



Political awareness in the digital era: How social media drives community engagement for development in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study was conducted to examine social media, herein referred to as SM-driven community engagement, and its role in political awareness creation towards socio-political development in Nigeria. The rationale behind the study was the need for insights as to the place of SM engagement in political awareness creation. The researcher relied on a survey research design using a multistage sampling technique to determine the final population sample for the survey. A Google Forms-aided questionnaire was designed, and a link was shared with the respondents. The findings of the study show greater access to SM platforms among Nigerians, with political information as one of the most prominent contents. SM-disseminated political information creates awareness as youth with greater access become interested in political matters on account of their exposure to such information across platforms. Furthermore, the study also shows that community engagement is enhanced by virtue of the use of SM for political awareness creation. It was also revealed that the capacity of SM as platforms for awareness creation drives community engagement and development in Nigeria. This is particularly the case with respect to the development of political consciousness towards meaningful participation in the political sphere. The researcher concluded that SM-driven political awareness creation creates informed citizens capable of making decisions from an informed perspective toward the development of society in the current digital era.

Keywords

awareness; community engagement; development; digital era; social media

Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengkaji keterlibatan komunitas yang didorong oleh media sosial (*social media*, selanjutnya disebut sebagai SM) dan perannya dalam menciptakan kesadaran politik menuju pembangunan sosial-politik di Nigeria. Alasan di balik penelitian ini adalah kebutuhan akan wawasan mengenai peran keterlibatan SM dalam penciptaan kesadaran politik. Peneliti menggunakan desain penelitian survei dengan teknik sampling bertingkat untuk menentukan sampel populasi akhir dari survei tersebut. Kuesioner berbantuan Google Forms dirancang dan tautannya dibagikan kepada para responden. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya akses yang lebih luas terhadap platform SM di kalangan masyarakat Nigeria, dengan informasi politik sebagai salah satu konten yang paling menonjol. Informasi politik yang disebarluaskan melalui SM menciptakan kesadaran, di mana kaum muda yang memiliki akses lebih besar menjadi tertarik pada isu-isu politik karena paparan mereka terhadap informasi semacam itu di berbagai platform. Selain itu, penelitian juga menunjukkan bahwa keterlibatan komunitas meningkat berkat penggunaan SM dalam menciptakan kesadaran politik. Penelitian ini juga mengungkap bahwa kapasitas SM sebagai platform pencipta kesadaran mendorong keterlibatan dan pembangunan komunitas di Nigeria. Hal ini terutama berlaku dalam hal perkembangan kesadaran politik menuju partisipasi yang bermakna dalam ranah politik. Peneliti menyimpulkan bahwa penciptaan kesadaran politik yang didorong oleh SM menghasilkan warga negara yang terinformasi dan mampu membuat keputusan secara bijak dari perspektif yang berdasarkan informasi, demi pembangunan masyarakat di era digital saat ini.

Kata Kunci

Kesadaran; keterlibatan komunitas; pembangunan; era digital; media sosial

1. Introduction

Political awareness is about the citizens of a country developing political consciousness. It refers to the extent to which individuals in a society give attention to the politics within their political space. Relatedly, it is the extent to which a person pays attention to politics and comprehends what s/he encountered in the process (Zaller, as cited in Solhaug et al., 2018). The essence of this is that members of society may be desirous of such political awareness to make significant contributions to the development of society and democratic institutions through their decisions and actions premised on such process. Therefore, exposure to political messages and communication becomes an important aspect of creating awareness.

In the context of political matters, awareness implies that the individuals so exposed to political communication and messages have the capacity to engage with public affairs from a cognitive and intellectual standpoint. Solhaug et al. (2018) also explained that the reaction is usually from the minds exposed to factual information about politics and government. In a democratic country, political awareness is said to be crucial to the public or citizens due to the need to understand ways to react to unfolding political events happening around them (Rahman & Razali, 2018). This is an indication that in the modern era, political awareness is crucial to the citizens as it makes them conscious of the government and activities relating to governance.

