



## Political Parties and the Matrix of Social Media War in Nigeria

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### Abstract

The use of social media has taken over all aspects of socio, economic, political, educational and cultural space. This has enabled all sorts of competitions in the social media, thereby turning it to media war among the contenders. Politically, political parties in Nigeria adopted significantly the use of social media as its major source of its campaign to woo the electorates to their parties. This study focused on political parties and the matrix of media war in Nigeria and the challenges it imposed to the electorates. The specific objectives include: to determine if social media war of political parties in their political campaigns is a challenge to the electorates in determining the political party to register as members; to find out if social media has made it difficult for the electorates in choosing the candidates to vote for during elections, and to determine if social media war by political parties play any role in determining voters turn out during elections. This study is anchored on agenda setting theory as its theoretical framework of analysis, while survey research design was adopted, making use of primary sources of data. Population of 2, 673,340 was used with a sample size of 400, determined with the application of Taro Yameni Mathematical Formula. The study applied stratified sampling technique as research questions and hypotheses raised to guide the work were tested using Chi Square. Findings show that social media war by political parties imposed challenge to the electorates in determining the political parties to belong to, and vote for as well as turn out during elections. The study recommends among others, that political parties should create a robust and effective social media presence to inform and educate the electorates and woo them to their parties.

**Keywords:** Political Parties, Social Media War, Electoral Campaign, Electorates, Nigeria.

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## Introduction

Democracy has been generally regarded as one of the best forms of government in the world today as noted by Nkwede, Elem, Udeuhele and Kpuduwei (2021). This is associated with the freedom given to citizens to elect their leaders who represent them at all levels. With this comes the existence of political parties on whose platform, individuals seek election to occupy various political offices. Since political parties owe it as responsibility to project and campaign for its party to win elections, various political parties have continued to devise various campaign strategies, ranging from Newspaper publication, Radio, Bill boards, flyers among others. These have for many years been the traditional means through which various political parties market their candidates and convince the electorates to belong to their political parties and vote for their candidates. Those who do not wish to belong to political parties are convinced through various political parties' manifestoes in flyers and campaign rally in various constituencies, local government areas and, wards level among others. All these efforts are strategies to woo the electorates to vote for them to win election.

Presently, with the advent of Information Communication Technology, the Social media has almost taken over all aspects of socio, economic, political, educational and cultural space all over the world for which Nigeria is one. This has provided opportunity for all sorts of competitions in the social media, thereby turning it to media war among the contenders. Politically, like every other every other aspect, Political parties all over the world adopted reasonably the use of social media as its major source of information dissemination to the electorates as social media is used to campaign and woo the electorates to their side. In advanced counties such as the United States of America, United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, Netherland, France among others, started the use of social media to disseminate information to the electorates with the intention of convincing them to belong to their political parties or vote for them during elections.

In developing countries such as Nigeria, the mass media are already considered to be an integral part of the political structure. This is as a result of the information they provide on what the people base their political judgments and form their political opinion. This has significantly improved the level of awareness, responsibility and participation in any democratic society such



as Nigeria who presently depend largely on the activities of the mass media (Santas, Asemah & Jumbo, 2020).

In Nigeria, as it implies in other countries of the world, especially in democratic set-up, election period consists of series of processes and activities leading to the actual day which electorate would cast their vote for the preferred candidate. In a normal democratic setting, periodic election is central to the effective functioning of democratic system. In this entire process of the election such as; registration of voters for eligibility to participate in election or voting, party primaries, campaign strategies to voting in an elections, the media play critical roles throughout the electoral process. In addition to promoting public debate and educating citizens, they monitor the integrity of the process and can be a primary vehicle for accountability demands (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2015).

The period of election in Nigeria is usually characterized by heightened activities where almost all aspects of the nation's life are pushed to a fever pitch. One of the major activities in the build up to the election is the voter's registration exercise, which is organized to ensure that only members of the public who are registered by the electoral body are allowed to vote during elections (Omojuwa, 2015). Although it is the responsibility of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to mobilize Nigerians to participate in the voters' registration exercise to be eligible to vote during elections, different political parties start at this level get involved to mobilize and educate the electorates on the need to register in order to vote for their parties. This is done using various social media platforms. The political parties understand that the social media is vital to this function considering the power they wield in public opinion formation and mass mobilization effort in ensuring citizens participation in national causes.

