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## THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON POLITICAL COMMUNICATION: A CASE STUDY OF NIGERIA'S 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN OMU-ARAN

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## Abstract

*This study explores the influence of social media on political communication during Nigeria's 2023 general elections, with a specific focus on Omu Aran, a town in Kwara State known for its active political engagement and diverse social media usage. The objective of this study is to analyze the impact of social media on political communication in Omu Aran during the elections. The study investigates the role of social media in shaping public opinion, voter mobilization, and candidate campaigns. It also conducts a case study of Omu Aran's political communication landscape and examines the benefits and drawbacks of social media in political communication. The study is situated within the framework of the Agenda-setting theory and the voting behavior theory. The Agenda-setting theory emphasizes the media's ability to convey the significance of news items to the public, influencing the public agenda. The research methodology involved the use of both secondary and primary sources of data, including online sources, articles, journals, textbooks, and administered questionnaires to the target participants. The study reveals that voter education programs facilitated by the media have contributed to increased election literacy, improved voter turnout, and reduced invalid ballots. The media's presence during the entire electoral process acts as a deterrent to fraudulent activities. The findings of the study have implications for political communication in Nigeria. Political parties and candidates need to strategically utilize social media platforms to shape public opinion and mobilize voters. However, challenges such as the spread of misinformation and online manipulation should be addressed through media literacy promotion and measures to combat misinformation. Recommendations for future research and policy considerations include exploring the impact of social media algorithms on political communication, developing guidelines and regulations for responsible social media use, and further studying the role of local media and community radio stations in political communication. Addressing challenges such as misinformation and online manipulation and further exploring the role of local media can strengthen Nigeria's democratic processes and ensure credible and transparent elections.*

**Keywords:** Political communication, Social media, Nigeria 2023 elections, Media influence.

## INTRODUCTION

Political communication plays a crucial role in shaping the outcomes of elections, and in recent years, the influence of social media on political discourse has become increasingly significant. This essay focuses on the influence of social media in Nigeria's 2023 general elections, specifically examining the case of Omu Aran, Nigeria. Omu Aran is a vibrant town in Kwara State known for its active political engagement and diverse social media usage. By exploring the impact of social media on political communication in this context, we can gain insights into broader trends and implications for democratic processes in Nigeria.

Nigeria, as the most populous country in Africa, has a history of complex and competitive general elections. These elections not only shape the country's political landscape but also have significant implications for socio-economic development, governance, and public policy. With the rise of social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, political communication has witnessed a paradigm shift, creating new opportunities and challenges for political actors and voters alike. (Adeagbo, Ewuola, Lawal, & Awofadeju, 2019).

The media as used in this context refers to a variety of mediums or channels that are used in an organized fashion to disseminate information to large audiences as a public service. The media is critical to the development of a nation. The media is commonly regarded as a form of communication capable of simultaneously delivering consistent messages to a wide range of audiences. The advancement of the internet and technology has greatly increased the number of people exposed to various interactive platforms where a diverse and wide range of information is exchanged, potentially having a significant impact on human behaviour, decision-making, and judgement. Social media are new information networks and information technology that facilitate the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships by utilizing interactive and user-generated content. The dissemination of information to the electorate by the media before, during, and after the electioneering period has a significant impact on the diverse audience.

Elections are fundamentally a means for eligible citizens to choose who will represent them in government. The procedures governing this voting or selection can occasionally run smoothly and flawlessly, but more often than not, they cause a series of unthinkable crises that result in fighting, the burning of homes, cars, and numerous other valuable possessions, and, most importantly, the killing of one another. In such a situation, the media, as the fourth estate of the realm, is expected not only to provide accurate and reliable information about everything but also to fulfil their fundamental social duty of creating an ideal society that is peaceful for all citizens, because development can only succeed in a peaceful society.

### **Historical Context of Nigeria's General Elections**

Nigeria's general elections have played a crucial role in shaping the country's political landscape and democratic progress. Since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria has experienced periods of military rule, political instability, and democratic transitions. The electoral process has been instrumental in determining the country's leadership and governance (Adeagbo, et al, 2019).