Additionally, the political awareness/consciousness of citizens is also beneficial to the government. A situation of political awareness on the part of the citizens of a country may foster smooth communication between the leaders and citizens. In line with the foregoing, Ahmed (2024) explained that politically aware societies contribute immensely to building a healthy democracy. This is largely due to the notion that awareness of the government's policies, actions and initiatives can motivate citizens to contribute significantly towards the development of a society through active participation. This is also seen from the perspective of the importance of political consciousness among the citizens of a country and the ways they make decisions and actions aimed at governance.

The digital era is further redefining and redirecting the idea of political awareness or consciousness. Social media platforms provide the force for greater awareness creation among young voters in different territories of the world. These platforms also serve as motivating avenues for the users to engage in politics. Accordingly, Alodat et al. (2023) highlighted the place of SM platforms as tools for raising political awareness among young persons in the modern era. Social media are also useful as tools for learning in many fields aside from politics and have also become the regular avenues through which young people seek information (Siyal & Brohi, 2022). In essence, there is a greater focus on social media platforms for information-seeking purposes in the digital era.

Sometimes, the citizens who seek information toward political understanding do so for the purpose of active participation and the need to contribute to democratic goals and development. Well-informed citizens are also able to make informed decisions based on their knowledge of politics and governance. This implies that they are politically aware and educated. Accordingly, Chen and Madni (2024) noted that education equips citizens to have critical thinking capabilities just as they gain knowledge of social sciences, economics and history required to make decisions from an informed perspective particularly in the political sphere.

One of the ways political knowledge and awareness can be acquired is through engagement. Often, political institutions such as parties and government institutions attempt to engage the local population on sundry matters, including awareness creation. Such community engagement may involve building relationships, developing communications and making efforts to manage interaction towards actualising specific outcomes beneficial to the

community and the organisation at the forefront (Hendricks, 2023). This implies that it is about engaging stakeholders and providing them with the platforms and opportunities to participate in activities culminating in great results for all.

According to Hendricks (2023), community engagement as an aspect of stakeholder engagement can also be conceptualised and understood by related terms such as community collaboration, community consultation, public participation, public consultation, community management, and stakeholder management. These are crucial aspects of actualising development goals from a community perspective as efforts championed by the people appear to achieve greater success. This is also akin to the idea of civic engagement which can also be leveraged to create political awareness across communities in modern society. This is the case because, according to Kristensen (2022), it is considered an important way to make sense of how citizens perceive their role in a democracy.

There are different avenues and channels through which people learn about political issues, and all contribute to political knowledge formation. From another perspective, learning about politics across various contexts remains a valid point that motivates citizens to participate in democracies. Accordingly, Kristensen (2022) highlighted that contexts of learning about politics, such as the family, communities, education and institutions, are also useful to the development of attitudes and eventually culminate in public participation in democratic processes. The media is another important institution that creates avenues through programmes and information dissemination to raise political awareness.

The mass media are powerful and influential platforms used for political awareness creation (Ali et al., 2013; Muhammad et al., 2023). In the digital media era, social media platforms are also reputed for political awareness creation (Chiamogu et al., 2021; Fakeye, 2023; Siyal & Brohi, 2022; Sebastin, 2024). This may be primarily due to the characteristics of platforms, such as ease of access and interactivity. Political parties, their candidates and other political institutions leverage the platforms to engage citizens on different political matters, including campaigns, policy information dissemination, and other important political causes. In fact, social media are considered an effective platform for voter mobilisation in the 21st century's political sphere (Benaiah & Osuntoki, 2024; Inobemhe & Asemah, 2025; Mohammed & Kirfi, 2024).

