	5	3.2
Desktop	1	.6
Smartphone	128	82.1
Others	22	14.1
Total	156	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Table 5 shows the medium used to source political messages. The table shows that 87 respondents representing 55.8% chose radio, 7 respondents (4.5%) chose television, 60 respondents representing 38.5% chose smartphones, and 2 respondents representing 1.3% chose others.

Table 5. Table of response of respondents to the medium through which the respondents' source political message.

Medium used to source for political message	Respondents	Percentage
Radio	87	55.8
Television	7	4.5
Social media	60	38.5
Newspaper/Magazine	2	1.3
Total	156	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

In **Table 6**, 130 respondents, representing 83.3%, chose yes, and 26 respondents (16.7%) chose no to whether social media connected the respondents to political platforms.

Table 6. Table of response of respondents whether social media connect the respondents to political platform.

Social media connect respondents to political platform	Respondents	Percentage
YES	130	83.3
NO	26	16.7
Total	156	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Table 7 shows the type of information/news the respondents frequently access on social media platforms. The table shows that 33 respondents representing 21.2% chose political news, 18 respondents (11.5%) chose political gist, 38 respondents representing 24.4% chose political campaign, and 67 respondents representing 42.9% chose political meetings.

Table 7. Table of response of respondents to the type of information/news the respondents frequently access on social media platforms.

Types of information/news frequently accessed by respondents on social media platforms	Respondents	Percentage
Political news	33	21.2
Political gist	18	11.5
Political campaign	38	24.4
Political meetings	67	42.9
Total	156	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

In **Table 8**, 56 respondents representing 35.9% strongly agreed, 31 respondents (19.9%) agreed, 16 respondents representing 10.3% are neutral, 13 respondents representing 8.3% strongly disagreed, and 40 respondents representing 25.6% disagreed that access to social media in rural environments like Odogbolu is without hitches.

Table 8. Table of response to access to social media in rural environments like Odogbolu is without hitches.

Accessing of social media in rural environments like Odogbolu is without hitches	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agreed	56	35.9
Agreed	31	19.9
Neutral	16	10.3
Strongly disagreed	13	8.3
Disagreed	40	25.6
Total	156	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Table 9 shows the challenges of social media usage. The table shows that 18 respondents representing 11.5% chose access to power, 11 respondents (7.1%) chose access to network, 19 respondents representing 12.2% chose that many residents are aged, 45 respondents representing 28.8% chose a high level of illiteracy, and 63 respondents representing 40.4% chose that most residents are not internet literate.

Table 9. Table of response of respondents to the challenges of social media usage.

Hindrances to social media usage	Respondents	Percentage
Access to constant electricity supply	18	11.5
Access to network	11	7.1
Residents are aged	19	12.2
level of illiteracy	45	28.8
Most residents are not computer literate	63	40.4
Total	156	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

In **Table 10**, 108 respondents representing 69.2% strongly agreed, 24 respondents (15.4%) agreed, 8 respondents representing 5.1% strongly disagreed, and 16 respondents representing 10.3% disagreed that social media content on political platforms influences respondents' political decisions. Therefore, it can be asserted that social media contents affect political decisions of rural dwellers, as 84% of the respondents concur with the notion, while a small percentage of 15% disagree.

Table 10. Table of response to social media content on political platforms influences respondent's political decision.

Social media content on political platforms influences respondent's political decision	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agreed	108	69.2
Agreed	24	15.4
Strongly disagreed	8	5.1
Disagreed	16	10.3
Total	156	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

In **Table 11**, 71 respondents representing 45.5% strongly agreed, 46 respondents (29.5%) agreed, 18 respondents representing 11.5% are neutral, 4 respondents represent 2.6% strongly disagreed, and 17 respondents representing 10.9% disagreed that politicians in Odogbolu local government areas sustain their followers through the various political social media platforms. Thus, 75% of the respondents agree with the notion, while 13% disagree.

Table 11. Table of response to politicians in Odogbolu local government areas sustain their followers through the various political social media platforms.