Okon, (2013) states that democracy thrives on the principles of informed electorate making responsible choices and decisions, and that the social media are not only key avenues for providing the required information, as they also determine what is available in the public domain. This goes down to party primaries and subsequent campaigns that usher in elections. This easy access to social media and freedom of expression that accompanies democracy has



created the opportunity for political parties to use the social media for all sorts of unguided information, ranging from false accusations, propaganda, sensationalism, destructive criticisms, unverified and spurious information, subjective analyses, and unsubstantiated assumptions. They have equally transformed political participation in a number of ways, like segmentation of audience, weakening gate keeping capacity of traditional media, releasing most recent news which is capable of influencing citizen's registration as a member of a political party and other political settings in Nigeria (Akakwandu, 2016). While some people are of the review that the situation creates opportunity for the electorates to make choice based on information gathered on social media about different political parties, others are of the opinion that such media war among different political parties to woo supporters breeds challenge for the electorates in determining the political parties to belong to or vote for during elections. It is based on this disagreement that this study aims to find out if social media war by political parties is a challenge to the electorates. In unraveling this, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. Does social media war influenced electorates' registration as members of political parties?
2. Has social media war influenced voters turn-out during election?
3. Has social media war influenced electorates' choice of party candidate during election

The main objective of this study is to examine the media war among political parties and its implication in political participation in Nigeria with reference to Ebonyi State. The specific objectives include:

1. To determine if people's registration as members of political parties were influenced by social media war by political parties
2. To examine the influence of social media war by political parties on voters turn-out during election.
3. To find out if social media war by political parties influence electorates' choice of party candidates during election

The following formulated research hypotheses serve as a guide to this study:



**H<sub>01</sub>:** Social media war by political parties does not influence peoples' registration as members of political parties.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** Social media does not influence peoples' choice of candidate to vote for during election.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** Social media war by political parties does not influence voters turn-out during elections.

### **Methodology**

This section examined the research design, population of the study, sample size and method of data collation and analysis. The study adopted quantitative research method with the application of cross sectional survey design, applying purposive sampling techniques. The study was carried out in 6 Local Government Areas of Ebonyi State, purposively selected from the 3 Senatorial Zones of Ebonyi North, Ebonyi Central and Ebonyi South. The 3 selected Local Government Areas are; Abakaliki, Ezza South and Onicha Local Government Areas. The choice of these local government areas were guided by the availability of internet services and use of social media.

With the application of Taro Yameni mathematical formula, a sample size of 400 was used from the projected population of 774, 400 of the 3 Local Government Areas of Abakaiki Local Government Area; 223, 000, Ezza South Local Government Area; 199,000 and Onicah Local Government Area; 352, 400 (NBS, 2022). With the instrumentality of structured questionnaire, a total of 400 questionnaire were distributed to the respondents across the 3 local Government Areas at 133, 133 and 134 each, shared purposively by the researcher with the aid of research assistant. The respondents were purposively selected from traders, farmers, youths, women, political party members, political office holders, party agents and civil servants. A total of 380 questionnaire were returned and were used for the analysis.

**Table 1:** Sample distribution of questionnaire to 3 selected Local Government Area of Ebonyi State

| S/NO | Local Government | Sample Size | Percentage (%) Distribution |
|------|------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| 1    | Abakaliki        | 133         | 33.3                        |
| 2    | Ezza South       | 133         | 33.3                        |
| 3    | Onicha           | 134         | 33.4.                       |
|      | Total            | 400         | 100                         |

Field work, 2023

The questionnaire was designed and structured in the format of Likert rating scale of; Strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree and Disagree and contains nine questionnaire items, while descriptive statistical analytical methods involving frequency tables and percentage were used for data analysis with inferential statistics, using Chi-Square and analytical technique for testing hypotheses. Construct validity and reliability and Inter-rater reliability methods were used respectively to guarantee validity and reliability of research instruments and findings.