Nigeria's transition to democracy in 1999 marked a significant turning point in the country's political history. It ended over three decades of military rule and ushered in a democratic era. The general elections held every four years serve as a critical mechanism for citizens to elect their representatives, including the President, members of the National Assembly, and state governors. The 2023 general elections hold immense significance for Nigeria's democratic trajectory and socio-economic development. The elections determine the country's political leadership for the next four years and shape the policies and direction of the nation (Attia, et al., 2021). The 2023 elections come at a crucial time when Nigeria faces various challenges, including security concerns, economic instability, and social tensions. As noted by Kuru (2019), elections provide an opportunity for the electorate to express their aspirations, voice their concerns, and choose leaders who can address these pressing issues effectively.

Moreover, the 2023 elections tested the resilience and credibility of Nigeria's democratic institutions. The successful conduct of free, fair, and transparent elections is crucial for building public trust in the electoral process and ensuring the legitimacy of elected officials. As emphasized by Momoh (2019), the 2023 elections were a litmus test for Nigeria's democratic consolidation and can shape the country's future political landscape.

## **Political Communication in Nigeria and the Digital Era**

The emergence of the digital era has revolutionized political communication in Nigeria, introducing new opportunities and challenges (Odubote, 2014). The evolution of political communication in the digital era encompasses the following: a) **Rise of Social Media:** Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, have gained significant popularity in Nigeria. These platforms offer politicians and citizens an interactive space to engage in political discussions, share information, and mobilize support. According to the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) report, as of 2021, Nigeria had over 100 million internet users, with a significant portion engaging in social media activities (NCC, 2021). The increasing use of social media platforms for political communication has had a profound impact on election campaigns and citizen engagement; b) **Online Political Campaigns:** Candidates now utilize websites, blogs, and social media accounts to disseminate campaign messages, share policy positions, and interact with voters. Online campaign advertisements and targeted messaging have become prevalent. The influence of digital communication on elections in Nigeria can be seen in the 2015 and 2019 general elections, where social media played a crucial role in mobilizing and engaging voters (Oso & Olayiwola, 2020). These elections witnessed an increase in online political engagement, with candidates leveraging social media platforms to reach a broader audience; c) **Citizen Journalism and Online Activism:** Digital platforms have empowered citizens to become active participants in political communication. Citizen journalists and online activists use social media to raise awareness, share news, and voice their opinions. The impact of digital communication on political activism in Nigeria is evident in movements such as the #EndSARS protests in 2020, where social media platforms served as a catalyst for mobilization and advocacy (Sotunde, 2021). These digital spaces provide opportunities for citizens to express their political views, participate in public discourse, and hold elected officials accountable; d) **Real-time Information Dissemination:** The digital era enables the rapid dissemination of political information and news updates, allowing citizens to stay informed about political developments in real time. Social media platforms facilitate the sharing of news articles, videos, and live broadcasts, creating a more dynamic and accessible information ecosystem. The impact of digital communication on political engagement in Nigeria is supported by research conducted by Pew Research Center, which found that a significant portion of Nigerian social media users rely on these platforms for news consumption (Pew Research Center, 2021); e) **Data Analytics and Targeted Messaging:** Political campaigns employ data analytics to understand voter preferences and tailor their messaging accordingly. This personalized approach aims to maximize the impact of political communication efforts.

## **Social Media Platforms and their Popularity in Nigeria**

Social media platforms have become an integral part of people's lives worldwide, including Nigeria. These platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp, provide users with the ability to create and share content, connect with others, and engage in discussions. In Nigeria, social media has gained significant popularity due to its widespread accessibility and affordability. According to the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) report, as of 2021, Nigeria had over 100 million internet users, with a significant portion engaging in social media activities (NCC, 2021). The rise of affordable smartphones and improved internet connectivity has contributed to the increased adoption of social media platforms across the country. Social media platforms have had a transformative impact on political communication in Nigeria. They have become powerful tools for political actors to