Politicians in Odogbolu local government areas sustain their followers through the various political social media platforms	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agreed	71	45.5
Agreed	46	29.5
Neutral	18	11.5
Strongly disagreed	4	2.6
Disagreed	17	10.9
Total	156	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

In **Table 12**, 42 respondents representing 24.4% strongly agreed, 33 respondents (21.2%) agreed, 16 respondents representing 10.3% are neutral, 21 respondents representing 13.5% strongly disagreed, and 44 respondents representing 28.2% disagreed that social media platforms can be used to communicate political matters effectively to people in rural areas. Thus, more people perceive social media as a means of communicating political matters effectively to ruralites, as 46% of the respondents concurred while 44% think otherwise.

Table 12. Social media platforms can be used to communicate political matters effectively to people in rural areas.

Social media platforms can be used to communicate political matters effectively to people in rural areas	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agreed	42	24.4
Agreed	33	21.2
Neutral	16	10.3
Strongly disagreed	21	3.8
Disagreed	44	40.4
Total	156	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

In **Table 13**, 38 respondents representing 24.4% strongly agreed, 33 respondents (21.2%) agreed, 16 respondents representing 10.3% are neutral, 6 respondents representing 3.8% strongly disagreed, and 63 respondents representing 40.4% disagreed that social media platforms are relevant in the mobilizing electorates of Odogbolu local government. It can be seen that a total of 46% agreed that social media platforms are relevant in mobilizing rural electorates for elections, while 44% of the respondents do not agree.

Table 13. Social media platforms are relevant in the mobilizing electorate of Odogbolu local government.

Social media platforms are relevant in the mobilizing electorate of Odogbolu local government for elections	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agreed	38	24.4
Agreed	33	21.2
Neutral	16	10.3
Strongly disagreed	6	3.8
Disagreed	63	40.4
Total	156	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

In **Table 14**, 74 respondents representing 47.4% strongly agreed, 20 respondents (12.8%) agreed, 6 respondents representing 3.8% are neutral, 5 respondents representing 3.2% strongly disagreed, and 51 respondents representing 32.7% disagreed that political messages via social media influence choice of candidate. The survey shows that 60% of the sampled population aligned with the notion that political messages via social media influence their choice of candidates for elections, while 36% think otherwise.

Table 14. Political messages via social media influence your choice of candidate.

Political messages via social media influence your choice of candidate	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agreed	74	47.4
Agreed	20	12.8
Neutral	6	3.8
Strongly disagreed	5	3.2
Disagreed	51	32.7
Total	156	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

In **Table 15**, 51 respondents representing 32.7% strongly agreed, 34 respondents (21.8%) agreed, 26 respondents representing 16.7% strongly disagreed, and 45 respondents representing 28.8% disagreed that social media messages to the electorates during the electoral process are credible. Credibility of messages and means of conveying them are crucial in electoral contests. As such, these two variables are vital to enhancing the credibility of an electoral process. From the table, 55% of the respondents affirm that social media messages to the electorates during the electoral process are credible, while 46% perceive it as incorrect.

Table 15. Social media messages to the electorate during the electoral process are credible.

Social media messages to the electorate during the electoral process are credible	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agreed	51	32.7
Agreed	34	21.8
Strongly disagreed	26	16.7
Disagreed	45	28.8
Total	156	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

In **Table 16**, 42 respondents representing 26.9% strongly agreed, 49 respondents (31.4%) agreed, 49 respondents representing 31.4% strongly disagreed, and 16 respondents representing 10.3% disagreed that social media can be used to influence voters' perceptions during the electioneering process in rural environments.

Table 16. Social media can be used to influence voters' perceptions during the electioneering campaign in rural environment.