## Conceptual Elucidation

### Media and Political Participation

The mass media are commonly seen as the oxygen of democratic governance and the public square for the nurturing of democratic norms and ideals (Odunlami, 2014). According to Dahlgren (2011), the free media outlets make a wide range of information accessible to the public and provide political knowledge through access to reliable and comprehensible resources such as portrayals, news, reports, discussions and so forth about social and political affairs. Likewise, Chaffee and Frank (1996) opined that textual (newspaper), auditory (radio news), and audiovisual (television) news channels should be able to provide vital information about important political and social issues. The BBC Media Action equally reported that a healthy relationship between the media and the public is needed for well-functioning democracy because informed citizenry is crucial for political accountability (Ahmed et al., 2011). Just like family, school, political system, religion and occupation, the media play vital roles as agents of political socialization in the society. Access to the media has significant relationship with political



participation (Scavo, and Snow, 2016), because the general public get their news and information from mass media. According to scholars, participating in politics is dependent on access to and usage of news media (Rosenstone, & Hansen, 2008). Similarly, Aalberg et al (2013) revealed a positive relationship between political news use and political participation. The educative roles of the traditional and new media seem to have increase political interest, discussion, and ideological sophistication in many countries (Aarts and Semetko, 2003). Therefore, the media are tools for political participation and democratic consolidation (Castells, 2007). The more citizens use television, radio, newspapers or internet to access the news, the higher their political knowledge which is crucial to political participation (Apuke, and Apollos, 2017). Widespread availability of news and political information on internet and satellite television has tendencies to improve citizens' knowledge of current events.

Tewksbury, Weaver, and Maddex (2001) proved that search engine results and web portals that mixed news headlines with entertainment stories can cause accidental exposure to political information which makes people to participate in political matters. Paradoxically, Prior (2007) demonstrated that greater media choice (i.e., cable television and internet access) widens gaps in political information and electoral participation between individuals who prefer news and those who prefer entertainment. Feldman and Kawakami (1991) in their study of 1100 Japanese undergraduates discovered that attention and exposure to newspaper is a stronger predictor of political knowledge and participation than televisions. The Obama election in 2008, the Iranian postelection protests in 2009, "Occupy wall street" in 2011, Arab spring of 2010-2012 and "bring back our girls" in 2014 campaigns show that social media can be used effectively for political mobilization and enlightenment (Ifukor, 2010). Just as Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, blogs and other social media apps were used by Nigerian youths to force down fuel price after "Occupy Nigeria" (Omojuwa, 2015) and to monitor the polls during the 2015 general elections (Mustapha, Gbonegun and Mustapha, 2016).

Similarly, Molaei (2017) acknowledged that social media are rapidly emerging as important sources of news, contributing to an informed citizenry. During the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, "Next Level", Atikulate and "TakeIt Back (at federal level)", "Penkelemese and





Omituntun (in Oyo State)” and “Otoge (in Kwara state)”. Also in Ebonyi State, “Dave Umahi Iron-Gate” were among the campaign hashtags and media slogans used to mobilize voters and campaign for political power (Mamman, 2019). Prior (2005) acknowledged that increased access to and use of news media is related to political participation which according to him is influence by age, gender, or education levels. A study conducted in Sweden (Nilsson, 2009) revealed that young people nowadays browse internet and watch television while few of them read the newspaper while older people in the U.S. tend to have higher level political participation than young people (Wattenberg, 2011).

### **Social Media and Voters’ Registration**

Social media’s most appealing and unique characteristic is the mere fact that it is a virtual place where people can socialize with one another. The social interactions made online, however, mirror the ones made offline. A big part of elections and campaigning is candidates communicating the issues of political settings with the public. The ways incumbent candidates win reelection are by reaching out to constituents, communicating with them, and making sure that they know that their voices will be heard once they are in office. Not only do candidates use social media to connect with voters, but voters also use social media to learn about candidates and encourage others to vote for particular candidates. Young people in particular are susceptible to a phenomenon called the “social vote,” the idea that people are likely to vote if those in their socialized groups are voting. 74% of registered voters belong to the “social vote” cohort (Rainie, et al., (2012). Talking about voting and encouraging others to vote happens in several ways: through face-to-face conversations, by phone, in e-mails, and, more recently and effectively, through social media. Young voters are more likely to utilize the last method yet are also susceptible to being encouraged to vote through face-to-face conversations with people close to them. According to a study performed by Lee Rainie of the Pew Research Center during the presidential election, 54% of registered voters had face- to-face conversations with family and friends to encourage them to vote. The percentage was compared to the 22% of registered voters who let others know online on Facebook, Twitter, or another social networking site that they were planning to vote and how they were voting. 29% of young voters between the ages of 18 and 29 used social media to announce their vote compared to the 14% of voters aged