disseminate information, engage with citizens, mobilize support, and shape public opinion. Odubote (2014) observed that the role of social media in political communication can be examined through various dimensions: a) Information Dissemination: Social media platforms enable political actors to share information, news updates, policy positions, and campaign messages with a wide audience. Political parties and candidates utilize social media to communicate directly with their supporters and reach out to undecided voters; b) Citizen Engagement: Social media allows citizens to actively participate in political discussions, express their opinions, and engage in debates. It provides an avenue for citizens to interact with political leaders, ask questions, and provide feedback; c) Amplification of Voices: Social media platforms amplify the voices of individuals and groups who may have limited access to traditional media channels. It provides marginalized communities and grassroots movements with a platform to raise awareness, advocate for their rights, and mobilize support; d) Real-time Feedback: Social media facilitates real-time feedback and dialogue between political actors and citizens. Political campaigns can gauge public sentiment, address concerns, and adjust their strategies based on the feedback received; e) Campaign Mobilization: Social media platforms have become essential for mobilizing support during political campaigns. Candidates and parties use social media to organize events, coordinate volunteers, and encourage supporters to actively participate in campaign activities.

### **Political Landscape in Omu Aran, Nigeria**

Omu Aran, a town in Kwara State, Nigeria, is known for its vibrant political engagement and diverse social fabric. The town has witnessed significant political developments and has become a microcosm of the broader Nigerian political landscape. According to Ojo (2015), Omu Aran has a multi-ethnic and multi-religious population, reflecting the diversity present in Nigeria as a whole. The political landscape in Omu Aran is characterized by active participation from various political parties, grassroots organizations, and interest groups. Local politicians engage in robust political campaigns to secure support from the electorate.

Social media platforms have gained popularity among the residents of Omu Aran, serving as a means of communication, information sharing, and political engagement. A study by Adegbola (2020) found that a significant portion of the town's population actively uses social media for political discussions, following candidates' campaigns, and expressing their political opinions.

The political landscape in Omu Aran reflects the broader dynamics of Nigerian politics, with issues of governance, social justice, and development at the forefront. The town's residents are actively involved in political activities, both online and offline, and are crucial stakeholders in Nigeria's democratic processes.

### **Objectives of the research**

The primary objective of this essay is to analyze the influence of social media on political communication during Nigeria's 2023 general elections in Omu Aran. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To investigate the role of social media in political communication, considering its impact on public opinion, voter mobilization, and candidate campaigns.

2. To conduct a case study of Omu Aran, focusing on its political communication landscape and the role of social media in shaping the outcomes of the 2023 general elections.
3. To analyze the benefits and drawbacks of social media in political communication, and to provide recommendations for policymakers, political actors, and researchers on harnessing the potential of social media while mitigating its negative impacts in future electoral processes.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is situated within the Agenda-setting theory and the voting behaviour theory. The concept of agenda-setting arose from the idea that the mass media could convey the significance of items on their news agenda and transmit it to the public agenda. This argument demonstrates that the mass media do have a role to play during political campaigns, and this role is critical because of their dynamic position in the relationship between the political class and the electorate, which puts them in a leading position to decide the course of the campaign as well as shape and influence what the general public is thinking about promoting the role of the media in setting the agenda. Understanding the main points of the agenda-setting theory reinforces the notion that the media cannot afford to be biased in its function. When certain media outlets choose to favour one candidate or political party over another, or unfairly give that candidate or political party more space and columns (in print media), these media outlets provide a lopsided view of things over time, and their patronage in terms of viewership or readers suffer as a result (Folarin, 2005).

## **Research methodology**

This research work used both secondary and primary sources of data. Secondary data for this research work were obtained from online sources, articles, journals, and textbooks. The primary data were sourced from the administered questionnaires to the target participants. The population of this study was the three main electoral wards in Omu-Aran, Kwara State, Nigeria. The three wards are Aran, Ihaye, and Ifaja.

The research instrument that was used in this study for gathering data was a questionnaire. This is because the questionnaire is a technique that helped to collect data that was used to ascertain facts about opinions, beliefs, attitudes, ideas, practices and other demographic information of samples. The Questionnaire was generated from each of the research questions. The instrument was divided into two sections. The first section features filter questions, as well as questions developed using a 5-point Likert scale from 1= strongly agree to 5 strongly disagree and the second section covered demographic variables. By employing a comprehensive research approach, this essay aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the influence of social media on political communication in Nigeria's 2023 general elections in Omu Aran. Through this analysis, we can gain valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of political communication and contribute to the broader discourse on democratic processes and social media's role in shaping them.