In the social media era, the youth are engaged in greater dimensions to participate in political activities, and this was glaringly recorded during the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. The lack of political communication, voter apathy and other events that characterised previous elections in the country were relegated following the adoption and greater utilisation of social media as platforms for mobilisation during the elections. Considering this trend, the questions are: How have social media platforms enhanced political awareness in Nigeria? What are the implications of social media-driven voter engagement? These questions can be summed up in the line of thought of whether SM-influenced community engagement translates to real awareness creation and participation. This study was conducted to provide insights into these pertinent research questions.

2. Methods

The study is based on a survey research design. The rationale of this study was to ascertain the role of social media in community engagement within the context of political awareness creation toward socio-political development. The survey was conducted in line with Salmons (2023) that surveys are conducted in academic settings, politics and business in order to get a sense of the attitudes or preferences of a group of people. Accordingly, the design was adopted to gauge the perceptions of a group of Nigerians regarding the adoption and use of social media as avenues for political awareness creation required to invoke a community-oriented socio-political development in the country.

For the purpose of this study, Lagos was carefully chosen on the basis of its economic and political relevance to Nigeria. Particularly, the city is home to millions of Nigerian voters as per its large population density. It is a mega-city with population estimates of between 16 and 21 million dwellers (Idris & Fagbenro, 2019). For the purpose of this study, the estimated population figure is 21 million. The sample size for this study is 384, determined using the sample size determination formula developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) as provided below:

Eq. 1

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

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 21,000,000 \times 0.5 \times (1 - 0.5)}{(0.05)^2 \times (21,000,000 - 1) + 5.841 \times 0.5 \times (1 - 0.5)}$$

$$n \approx 384$$

The multistage sampling technique was relied upon to arrive at the final demographics of the survey. The first stage involved using a purposive sampling technique to select Lagos State for this study based on its strategic location and significance in the federation. Lagos is a coastal state located between latitudes 6° 23'N and 6° 41'E and longitudes 2° 42'E and 3° 42'E and is the most populated state of the country with more than 21 million inhabitants. While Abuja is the administrative capital of Nigeria, Lagos is the country's economic capital. This puts the state in a vantage position to have a heterogeneous population with different demographics, economic status, political orientation and social views. In the second stage of the sampling, the Lagos West senatorial district was selected using the convenience sampling technique. The final technique utilised by the researcher was stratification, wherein the Oshodi/Isollo Local Government Area emerged as a specific area for the study. The socio-political and population size was taken as the basic characteristics to divide the district into strata, and the stratum with the highest population density and complex socio-political make-up (Oshodi/Isolo) was selected.

The instrument of data collection for this study is the questionnaire. The instrument was designed in line with the 5-point Likert scale having options like SA= Strongly agree; A=Agree; Undecided=U; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly disagree. Expert and face validation technique was adopted as the instrument was subjected to the process with the assistance of senior communication experts at Glorious Vision University, Nigeria. Consequently, Google Forms was used to design the research's data gathering instrument and the survey link was generated. In line with research ethics, respondents were informed of their rights and status as voluntary participants in the study and reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any point without prior notice.

Additionally, they were assured of privacy and protection by virtue of the anonymity of their data throughout the duration of the study. The method of data gathering was sharing the survey link to various community development WhatsApp platforms in the area. The survey was opened for four weeks, receiving 356 responses, which implies a 92.7% response rate. Data from the survey was analysed using SPSS version 26 to find patterns and insights to answer the research questions, while tables aid the presentation.

3. Results

The rationale for this study was to ascertain the role of social media in enhancing political awareness and how much it improves community engagement for development. Accordingly, results from the survey show insights relevant to the enquiry as the study saw a 92.7% response in the form of data presented in the tables below:

Table 1. Social Media (SM) Platforms Enhanced Political Awareness

Parameters	SA [%]	A [%]	U [%]	D [%]	SD [%]	<i>m</i>	Decision
I have SM accounts	49 [13.8]	276 [77.5]	13 [3.7]	14 [3.9]	4 [1.1]	3.99	Accepted
I have unhindered access to political information on SM	166 [46.6]	134 [37.6]	37 [10.4]	14 [3.9]	5 [1.4]	4.24	Accepted