65 and older (Rainie 2012). Today, the use of social media by youths in electoral activities cannot be over emphasized. It play active role in helping people mostly youths to mobilize support for candidates and actual voting. Youths are the active participants of election violence and also the active users of social media. Disseminating useful information to youth in form of voter education is a means of forestalling incidences of election violence and electoral manipulations. Data released by statista.com indicated that there are 84.3 million internet users in Nigeria and that by 2019, there would be 93 million internet users. Chukwuemeka Afigbe, Manager Developer programme at Facebook revealed that about 26 million Nigerians now login on Facebook every month. Social media is indeed the best avenue for reaching out to majority of the voters (Mamman, 2019).

### **Social Media Platforms and Political Parties.**

Recent years have seen a growth in the use of social media in political campaigns and electioneering processes in Nigeria. For instance, in the Nigerian 2015 and 2019 general elections, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc was employed due to its participatory nature. It was used as a platform by different political parties for political campaign and mobilization of voters. And this means that adoption of these social media platforms in political campaigns helps political parties to disseminate information easily as well as mobilize voters. Supporting this view, an investigation that examined the Nigerian 2015 general elections also reported that Twitter was mostly used and this mobilized and influenced people to vote a particular candidate (Mamman, 2019). This shows that the use of Twitter for political campaigns assist political aspirants in mobilizing and influencing the electorate to vote for them. This supports Suntai and Sukhraj (2017) who found that the civil society deployed the arsenal of social media effectively to broadcast information during the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. Accordingly, there was evidence to show that during the period of the campaign, Tweet meets and Hangouts were the in-thing within Nigerian online socio-political networks. Hashtags, such as MeetGej, Febuhari, Marchoutjonathan, WhyiwillvoteGEJ, MarchforBuhari, GMB15, LagosForYou and iHavedecided were promoted by politicians and their friends; while NigeriaDecides, Nigeria2015, iPledgeToVote, MyPVCnow, GoVote, VoteNoFight, etc., were promoted by civil society groups to increase citizens' involvement (Mamman, 2019). Even during the voting



process, it was discovered that pictures and videos floated on Facebook and WhatsApp accounts showing party agents who were arrested in the act buying voters with money and some other concessions as well as the issue of underage voting in some states prompting immediate action by INEC. Similarly, Chukwuma (2020) observed that social media was utilized in the 2019 elections as an avenue for encouraging people to vote, collation and preservation of the election results which prevented possibly election manipulation that usually occurs in Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is located within the ambit of the agenda setting theory. The agenda setting theory evolved from the research work of Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972. The authors specially examined the correlation between the media reports of the 1968 election campaign in Chapel Hill and the issues the members of the public discussed about the elections. The Agenda setting theory as is known today resulted from the analysis of the effects of the mass media on voters' attitudes and interests towards political parties and their candidates in the election (Oboh, 2014). In other words, the theory is founded on electoral matters and actions of the media at influencing the electorate to vote along a specific line of interest.

McQuail (2005) submits that the core idea in agenda setting is that news media indicate to the public what the main issues of the day are and this is reflected in what the public perceive as the main issues. Therefore, the news media indirectly determine what issues are important in society through the prominence they accord to the different issues that make up the editorial content of the newspaper. Likewise, important news stories on radio, internet and television are contained in the opening paragraph of news broadcast. The agenda setting function is the process the mass media use to predetermine the value a target audience would attach to a story based on the prominence the news media accorded to the story in their reports (Oboh, 2014). The agenda setting function of the media implies that people constantly look up to the mass media for cues to issues of significance. Therefore, the success of any election is a function of the degree of public involvement in the conduct of the elections. Correspondingly, the value the public attaches to any election is a function of the prominence the media accorded to the election activities in their reportage.