Social media can be used to influence voters' perceptions during the electioneering campaign in rural environment	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agreed	42	26.9
Agreed	49	31.4
Strongly disagreed	49	31.4
Disagreed	16	10.3
Total	156	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

5. Discussion of findings

In order to assess the impact of social media for political mobilization in Odogbolu Local Government Area of Ogun State, the researchers prepared a questionnaire to elicit information from the respondents and came out with the following findings in respect of the questions raised in the study. Findings revealed that residents of the study areas in the Odogbolu Local Government area use various media, which include conventional and non-conventional ones such as radio, television, newspapers/magazines, and social media platforms for political mobilization. However, the most common one is radio, which is followed by social media. This shows that social media is emerging as a substantial promotion tool during elections by the political parties to connect and express their vision, to influence voters, and to achieve its objective to help them increase their visibility or to gain majority votes during the election.

This goes along with the findings of Vankanavath and Deepak^[19] work on the influence of social media as a tool of political marketing in general elections in India, in which they considered social media as an emerging substantial promotion tool during elections by the political parties to connect and express their vision, to influence voters, and to achieve its objective to help them increase their visibility or to gain a majority. Their findings also indicate that political parties possess a well-managed social media team that gains people's interest during elections and that also has wide opportunities for the marketing stream focusing on social media management and promotional work related to elections, political parties, and politicians.

The findings also reveal that people frequently have access to news/information on political matters through social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, Telegram, and Twitter, with Facebook taking the lion share. In other words, the rural people get most of their political information through the Facebook social media handle than the other platforms. In relation to that, the study shows that smartphones are the device mostly used to access social media accounts in the study domain.

This finding correlates with the findings of Biswas et al.'s^[23] work on social media influence on politicians' and citizens' relationships through the moderating effect of political slogans, in which they posit that among the social media platforms, Facebook is the most widely used platform for political communication in Saudi Arabia. Social media giants like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, MySpace, and Wikipedia are widely known communication websites. They are also known as "Web 2.0" tools. Web 2.0 is a specific term that describes the 21st century Internet as a place where the users can yield and share ideas, share any piece of information with others, cooperate, and help each other.

In addition, findings of this study reveal that social media platforms exert significant influence on the electorates because politicians in Odogbolu local government area sustain their followers through the various political social media platforms; social media facilitates communication of political matters effectively; it influences people's choice of election candidate; shapes voters' perceptions during electioneering campaigns; and enables the electoral process to be considered credible by the electorates and considered a strong weapon for mobilizing electorates. Furthermore, politically interested people get needed information on social media, and they get updated about political activities and new policies through the social media that have a positive impact on the political activities. Thus, social media has transformed politics in the Odogbolu Local Government area.

Another significant finding in this study is the challenges to social media usage, including computer illiteracy, poor electricity supply, internet illiteracy, and a poor internet network, among others. Social media content on political platforms influences the respondent's political decision. Social media is not

only the current generation's line of communications technologies, but it has also changed daily activities and connected people in a manner never before possible.

This is in agreement with Lal^[28] position on how technological determinism theory has caused social change through changes in communication technologies. "So, we now live in the satellite era? Are we different? We could safely answer, yes. We now live in Europe and learn about the political status of African countries. We live in the U.S., and we see images from the war in Syria happening at the same time we are watching them. We live in a small island somewhere in the Mediterranean Sea, and we see in our screen the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico as it happens." All these he called 'Global Social Change' through technological determinism.

6. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is anchored that social media influence electorates in Odogbolu Local Government Area in the electoral process because most of the people believe in information emanating from it, which makes messages on the social media effective. Also, social media is important in the political mobilization process, as almost all politicians and political parties use it to get information across to the people. The influencing power of social media in the political mobilization process has made it indispensable for the politicians and the electorates in every election year.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

- The reach of social media surpasses that of any traditional media, and it's quite popular among the youth. Political parties should, therefore, increase their media publicity budget to include placement of information on the internet via social media sites.
- Political parties, politicians, civil societies/groups, NGOs, etc. should step up their presence online, using social media. If the majority of Nigerians can be persuaded to vote during elections through the use of social media, then low voter turnout syndrome would be a thing of the past.

Author contributions

Conceptualization, methodology, OIB; validation, formal analysis, OSA; writing—review and editing, OAA; supervision, funding acquisition, OO. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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