S/N	Ward	Population
1	Aran	6000
2	Ihaye	4350
3	Ifaja	8000
	<b>Total</b>	18350

**Table: 1** Population of the Study

Ward	Population	Percentage %	No
Ihaye	6000	33 %	129
Aran	4350	24 %	94
Ifaja	8000	43 %	168
<b>Total</b>	<b>18350</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>391</b>

**Table 2** Sample size and sampling technique

S/N	Ward	Respondents Demographic Variables	No.			%
<b>1</b>	Ihaye	Male	75			
		Female	54	<b>Total</b>	129	33 %
<b>2</b>	Aran	Male	55			
		Female	39	<b>Total</b>	94	24 %
<b>3</b>	Ifaja	Male	97			
		Female	71	<b>Total</b>	168	43%
<b>TOTAL</b>			391			

**Table 3** Demographic characteristics of respondents

From the above table, it was observed that out of 391 respondents. 227 representing 58% were males while 164 representing 42% were females. It could be deduced from the table that the number of males studied out-number their female counterparts.

### **The impact of the electoral sensitizations campaign through the media on the success of the 2023 General Election in Omu-Aran**

Data towards answering research question one are presented in the table below to show the impact of the electoral sensitization campaigns through the media on the success of the 2023 general elections in Omu Aran.

**Table 4: Response to RQ1**

S/N	Questions	Res.	(No.) %	Res.	(No.)%	Res.	(No.)%	Res.	(No.) %	Total
1	Did you participate in the 2019 general elections	YES	(391) 100	NO	(0)					(391) 100
2	Rate the electoral process	Satisfying	(231) 59	Okay	(140) 36	undecided	(12) 3	So Dis. app	(8) 2	(391) 100
3	Information on the media (voters Education) i.e Election time table, the election process, and electoral rules contributed to the success of the election	S. Agree	(223) 57	Agree	(43) 11	Undecided	(74) 19	disagree	(51) 13	(391) 100
4	Media sensitization prevents electoral fraud	S. Agree	(305) 78	Agree	(66) 17	Undecided	(16) 4	disagree	(4) 1	(391) 100
5	How was media sensitization instrumental to your participation in the 2023 general election?	H. motivating	(199) 51	Motivating	(106) 27	Undecided	(27) 7	Slightly. M	(43) 11	(391) 100
								Not. M	(16) 4	

It shows that 391 respondents participated in the 2023 General elections. This suggests that all the respondents are eligible electorates and performed their civic responsibility during the election. Concerning the Likert scale question; "Rate *the electoral process*". 371 (95%) respondents were satisfied, while 8 (2%) of the respondents were satisfied with the electoral process. Concerning the Likert scale statement; "voters education" 223 (57%) strongly agreed, 43 (11%) agreed, 74 (19%) were undecided, and 51 (13%) disagreed. Hence, a total of 68% of the population agreed that voters' education through the media has played a part in the success of the election. In response to another Likert scale statement; "Media sensitization prevents electoral fraud", 305 (78%) strongly agreed, 66 (17) agreed, 16 made up of (4%) were undecided, while 4(1%) disagreed. Concerning the last statement; "*How was media sensitization instrumental to your participation in the 2023 general election*", 199 (51%) of the respondents were highly motivated, 106 (27%) were motivated, 27 (7%) were undecided, 43 (11%) were slightly motivated, while 16 (4%) were not motivated at all.



Thus, from the forgoing findings, it could be deduced that the majority of the respondents were motivated to participate in the process of the election due to the reliable information made available to them through different platforms of media. The participation of the electorate goes to a length to solidify the success of any election, when an election witnessed a low turnout of voters it was a successful one.

**Influence of Media campaign on the success of political parties and their candidate in the 2023 general election?**

The researcher will rely on the respondent's views on the subject matter in answering this question. With the help of a table and bar chart that shows the participant's notion about the role played by corruption.