(continue on the next page)

Table 1. (Continue)

Parameters	SA [%]	A [%]	U [%]	D [%]	SD [%]	<i>m</i>	Decision
I spend more than 6 hours daily on SM	11 [3.1]	9 [2.5]	270 [75.8]	46 [12.9]	20 [5.6]	2.85	Rejected
I spend less than 6 hours daily on SM	23 [6.5]	60 [16.9]	202 [56.7]	28 [7.9]	43 [12.1]	2.98	Rejected
I am exposed to SM information	233 [65.4]	40 [11.2]	31 [8.7]	21 [5.9]	31 [8.7]	4.19	Accepted
Political information is one of the most prominent SM-featured contents in Nigeria	146 [41.0]	119 [33.4]	50 [14.0]	18 [5.1]	23 [6.5]	3.97	Accepted
I became aware of certain political news through SM	108 [30.3]	140 [39.3]	60 [16.9]	24 [6.7]	24 [6.7]	3.80	Accepted
SM-disseminated political information creates awareness	135 [37.9]	135 [37.9]	30 [8.4]	28 [7.9]	28 [7.9]	3.90	Accepted
Youth are interested in politics due to SM access	96 [27.0]	166 [46.6]	48 [13.5]	23 [6.5]	23 [6.5]	3.81	Accepted
SM political awareness creation is high	88 [24.7]	147 [41.3]	59 [16.6]	31 [8.7]	31 [8.7]	3.65	Accepted

Source: Online Survey, 2024

KEY: SA=Strongly agree; A=Agree; Undecided=U; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly disagree

Decision Rule: 0.00 – 3.49 = [Rejected] 3.50 – 5.00 = [Accepted]

Table 1 data shows that social media platforms played a significant role in political awareness creation. Data presented in the table show that the majority of the respondents have access to SM platforms ($m = 3.99$), they have unhindered access to political information across the platforms ($m = 4.24$), and are exposed to SM information ($m = 4.19$). Further data also demonstrate that political information is one of the most prominent SM-featured contents in Nigeria ($m = 3.97$), the respondents became aware of certain political news through SM ($m = 3.80$), SM-disseminated political information creates awareness ($m = 3.90$), youth become interested in political due to SM access ($m = 3.81$), and SM political awareness is considered to be high ($m = 3.65$). The data imply that SM users in Nigeria have greater access to platforms, and political information is a major content across the platforms to which they have unhindered access in the digital era.

In contrast, the respondents could not tell whether they spend more than six hours daily on SM ($m = 2.85$) or less than six hours on the platforms daily ($m = 2.98$). These two notions were rejected, implying that SM users may not have an idea of their daily time spent on SM. This is also an indication that time management is a challenge in respect of SM usage in this part of the world.

Table 2. The implication of Social Media-Driven Voter Engagement on Development

Parameters	SA [%]	A [%]	U [%]	D [%]	SD [%]	<i>m</i>	Decision
SM-driven voter engagement enhanced voter education	130 [36.5]	161 [45.2]	33 [9.3]	18 [5.1]	14 [3.9]	4.00	Accepted
It creates an interactive forum and platform	148 [41.6]	119 [33.4]	29 [8.1]	31 [8.7]	29 [8.1]	3.92	Accepted
It promotes community engagement and participation	120 [33.7]	148 [41.6]	29 [8.1]	29 [8.1]	30 [8.4]	3.84	Accepted

(continue on the next page)

Table 2. (Continue)

