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Article

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SOCIAL MEDIA AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTION PROCESSES: A STUDY OF KATSINA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, KATSINA STATE

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Abstract

Refers to the act of spreading political information or advertising a product. The objective of this study is to the challenges in the use of social media for political participation by youth. The study adopted mixed methods of data collection with a sample size of 384 respondents for both quantitative and qualitative methods. Uses and Gratification theory has been adopted as the theoretical framework of the study. The study found that the majority of the youths in Katsina have lack of money, distrust in electoral processes, and political maneuver find them difficult to participate in politics and even to win for political office. The paper concludes that these social media platforms include Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and WhatsApp, which have made it easier for people to share political information either false or tangible information. The study recommends that youths should use social media as a means of spreading message and information that are meaningful and relevant to the context of reality.

Keywords: Campaigns, General Election Processes, Party Manifestation, Social Media, Youth Participation,

Introduction

Refers to the act of spreading political information or advertising a product. Using a variety of social networking sites and platforms, social media are news forms that allow their consumers to engage in online social interaction (Ahmed & Aondover, 2022). Via online networks, social media makes it easier to share knowledge and concepts. Social media is a wide range of applications and platforms that let people share material, communicate online, and create communities. Examples of these include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp,

and YouTube these are mechanism that contributes towards disseminating an information. The 2015, 2019, and 2023 elections in Nigeria saw a significant change in the political involvement and participations. Users' political attitudes and involvement have changed as a result of the use of social media platforms by individuals, political parties, and organizations. These platforms include Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and WhatsApp, which have made it easier for people to share political information. (Hile et al., 2023). Aondover et al., (2022) observed that social media has become a powerful social and political force in society. This has been made possible by contemporary developments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), which have further propelled a paradigm shift in the manner of information dissemination and social interaction across all institutions of society. In today's interconnected world, social media has become an integral part of our daily lives, transforming the way we communicate, conduct business, discuss politics, and share our culture. Its impact is undeniable and has the potential to shape political participation in significant ways.

The rapid development of social media has brought about major changes in how people find and connect with individuals who share similar interests. During the last general elections, numerous celebrities, including Kwankwaso, Atiku Peter Obi and Bola Tinubu, leveraged their social media presence to engage with voters and influence their choices and directions. This demonstrates the power social media platforms hold in shaping political discourse and decision-making (Aondover et al., 2023). Moreover, the nature of information dissemination has been profoundly impacted by social media. Social media also play a key role in businesses' marketing strategies given the sheer amount of time individuals spend each day on social platforms and apps. It can also collect information helps businesses to fine-tune their marketing campaigns and conduct market research. It helps companies promote products and services as it enables the distribution of targeted, timely, and exclusive sales and coupons to potential customers. Further, social media can help build customer relationships (Hile et al., 2023).

The Used of Social Media Platforms in Political Participation

The internet is critical in effective global communication and has created opportunities for increased and more diverse civic engagement and political participation (Ohme, 2019). Social media, which is internet enabled, has become ubiquitous and familiar in Africa, especially in Nigeria, with the introduction of the mobile phone in 1999 (Morah, et al., 2016). Bello & Kaufhold (2023), believe social media use is solid and steady in developing countries. The social media boom is overwhelming changing African's economic, educational, social, and political landscapes (Morah, et al., 2016). However, globally, the use of the internet has increased, with two-third of the world's 7.8 billion people already online thanks to social media and social networking site (SNS), including Facebook, You Tube, Instagram, Twitter and WhatsApp (Kemp, 2022), as cited in (Bello &. Kaufhold, 2023). Social media use has enabled people to organise, interact with the outside world participate in social and political activity, particularly in emerging and developing nations (Howard et al., 2011,) Mano & Ndlela, (2020). The prevalence of social media use among young people in Africa is believed to have a connection with their rich history of failed governance that manifests in various forms of marginalisation (Obisesan, 2023).