Response to RQ2

**Table 5:**

S/N	Questions	Res.	(No.)%	Res.	(No.)%	Res.	(No.)%	Res.	(No.)%	Total
1	Do you have a social media account	YES	(391) 100	NO	(0) 0					(391) 100
2	How did gain information about the parties and candidates during the 2023 election?	Newspaper	(4) 1	Television	(8) 2	Social Media	(375) 96	Radio	(4) 1	(391) 100
3	Media create a bridge between parties/ candidates and the electorates	S. Agree	(305) 78	Agree	(66) 17	Undecided	(16) 4	disagree	(4) 1	(391) 100
4	Information in social media about a party or candidate influences your notion about the party or candidate	S. Agree	(262) 67	Agree	(102) 26	Undecided	(4) 1	disagree	(23) 6	(391) 100

From the result presented in the table above, it was evident that 391 respondent which made up of 100% of the respondents has a social media account, where they receive update and news about recent happenings. Concerning the question; " *How did gain information about the parties and candidates during the 2023 election*". While 4 (1%) of the respondents heard via Newspaper, 8 (2) via television, but 375 (96%) of the respondent heard about various

candidates and their parties via social media while 2 (1%) were informed by the radio. This result affirms that the majority of respondents heard about both parties and candidates in the media. Concerning the Likert scale statement; " *Media create a bridge between parties/candidate and the electorates*" 305 (78%) strongly agreed, 66 (17%) agreed, 16 (4%) were undecided, while 4 (1%) disagreed. Hence, a total of 95% of the respondent agreed that the media serve as a bridge connecting the party and its candidate to the electorate. Concerning the statement; "*Information in the social media a party or candidate influences your notion about the party or candidate*", 265 (67%) strongly agreed, while 102 (26%) agreed, 4 of the respondents made up of (1%) were on the fence on this, while 23 (6%) disagreed

Thus, from the forgoing findings, it could be deduced that the majority of the respondents gained knowledge about candidates and their parties through the media, video clips of politicians and their parties making audacious promises flooded the internet in preparation for elections. Also, it was due to the internet and social media platforms that the party faithful organize a rally for their candidates and were able to gather participants.

**The role did the media play in the transparency and fairness of the 2023 general election in Omu-Aran?**

**Table 6:**

S/N	Questions	Res.	(No.) %	Res.	(No.) %	Res.	(No.)%	Res.	(No.)%	Total
1.	Rate the Media coverage of the entire elections.	Satisfying	(231) 59	okay	(140) 36	Undecided	(12) 3	So Dis. app	(8) 2	<b>(391) 100</b>
2.	Media coverage of the entire election helps protect the sanctity of the process	S. Agree	(223) 57	Agree	(43) 11	Undecided	(74) 19	disagree	(51) 13	<b>(391) 100</b>
3.	Media coverage discourages electoral fraud	S. Agree	(305) 78	Agree	(66) 17	Undecided	(16) 4	disagree	(4) 1	<b>(391) 100</b>
4.	How was media coverage of the entire election process instrumental to your participation in the 2023 general election	Motivating	(199) 51	Motivating	(106) 27	Undecided	(27) 7	Slightly. M	(43) 11 (16) 4	<b>(391) 100</b>
								Not.M		

Concerning the Likert scale question; "Rate *the media coverage of the entire election*". 371 (95%) respondents were satisfied, while 8 (2%) of the respondents were satisfied with the media coverage. Concerning the Likert scale statement; "media coverage, protecting the sanctity of the process" 223 (57%) strongly agreed, 43 (11%) agreed, 74 (19%) were undecided, and 51 (13%) disagreed. Hence, a total of 68% of the population agreed that when there is adequate media presence the sanctity of the election is protected. In response to another Likert scale statement; "*Media coverage discourages electoral fraud*", 305 (78%) strongly agreed, 66 (17) agreed, 16 made up of (4%) were undecided, while 4(1%) disagreed. For the last statement; "*How was media coverage of the entire election process instrumental to your participation in the 2023 general election*", 199(51%) of the respondents were highly motivated, 106 (27%) were motivated, 27 (7%) were undecided, 43 (11%) were slightly motivated, while 16 (4%) were not motivated at all.