Parameters	SA [%]	A [%]	U [%]	D [%]	SD [%]	<i>m</i>	Decision
Voters are better equipped with information about candidates	107 [30.1]	143 [40.2]	35 [9.8]	35 [9.8]	36 [10.1]	3.70	Accepted
Voters are better equipped with information about parties	120 [33.7]	147 [41.3]	29 [8.1]	30 [8.4]	30 [8.4]	3.83	Accepted
Political growth of candidates is premised on SM-driven voter engagement	25 [7.0]	28 [7.9]	254 [71.3]	26 [7.3]	23 [6.5]	3.02	Rejected
Socio-political development can be linked to SM-driven voter engagement and awareness creation	82 [23.0]	193 [54.2]	27 [7.6]	27 [7.6]	27 [7.6]	3.78	Accepted
SM-driven voter engagement creates effective alternatives to traditional media like radio/TV, newspaper/magazines	128 [36.0]	153 [43.0]	25 [7.0]	25 [7.0]	25 [7.0]	3.94	Accepted
It increases voter apathy through fake news and misinformation	56 [15.7]	46 [12.9]	229 [64.3]	13 [3.7]	12 [3.4]	3.15	Rejected
It promotes fear due to overabundance of information	24 [6.7]	50 [14.0]	236 [66.3]	22 [6.2]	24 [6.7]	3.08	Rejected
SM capacity to drive community engagement for development in Nigeria is high	130 [36.5]	161 [45.2]	33 [9.3]	16 [4.5]	16 [4.5]	4.05	Accepted

Source: Online Survey, 2024

KEY: SA=Strongly agree; A=Agree; Undecided=U; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly disagree

Decision Rule: 0.00 – 3.49 = [Rejected] 3.50 – 5.00 = [Accepted]

Table 2 data demonstrates that SM-driven voter engagement enhanced voter education ($m = 4.00$), creates an interactive forum and platform ($m = 3.92$), promotes community engagement and participation ($m = 3.84$), voters are better equipped with information about candidates ($m = 3.70$), and voters are better equipped with information about parties ($m = 3.83$). Furthermore, data also indicate that socio-political development can be linked to SM-driven voter engagement and awareness creation ($m = 3.78$), SM-driven voter engagement creates effective alternatives to traditional media like radio/TV, newspaper/magazines ($m = 3.94$), and SM capacity to drive community engagement for development in Nigeria is high ($m = 4.05$). The implication of this is that the use of SM for voter engagement and political awareness creation is effective as voters are better equipped with the requisite information to make informed decisions through the platforms. It also promotes community engagement in greater dimensions.

Data also show that respondents could not tell whether the political growth of candidates is premised on SM-driven voter engagement ($m = 3.02$) or whether SM increases voter apathy through fake news and misinformation ($m = 3.15$) or even promote fear due to the overabundance of information ($m = 3.08$). These notions were consequently rejected. The implication is that the growth of stakeholders in the political sphere of Nigeria may not be directly tied to their engagement with voters across SM platforms. This is also similar to the notion of SM-spread fake news and misinformation leading to voter apathy. Data show that this may not be the major cause of voter apathy. An overabundance of information (infodemic), as seen in the SM-enabled digital era, may not promote fear.

4. Discussion

This study was conducted to examine political awareness creation in the digital era with a specific focus on SM and their use to drive community engagement for development in Nigeria. Accordingly, findings of the study show that 226 respondents (77.5%) indicated that they have SM accounts indicating high use of platforms among the respondents. Relatedly, it was also seen that respondents show unhindered access to SM, as demonstrated by 166 (46.6%) respondents who strongly agreed and 134 (37.6%) who simply agreed to the notion. This is backed by data that show over 15.8% of the population has social media accounts as of January 2021 (Chiamogu et al., 2021), and over 36.7 million Nigerians are known to use different SM platforms (Michael, 2024; Umogun, 2023). Studies also reported greater access and use of SM in the country (Inobemhe et al., 2025a; Inobemhe et al., 2025b; Suemo et al., 2024). There is a growing need for SM as a means of communication and interaction in the country, and this informs the growing popularity and acceptance.