Mano & Ndleda (2020) argue that Africa people increasingly use mobile and social media to partake in political debates, even in ways that challenges authority. The essence of social media as a political engagement tool was understood in the above assertions. Politics

in Africa is bedevilled by various factors, including voter apathy and ethnic, religious, tribal and economic influence. In recent times, tribalism is one factor in Nigeria politics that is assumed to dominate and affect leader selection. In Africa, “the nature of colonial rule was abhorrent to broad participation of constituents in the direction and operation of political system” Lechler & McNamee (2018) as cited in Bello & Kaufhold (2023). The outcomes of the Nigeria 2023 election were particularly controversial following the alleged claims of irregularities that occurred during the elections despite the prominent heavy media coverage of the polls. With an approximate population of 202 million people and over 350 ethnic groups and languages, uniformity in ideas, objectives and aspirations is challenging due to political sentiment (Obisesan, 2023).

The Challenges in the Use of Social Media for Political Participation by Youth

Social media is categorized as new media, which is an interactive medium that is free from restrictions on the transmission of information that transcends distance and time. The advantages possessed by social media make it one of the forms of technology that is most often used in their lives as a medium to interact with other people. Social media serves as a versatile educational tool, facilitating the transmission of both domestic and foreign news, economic, political, educational, and entertainment information (Ma’dan et al., 2023). With the help of the government to ensure widespread internet network facilities, the use of social media is now comprehensive and is used by every age group, including the youth, adults, and the elderly, resulting in an increase in its use every year (Ma’dan et al., 2023). Political parties must also implement effective mechanisms to capture the interest of youth voters, particularly in the areas of representation and party struggle. The introduction of new faces into the party and the dissemination of information on social media can transform the political landscape by harnessing the power of social media to assist youth in making political decisions. Political parties should use alternative media platforms to provide the best input, especially young influencers, to help this youth group understand the issues the party is fighting for. Nevertheless, the existing political leaders and politicians who continue to drift with old political order patterns will miss opportunities to shape their influence, as social media is an important channel for them to spread their agenda and gain the trust of the community, especially the young generation across the country (Ma’dan et al., 2023).

However, the youth voters also faced challenges as the political facts obtain from the social media mediums are difficult to control and monitor compared to traditional media since anyone are free to give their political opinions (Wahab et al., 2013). Although social media has the potential to spread information quickly and benefited the youth users, its content can raise doubts and be difficult for users to trust (Salman et al., 2018). The exposed to the publication of information which is unprocessed, unfiltered and tends to provide views which is not professional were the issues youths should be aware of (Wahab et al., 2013). For example, during the 2023 Nigeria presidential election, a significant amount of fake news was highly biased with majority of youth supporting Kwankwaso, Atiku, Tinubu and Obi the Muslim cleric has contribute in preached telling Muslim followers to vote for Tinubu this has persuade the interest of many Muslims to caste vote for Tinubu, this significantly contribute to Tinubu to win 2023 general election despite, he used money buy votes. (Mihala, 2023).