According to Abdulai, Ibrahim & Mashoud (2020) citing Shaw & Martin (1992), the agenda setting theory is made up of three interconnected aspects - media agenda, public agenda and policy agenda. According to them, media agenda are the issues discussed or covered by media reportage, and public agenda are issues audience members consider salient. The media agenda largely influences matters on the public agenda because they attach prominence to issues on the public agenda. The three are interrelated, and when an agenda setting process is initiated, they interact and influence each other. Media agenda and public agenda settings are common in the communication research, but policy agenda is usually researched by scholars in the field of political science and sociology (Zhou et al 2016 cited in Abdulai, Ibrahim & Mashoud, 2020).

Furthermore, agenda setting theory operates at three levels: The first level, second level and third level agenda setting (Miller 2005, cited in Abdulai, Ibrahim & Mashoud, 2020). The first level agenda setting espouses on how people's views about matters are considered salient in a given nation, and determined by the prominence and space of such issues in media coverage. The second level agenda setting shades light on how media lay emphasis on particular attributes while covering stories, hence directing the focus of audience members towards those features in news reportage in particular tone or affective feelings -negative, positive or neutral of the subject. So, by attaching salience's and emphasizing certain characteristics of the issues in their coverage, the media affects what people regards as importance to form an opinion. The third level agenda setting posits that media is not only able to inform what we think about and how we think about issues, but informs us what and how to associate, with salience of interrelationships among issues and attributes that can move between agendas simultaneously (Vu Guo & McCombs 2014; McCombs et al 2014, as cited in Abdulai, Ibrahim & Mashoud, 2020).

Applying the agenda setting theory to this study would mean that the media are expected to set public agenda for the electorates in relations to voter registration exercise and the entire electoral process. To this end, the media of communication are vested with the sole responsibility to disseminate information and messages that would bring about education and enlightenment of the electorates on all the various stages of the electioneering process. It, therefore, behooves on the political parties to use the social media to engage in aggressive public sensitization for the



electorates to participate in the process of registering to belong to political parties, choosing their elected representatives and turning out in mass to vote during elections. If the political parties fail to utilize the social media in this aspect, then the ripple effect will certainly affect the outcome of voters' participation in the election. In this regard, the study is located within the second level agenda setting to explore how the mass media lays emphasis on the issue of voter education and mobilization and thereby setting the agenda for the electorate to participate in the electioneering process that led to general elections in Nigeria.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

**Table 2:** Your choice of political party to belong was influenced by social media

| Responses         | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly agree    | 260       | 68.4           |
| Agree             | 98        | 25.8           |
| Strongly disagree | 7         | 1.8            |
| Disagree          | 15        | 3.9            |
| Total             | 380       | 100            |

**Source:** Field Work, 2023

Table 2 above shows that 260 (68.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they choice of political party to belong was influenced by social media, 98 (25.8%) agreed that they choice of political party to belong was influenced by social media, 7 (1.8%) strongly disagreed, while 15 (3.9%) disagreed.

**Table 3:** Got attracted by the people in a political party through social media information

| Responses         | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly agree    | 261       | 68.7           |
| Agree             | 99        | 26.1           |
| Strongly disagree | 6         | 1.6            |
| Disagree          | 14        | 3.7            |
| Total             | 380       | 100            |

**Source:** Field Work, 2023



Table 3 above shows that out of 380 respondents 261 (68.7%) strongly agreed, 99 (26.1%) agreed, 6 (19.5%) strongly disagreed, while (3.7%) disagreed.

**Table 4:** Manifesto and policies of political party viewed in social media is what attracted you to a political party

| Responses         | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly agree    | 239       | 62.9           |
| Agree             | 115       | 30.3           |
| Strongly disagree | 10        | 2.6            |
| Disagree          | 16        | 4.2            |
| Total             | 380       | 100            |

**Source:** Field Work, 2023

Table 4 above shows that 239 (62.9%) strongly agreed that manifesto and policies of political party as a means by social media attracted them to a political party, 115 (30.3%) agreed that manifesto and policies of political party as a means by social media attracted them to a political party, 10 (2.6%) strongly disagreed, while 16 (4.2%) disagreed.

## Research Question 2

**Table 5:** Social media information about candidate attracted you to support the candidate.

| Responses         | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly agree    | 261       | 68.7           |
| Agree             | 99        | 26.1           |
| Strongly disagree | 6         | 1.6            |
| Disagree          | 14        | 3.7            |
| Total             | 380       | 100            |

**Source:** Field Work, 2023

Table 5 above shows that out of 380 respondents 261 (68.7%) strongly agreed that social media information about candidate attracted them to support the candidate, 99 (26.1%) of the respondents agreed that social media information about candidate attracted you to support the candidate, 6 (1.6%) respondents strongly disagree, while 14 (3.7%) respondents disagreed.