The above is also an affirmation of the notion that respondents have SM accounts and have digital awareness as promoted in the digital age. Furthermore, 233 (65.4%) respondents also indicate exposure to information disseminated across SM platforms, of which 146 (41.0%) are of the notion that politics-related information happened to be one of the most prominent SM-featured contents in Nigeria. This indicates that there is greater creation and sharing of political information across different SM platforms. Earlier studies also demonstrated the use of SM platforms as channels to share political information in Nigeria in the modern era (Aina & Afolaranmi, 2025; Erubami, 2020; Oparaugo, 2021). In essence, political institutions and politicians have included the use of social media as an important aspect of their engagement strategies and platforms. This was also glaring during the 2023 presidential elections in Nigeria, where stakeholders greatly leveraged SM. It was particularly glaring from the Obidient Movement adoption and use of platforms (Agbim et al., 2023; Okoli & Agantiem, 2023). Different SM platforms such as Twitter (now X), Facebook and Instagram were utilised.

Awareness is also one of the main takeaways of the SM-revolution regarding information access in the digital era. This is based on the notion of 108 (30.3%) respondents who strongly agreed and 140 (39.3%) who simply agreed to the notion that they became aware of certain political events through exposure to SM platforms. Similarly, 135 (37.9%) respondents strongly agreed, while 135 (37.9%) simply agreed to the notion that SM-related political information creates awareness. This mirrors the findings of previous studies that established the place of social media as platforms for awareness creation (Adams et al., 2024; Sebastin, 2024). Youth's interest in politics is also influenced by virtue of their access to SM is the notion accepted based on the opinion of 96 (27.0%) who strongly agreed and 166 (46.6%) who agreed to the notion. SM political awareness creation is high is another important find of this study based on the position of 88 (24.7%) respondents who strongly agreed and 147 (41.3%) who simply agreed. Muhammad and Abdullahi (2020) also showed that social media can be a force for awareness creation among youth. It is also the case because the majority of the youth population in Nigeria spends long hours on social media daily.

From its community engagement perspective, SM-enabled political awareness creation also has some implications for socio-political development in Nigeria. The study's findings show that voter education is enhanced on account of SM-driven voter engagement made possible in the digital era. This is based on the opinion of 130 (36.5%) respondents and 161 (45.2%) who strongly agreed and agreed to the notion of the educational value of SM-enabled engagements with voters. Oluwatosin et al. (2020) also found media to greatly influence political knowledge formation among students in Nigeria. This is closely related to the implication of SM-driven voter engagement that has to do with interactive forums and platforms, as 148 (41.6%) strongly agreed, while 119 (33.4%) simply agreed to the idea. The implication of the foregoing is that SM platforms are veritable avenues and forums for interaction between and among voters. Previous studies also showed the use of SM as avenues, forums, and platforms for political participation and engagement (Duru, 2023; Ezeigbo, 2024; Morah & Nwafor, 2024; Ologunbe & Taiwo, 2025). There is a growing popularity and acceptance of platforms for political causes, including protests and social movements in this part of the world.

Further findings of the study reveal that SM-enabled voter engagement also promotes the idea of community engagement and participation based on the position of 120 (33.7%) who strongly agreed and 119 (33.4%) who simply agreed to the notion. SM platforms remain useful for engagement purposes. Several studies have shown similar results. For example, Lakshmi and Prasad (2024) demonstrated that social media can be leveraged for community engagement in general and information dissemination in particular. SM platforms are also good therapy for community development was part of the results of the study conducted by Husain and Sani (2022), where the researchers showed a greater use of the platforms in modern times for such purposes. Similarly, respondents numbering 107 (30.1%) and 143 (40.2%) separately show alignment with the idea that voters are equipped with information about candidates, on the one hand, while on the other, 120 (33.7%) and 147 (41.3%) think that it equipped them with information about the political parties. The results imply that SM platforms are important sources of political information in the digital era. Previous studies also depicted SM platforms as effective sources of political information (Alodat et al., 2023; Tan, 2023; Tan et al., 2024) and knowledge (Intyaswati et al., 2021). This confirms that SM platforms are leveraged along positive dimensions in the present age.