## DISCUSSIONS

The study looked into the impact of media campaign messages on the success of the 2023 general election in Omu Aran. The discussion of study findings would help place the study in context, particularly to existing studies. The study's research question one finding asserts that residents are aware of the important role the media plays during elections. Regarding research question one, the respondent understands the media's influence on voter education. Voter education is a platform created by the media in which voters are constantly briefed on how to vote when to arrive at the voting venue, and voting requirements. A good voting education contributes immensely to the success of an election. The goal of the voter education program is to better enlighten residents about elections and other aspects of the political process. It is a voter sensitization process that has a favourable impact on voter turnout and reduces the number of invalid ballots in elections, particularly in nations with a substantial proportion of illiterate voters (Alhassan, 2018). According to Independent National Electoral Commission, Voter education consists of the following; information on how to vote, registration of voters, voter registration status, and a guide for transfer of registered voters, rights, and responsibilities of the voter. Civic and voter education are a major mandate of INEC, and the primary goal of its voter education program is to increase election literacy among the voting population. In terms of its mandate, the Commission's strategic goal has been to create an informed and practical citizenry capable of making informed decisions (Orji, 2015).

With the use of television broadcasts, community radio stations, and newspapers, among other things, voter education and public awareness contributed to the success of Nigerian elections. Voter education taught voters how to use a card reader, which was introduced in the 2015 election. Radio communication was efficiently utilized to provide voter education messages to individuals on the ground. This is because, in comparison to other forms of communication, radio can reach both literate and illiterate segments of the rural population. It also prevents Electoral Fraud because the media provides full coverage of the voting process; coverage of the entire process ensures the credibility of the voting process; while it may not protect the sanctity in areas where the election was marred by violence and disruptions, coverage of the entire process confirms the election result obtained from such area.

Electoral fraud is defined as any illegal interference with the electoral process that obstructs the people's will (Casimir et al., 2013). Other types of political elite fraud include 1) influencing election results through vote counts; 2) increasing the number of votes cast for the preferred candidate; and 3) decreasing the vote share of opposing candidates or parties. In Nigeria's political and democratic history, election fraud has taken on new dimensions, including underage voting, mass voting by unregistered residents, and other issues. Snatching

ballot boxes to be stuffed with thumb-printed votes for party candidates, switching results before or after collation to favour ruling party candidates, intimidation at the polls using private militant gangs or even state security, scaring genuine registered voters away from voting in opposing party polling booths Except in cases where violence was used to destabilise the process, the presence of the media prevents all of these obscurities from occurring.

In response to the second research question, respondents believe it influences voter behaviour. Voter turnout influences both the electoral process and the outcome. The main reason for political campaigns is to ensure free, fair, and credible elections. Political campaigns must strive to persuade voters to support the political philosophy preached by the campaign. Voting is a fundamental principle of the democratic system of government, and political and election participation in democratic societies has grown dramatically. This narrows the definition of voting; thus, voting in this capacity refers to aggregating individual preferences into a collective decision in an election, as well as the action of formally indicating one's choice of candidate or political party at an election.

Even though the media is not an electoral entity or the electorate, it has influenced people's perceptions of the election process. It brought to the residents' attention issues such as voting and making their votes count, as well as who to vote for and why they should vote. The significance of media trust cannot be overstated. The only way for the general public to be properly informed about the activities is for them to participate in the political system, and when this happens, having a free, fair, and trustworthy election becomes nearly impossible.

Because of the role of the media in the democratic environment in terms of disseminating information, entertaining, and educating the general public, the institution is the primary limb through which politicians attempted to obtain their optimal number of supporters, which could also be the critical significant number required to win an election. Thus, the relationship between politics and the media can be seen through the eyes of a politician looking to win an election. Politicians work hard throughout the process to maintain the full attention and interest of their supporters and the general public through the media. This logic may have to be extended to media institutions, particularly the owners, because the primary interest of media, particularly the more commercially oriented ones, is to stay in business and make good profits; mass media organizations are not, by any stretch of the imagination, charitable organizations. The only constraint here is that an organization with a financial stake must also be aware of and appreciate the ethics of the society in which it operates, and should be able to reflect those principles and more as and when it engages in commercial relationships with politicians. The same warning should be issued to politicians. In other words, the politician must recognize that society's ultimate priority is always harmony, which requires that the battle for power against other political candidates not be used as a license for wrongdoing, lawlessness, national instability, and chaos.