Therefore this implies that majority of the respondents agreed that social media information about candidate attracted them to support the candidate.

**Table 6:** Social media information about candidate influenced your decision to register to vote for a candidate

| Responses         | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly agree    | 262       | 68.9           |
| Agree             | 97        | 25.5           |
| Strongly disagree | 7         | 1.8            |
| Disagree          | 14        | 3.7            |
| Total             | 380       | 100            |

**Source:** Field Work, 2023

Table 6 above shows that 262 (68.9%) of the respondents strong agreed that social media information about candidate influenced their decision to register to vote for a candidate, 99 (25.5%) respondents agreed, 6 (1.8%) strongly disagreed, while 14 (3.7%) disagreed.

**Table 7:** Has social media influenced your decision to campaign for political party

| Responses         | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly agree    | 221       | 58.1           |
| Agree             | 112       | 29.5           |
| Strongly disagree | 24        | 6.3            |
| Disagree          | 23        | 6.0            |
| Total             | 380       | 100            |

**Source:** Field Work, 2023

Table 7 above clearly indicates that 221 (58.1%) respondents strongly agreed that social media information influenced their decision to campaign for political party, 112 (29.5%) agreed, 24 (6.3%) strongly disagreed while 23 (6.0%) disagreed.



### Research Question 3

**Table 8:** Social media information about candidate influenced your decision to come out and vote during election.

| Responses         | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly agree    | 262       | 68.9           |
| Agree             | 97        | 25.5           |
| Strongly disagree | 7         | 1.8            |
| Disagree          | 14        | 3.7            |
| Total             | 380       | 100            |

**Source:** Field Work, 2023

Table 8 above shows that 262 (68.9%) of the respondents strongly agreed that social media has influenced their decision to come out and vote during elections, 99 (25.5%) respondents agreed, 6 (1.8%) strongly disagreed, 14 (3.7%) disagreed.

**Table 9:** Has social media influenced your decision to mobilize others to campaign for the political party.

| Responses         | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly agree    | 244       | 64.2           |
| Agree             | 118       | 31             |
| Strongly disagree | 7         | 1.8            |
| Disagree          | 11        | 2.8            |
| Total             | 380       | 100            |

**Source:** Field Work, 2023

Table 9 above shows that 244 (64.2%) respondents strongly agreed that social media has influenced their decision to mobilize others to campaign for the political party, 118 (31%) agreed, 7 (1.8%) strongly disagreed, while 11 (2.8%) disagreed. Therefore, it implies that the majority of the respondents agreed that social media influenced their decision to mobilize others to campaign for the political party.





**Table 10:** Has social media influenced your decision to provide material assistance to political party.

| Responses         | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly agree    | 261       | 68.7           |
| Agree             | 99        | 26.1           |
| Strongly disagree | 6         | 1.6            |
| Disagree          | 14        | 3.7            |
| Total             | 380       | 100            |

**Source:** Field Work, 2023

Table 10 above shows that 261 (68.7%) of the respondents strong agreed that social media influenced and resolve to provide material assistance to political party, 99 (26.1%) respondents agreed, 6 (1.6%) strongly disagreed, 14 (3.7%) disagreed. This implies that majority of respondents agreed that social media influenced and resolve to provide material assistance to political party.

### Testing of the Hypothesis

#### Hypothesis I

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Social media war by political parties does not influence peoples' registration as members of political parties.