That socio-political development can be linked to SM-driven voter engagement, and awareness creation is also an important result from this study, and this is on account of the notion expressed by 82 (23.0%) who strongly agreed and 193 (54.2%) who agreed to the notion. Furthermore, 128 (36.0%) and 153 (43.0%) respondents expressed the notion that SM-driven voter engagement creates effective alternatives to traditional media like radio/TV and newspaper/magazines. Accordingly, findings based on the position expressed by 130 (36.5%) and 161 (45.2%) respondents show that SM's capacity to drive community engagement for development in Nigeria is high. This is an indication that the interactive and digital media era affords users the opportunities to build relationships and enhance engagement and participation in the political sphere. The capacity for social media to serve as veritable platforms and channels for building relationships in particular and community engagement in general has been demonstrated by several researchers (Mishnick & Wise, 2024; Glazier & Topping, 2021). This is another point that buttresses the continuous popularity and acceptance of SM platforms in different parts of the world.

Despite the support of different notions as discussed above, findings of this study also show that respondents rejected some notions. One such was the notion that the political growth of candidates is premised on SM-driven voter engagement. This was rejected based on the fact that the majority of respondents, numbering 254, representing 71.3%, could not tell whether there was a link between the two variables. This implies that SM-driven voter engagement may not be the only way towards the political growth of politically exposed personalities (PEPs) in our society. Therefore, PEPs and their political parties can leverage other avenues and channels to engage with the voters. For instance, Nigeria has a large population with no SM presence and may need to be approached/engaged using various other means such as public communication, interpersonal encounters and more traditional approaches like communication in religious centres, market squares and town hall avenues. These are mostly the case in communal and rural settings where grassroots mobilisers and opinion leaders are engaged to support a political and social cause. This is also glaring in the political sphere of Nigeria.

Similarly, 229 (64.3%) respondents were indecisive leading to the rejection of the notion that the use of SM increases voter apathy through fake news and misinformation disseminated with the platforms. That SM promotes fear due to overabundance of information was also rejected due to the position expressed by 236 (66.3%) who expressed indecisive disposition to the notion. This result sharply contrasts the findings of a study conducted by Erubami (2020), where it was demonstrated that social media can be identified as a prominent factor that promotes politics-related tensions and violence seen in the Nigerian political environment in recent times. Findings of studies also connected the rapid spread of fake news (Inobemhe et al., 2020; Inobemhe et al., 2022) and hate speech (Aduko, 2021) to the increasing popularity and acceptance of social media in Nigeria in the digital era. This implies that the largely unregulated SM platforms allow the dissemination and spread of all kinds of information, including fake news.

5. Conclusion


The issues raised in this study border on the digital era and the strength of political awareness creation through the use of SM platforms. Evidence abounds on the use of different social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X, WhatsApp, YouTube, TikTok and many more to create awareness around civic engagement in general and voter participation in particular. The use of social media by different political parties during the 2023 presidential election is a testament to the realisation of their important place as tools, vehicles, channels and platforms for effective engagement. Their use is akin to a carefully planned strategy or programme of some sort to engage youth who happened to be vocal and visible across various platforms known to Nigerians. Political parties and their candidates championed this dimension to their utilisation during the 2023 general election in Nigeria.

The implication of this possibility and the greater level of access to political information is that the citizenry is better equipped to make decisions from an informed perspective. Information about the candidates and their political parties is readily available and easily accessible with SM platforms wherein gatekeepers are near-absent. Consequently, users who make the voting public have the capacity to gain access and learn about political parties and their candidates towards making better choices during elections. SM platforms also simplify the idea of community engagement necessary for developing democratic systems and structures. This also enriches the idea of democracy, particularly where institutions are accountable while operating with transparency. However, there is a need to be circumspect and approach unverified information across SM platforms with caution to avoid taking political decisions on falsehoods and deepfakes.

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Authors' Information

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