A deep dive into the media's responsibility during the 2023 Presidential Elections reveals that all stakeholders—politicians, media organizations, and their owners—completely ignored not only the cardinal principle of journalistic practice but also a conspicuous battering of social solidarity and harmony. For example, flagrant lies were spread by the media and politicians for as long as it was expected to score a big political point. Before we proceed to identify the obvious flaws in political campaigns and the electoral process, it is critical to emphasize that the primary motivation for gaining political power is not personal gain, but rather the larger goal of providing services and adding value to the existential natures of the people who may have given the political leadership the mandate.

The 2023 Presidential Election was one of the most hotly contested in Nigerian presidential election history, dating back to the colonial and post-independence periods. Tensions, accusations and counter-accusations, heated campaigning, blame-shifting between the government and major opposition parties, and other issues characterized the elections.

In response to the third and final study question, respondents praise the role of media in terms of media coverage and live broadcasts. The participant emphasizes the importance of live broadcasting the event to ensure the fairness of the process. Election results are significant because they determine which of the candidates running for office will eventually hold public office. The general public believes that once the voting process is completed, the Resident Electoral Officers and the Chair of the Electoral Commission will aggregate the votes cast, compute the results, and announce the election results. According to experience, the best place to rig an election is at the post-voting collation centres (Oboh, 2016).

## **CONCLUSION**

The study on Omu Aran's political communication landscape during the 2023 general elections revealed several important findings. Firstly, it was found that the media plays a crucial role in voter education and awareness, influencing voter behavior and shaping public opinion. The voter education program, facilitated by the media, significantly contributed to the success of the elections by providing information on voting procedures, registration, and voter rights and responsibilities. Voter education programs have been effective in increasing election literacy and improving voter turnout, particularly in areas with a significant proportion of illiterate voters. Secondly, the study highlighted the role of the media in preventing electoral fraud. Through full coverage of the voting process, the media ensures the credibility of the elections, discouraging irregularities such as ballot box snatching and result manipulation. The presence of the media during the entire electoral process acts as a deterrent to fraudulent activities, contributing to the transparency and integrity of the elections. Thirdly, the influence of the media on voter behavior was evident in Omu Aran. Political campaigns utilized the media to persuade voters, disseminate political messages, and create awareness about the importance of voting. The media played a crucial role in shaping residents' perceptions of the election process, informing them about candidates, issues at stake, and the significance of their votes. Trust in the media was identified as a crucial factor in ensuring informed decision-making and promoting free, fair, and trustworthy elections.

## **Research Implications**

The findings of the study have significant implications for political communication in Nigeria. The increasing influence of social media platforms in shaping public opinion and mobilizing voters highlights the need for political parties and candidates to strategically utilize these platforms. Social media provides an avenue for direct interaction with voters, enabling political actors to disseminate their messages, engage with constituents, and build support. However, the study also revealed challenges and controversies surrounding social media use in elections. The spread of misinformation, fake news, and online manipulation poses risks to the credibility of the electoral process. Efforts must be made to ensure responsible use of social media platforms, promote digital literacy among voters, and implement measures to combat misinformation and disinformation.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations for future research and policy considerations can be made. Firstly, further research is needed to explore the impact of social

media algorithms and personalized content on political communication. Understanding how these algorithms shape the information individuals receive and the potential impact on their decision-making processes is crucial. Secondly, policymakers should consider developing guidelines and regulations to address the challenges posed by social media in elections. This includes promoting media literacy, encouraging responsible social media use, and establishing mechanisms to address misinformation and disinformation. Additionally, it is essential to conduct more in-depth research on the role of local media and community radio stations in political communication. These platforms often have a more direct and influential connection with local populations, and their impact on voter behavior should be further explored. In conclusion, the study highlighted the significant role of the media, particularly social media, in shaping political communication during Nigeria's 2023 general elections. The media played a crucial role in voter education, preventing electoral fraud, and influencing voter behavior. However, challenges such as misinformation and online manipulation need to be addressed. Future research and policy considerations should focus on understanding the impact of social media algorithms, promoting responsible social media use, and exploring the role of local media in political communication. By addressing these issues, Nigeria can strengthen its democratic processes and ensure the credibility and transparency of its elections.

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