Table 11: Testing of hypothesis 1 using table 2.

| Responses         | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly agree    | 260       | 68.4           |
| Agree             | 98        | 25.8           |
| Strongly disagree | 7         | 1.8            |
| Disagree          | 15        | 3.9            |
| Total             | 380       | 100            |

**Source:** Field Work, 2023

$$\text{Expected frequency} = \frac{380}{4} = 95.0$$

**Table 12: Chi-Square Calculation**

| Observed Frequency | Expected Frequency | O-E   | (O-E) <sup>2</sup> | <u>(O-E)<sup>2</sup></u><br>E |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| 260                | 95.0               | 165.0 | 27225.0            | 286.57                        |
| 98                 | 95.0               | 3.0   | 9                  | 0.09                          |
| 7                  | 95.0               | -88.0 | 7744               | 81.5                          |
| 15                 | 95.0               | -80   | 6400               | 67.36                         |
| 380                | 380                | 0     | 41378              | 435.52                        |

**Source:** Field Work, 2023

Therefore, the calculated value of  $\chi^2 = 435.52$

To compute the degree of freedom (Df) or critical

$$Df = (R-1) (C-1)$$

Where:

$$R = \text{Number of row which is 4}$$

$$C = \text{Number of Columns which is 2}$$

$$Df = (4-1) (2-1)$$

$$(3) (1)$$

$$3 \times 1 = 3$$

The researcher assumed 95% level of confidence and 0.05 level of significance. However, at 5% level of significance, the degree of freedom at 3 = 7.815.

**Decision Rule:** Since calculated value 435.5 is greater than the critical value 7.815, the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

**Conclusion:** From the above computation in accordance with the decision rule the alternative hypothesis which states that social media war by political parties influenced peoples' registration as members of political parties is hereby accepted.

## Hypothesis II

**H<sub>0</sub>:** Social media does not influence peoples' choice of candidate to vote for during election.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Social media influenced people's choice of candidate to vote for during election.



Table 13: Testing of hypothesis 11 using table 5 from the questionnaire distributed.

| Responses         | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly agree    | 261       | 68.7           |
| Agree             | 99        | 26.1           |
| Strongly disagree | 6         | 1.6            |
| Disagree          | 14        | 3.7            |
| Total             | 380       | 100            |

Source: Field Work, 2023

Table 14. Chi-Square Calculation

| Observed<br>Frequency | Expected<br>Frequency | O-E | (O-E) <sup>2</sup> | $\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$ |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----|--------------------|---------------------|
| 261                   | 95.0                  | 166 | 27556              | 290.06              |
| 99                    | 95.0                  | 4   | 16                 | 0.16                |
| 6                     | 95.0                  | -89 | 7921               | 83.37               |
| 14                    | 95.0                  | -81 | 6561               | 69.06               |
| 380                   | 380                   | 0   | 42054              | 442.65              |

Source: Field Work, 2022

$$\text{Expected frequency} = \frac{380}{4} = 95.0$$

Therefore, the calculated value of  $\chi^2 = 435.52$

The researcher assumed 95% level of confidence and 0.05 level of significance. However, at 5% level of significance, the degree of freedom at 3 = 7.815.

**Decision Rule:** Since calculated value 435.5 is greater than the critical value 7.815, the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

**Conclusion:** From the above computation in accordance with the decision rule the alternative hypothesis which states that social media influenced people's choice of candidate to vote for during election is hereby accepted.



### Hypothesis III

**H<sub>03</sub>:** Social media does not influence votes turn-out by making people to vote for party rather than choice.

**H<sub>3</sub>:** Social media influence voters turn-out to vote during elections.

**Table 15.** Testing of Hypothesis 111 using Table 8 from the Questionnaire Distributed.

| Responses         | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly agree    | 262       | 68.9           |
| Agree             | 97        | 25.5           |
| Strongly disagree | 7         | 1.8            |
| Disagree          | 14        | 3.7            |
| Total             | 380       | 100            |

**Source:** Field Work, 2023

**Table 16. Chi-Square Calculation**

| Observed<br>Frequency | Expected<br>Frequency | O-E | (O-E) <sup>2</sup> | $\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$ |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----|--------------------|---------------------|
| 262                   | 95.0                  | 167 | 27889              | 293.56              |
| 97                    | 95.0                  | 2   | 4                  | 0.04                |
| 7                     | 95.0                  | -88 | 7744               | 81.5                |
| 14                    | 95.0                  | -81 | 6561               | 69.06               |
| 380                   | 380                   | 0   | 42198              | 444.16              |

**Source:** Field Work, 2023

Therefore, the calculated value of  $\chi^2 = 444.16$

The researcher assumed 95% level of confidence and 0.0 level of significance. However, at 5% level of significance, the degree of freedom at 3 = 7.815.

**Decision Rule:** Since calculated value 435.5 is greater than the critical value 7.815, the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Conclusion: From the above computation in accordance with the decision rule the alternative hypothesis which states that social media influenced voters' turn-out to vote during elections is hereby accepted.



## Discussion of Findings

This study examines the media war among political parties and its implication in political participation in Nigeria with reference to Ebonyi State. The findings show that social media has significantly influenced peoples' registration as members of political parties. The decisions to choose the political parties to register and belong were determined by the efforts made by the political parties in convincing the citizens about their parties and in line with their manifestoes. This is made possible by the use of social media as each party was bent on wooing the people to belong to their own Political parties.

In the issues of influencing the electorates' choice of candidates to vote for, the finding discovered that due to the influence of social media as used by political parties, the electorates were able to identify with the candidate of a party that were able to convince the electorates through social media. Since it is not possible for all the electorates to know all the candidates personally, parties were using the social media to convince the electorates about each candidates. This has enable the choice of these candidates based on what their political parties were able to convince the electorates about them through the social media.

Furthermore, as a result of the use of social media by the political parties, there were significant improvement of voters turnout during elections compare to the past when the use of social media by political parties were not felt by the electorates. The social media turned the electorates to believe in these political parties and the candidates they support in election. This is in tandem with the opinion of Chukwuma (2020) when he states that social media was significantly utilized in the 2019 elections as it helped different parties in influencing many electorates to register as members of political parties, which influenced their turnout to vote during elections, adding that it was used by party agents as an avenue for encouraging people to join their party, and vote for their candidate.

In support of the finding s of this study, Mustapha, et al. (2016), are of the view that social media platforms such as facebook, twitter, whatsapp, instagram etc are persuasive, and often works to change people's mind, make them to become a membership of any political party of their choice



because of the abundance of ideas, thoughts, and opinions circulating through the social media platforms. Secondly, from the findings, it was also observed that social media influenced people's choice who to vote for during election, prompting Scavo and Snow (2016), to note that social media can help voters get more informed about politics, and can also provide false information that could affect the voters' opinions in a negative way. In line with this, Rainie et al., (2012), maintained that young people in particular are susceptible to a phenomenon called the "social vote," the idea that people are likely to vote if those in their socialized groups are voting. 74% of registered voters belong to the "social vote" cohort. Accordingly, 29% of young voters between the ages of 18 and 29 used social media to announce their vote compared to the 14% of voters aged 65 and older (Rainie 2012).

Apuke and Apollos (2017) note that, it is easier nowadays for any party and its candidates to communicate with large number of people at once because of online platforms. They communicate issues of political settings with them, reaching out to other constituents, making sure that they know that their voices will be heard once they are in office.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the analysis in this study, the media war among political parties. Today, hardly any political actor today would seriously claim that they do not take the media especially social media into consideration, either as presenting opportunities or threats. Considering the major importance of the media in all political communication processes, the media could be described as having become 'environmental', and similar to the physical environment, cannot be avoided or neglected. In this sense, all social and political institutions and actors, including the political parties, have become more dependent upon the social media. This has, however, not downgraded all politicians to 'media slaves,' but rather created incentives for political parties to adapt to the media, either proactively or reactively, and this has contributed to the media war against political parties in Nigeria.

Therefore, from the analysis of this study, it has been seen that social media outlets make a wide range of information accessible to the public and provide people with political knowledge. This



attracts them to registered as a member of a political party of their choice, and also choose candidate to campaign and vote for during election. People can now comfortably choose their political party due to their easy access to reliable and comprehensible resources such as, news, reports, discussions and so forth about their social and political affairs in social media.

### Recommendations

As a result of the findings, it is recommended that:

1. Political parties should create a robust and effective social media presence to inform and educate people, especially on social media platforms which has a high concentration of Nigerians who believe political news on social media and regards them as credible. This will help reduce the low turnout of voters on election days and reduce the spread of fake news.
2. The Federal Government of Nigeria should strengthen its efforts in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in every sector of the country. More and more Nigerians are gaining access to the internet every day and ensuring the information flow on the internet is uninterrupted is key to the information flow of the country.
3. The National Information and Technology Development Agency government should monitor what goes onto the social media as many people will believe what they read/see on it and the consequences wrong or misleading information can only better imagined.

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