Campaign Strategies and Youth Behavior

During the general election's campaign, competing political parties would continue to attract the interest of voters, especially among young generations by using different strategies and techniques. A certain sum of money was spent on "emotional content," which aimed to inform and draw attention to a political goal. Because these campaigns allow for a systemic and coordinated dissemination of knowledge, penetration, and consequence rather than focusing on a particular subject, they have the potential to impact young political behavior (Azmi & Chinnasamy, 2019). Thus, this will affect the interest of the younger generation to get involved in political parties (Abd Rahim et al., 2017). In the Nigeria youth context, the campaigns involving youth participation were more focused on economic issues such as unemployment and desire to have a better future. They wanted a country free of corruption, propaganda and racial issues (Pandian, 2020). Due to the campaign themes or political manifestos that influenced them, the Nigeria youth were excited to vote during election (Azis et al., 2020). For example, in political manifestos includes cash rebates on mobile purchases priced under RM500, the reduction education loan system, lower car prices, implement better minimum salary and this were expectedly influence the young generations. An updated political strategy that used the application of universal requirements and adapted to particular social circumstances replaced the earlier type of political campaigning that involved racial disparity. This relates to Pandian's (2020) findings which revealed that the behavior of young people, in terms of political involvement was no longer influenced by racial or religious inclinations. Today's generation regardless of race or religion, desires to be active in a more inclusive and multiracial politics.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted theoretical triangulation which are Uses and Gratification Theory, which was framed by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch in the 1970s, Uses and Gratification Theory provide an appropriate explanation by citing the attention away from media sources and message effects to audience uses of media content. The uses (exposure to the media) and, gratification (benefits, personal interest or gains) focuses the needs of members of the audience through picking of message pass by the speaker of the occasion. Uses and Gratification is concerned with what people do with media instead of what media do to people. The practical use of the media is what the Uses and Gratification Theory explains. This theory emphasizes on the reason(s) people have for engaging one medium over another as well as the gratifications they aim to derive. In the realm of social media, User Gratification Theory sheds light on why people select specific platforms and content to fulfill their personal needs. Social media users may seek information, entertainment, social interaction, identity validation, or emotional satisfaction. For instance, individuals might use platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter to connect with friends and family, share personal experiences, seek validation through likes and comments, and satisfy their need for social connection and also explains the understanding on the use of new media and how users seek social media and to what extent they are satisfied with its type, content, and method of use as a tool for political participation is being explained (Mojaye & Aondover, 2022).

Thus, youths are the backbone, as the audience, are active in the following sense. Firstly, with regards to their needs, they select the social media platform that appeals to them. Secondly, they selectively consume the political contents that meet their needs. Thirdly, the political content may or may not affect them. It does, it will result in increased participation of youths in politics. This goes to show that the youths, as the audience, are not

passive. In the same vein, political candidates are also able to select and use the social media platform of their choice to disseminate the messages of their choice during electoral campaigns and other electioneering activities. The theory is relevant to this study as this research looks into why and how youths use social media to participate in political tussles.

Research Design

This study is mixed methods research in nature. A sample size of 384 respondents was administered during field work to fill the questionnaire. The questionnaire was answered by both stakeholders, youths, as well as political thugs. And the questionnaire was designed in form of dichotomous research ("Yes" or "No"). In addition, a sample size of 8 participants was drawn for the qualitative aspect to complement the quantitative data.

Sample Size

The sample size of Three Hundred and Eighty Four (384) respondents was selected for the sake of this study because of the inability to examine the entire population of Katsina metropolis.

Study Area

Katsina State was created on 23rd September, 1987 from the defunct Kaduna State. The state is one of the six North West states located between the axis of Kaduna, Kano, Jigawa, Zamfara Sokoto, and has border with Niger republic. Katsina is a mono-lingual and mono-ethnic state, as the majority of its people are Hausa/Fulani. The state has thirty four (34) Local comprising Bakori, Batagarawa, Batsari, Bindawa, Baure, Charanchi, Dandume, Dutsi, Faskari, Funtua, Ingawa, Jibia, Kafur, Kaita, Kankia, Kusada, Mai'adua, Malumfashi, Mani, Mashi, Matazu, Musawa, Rimi, Sabuwa, Safana, Sandamu, and Zango. The Major activity of the state is agriculture which is the main stay of the state economy as 80% of the population are engaged in farming and rearing of animal. The major crops cultivated in the state are maize, cotton, groundnut, guinea corn, millet, rice, beans, and soya beans, while livestock is essentially cattle, sheep, goats, fish farming, and poultry.

Table 1: What Types of Social Media Platform that was more used in Political Participation in the 2023 General Election in Katsina Local Government Area?

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Facebook	141	36.8
Istagram	101	26.3
Twitter	87	22.7
WhatsApp	55	14.2
Total	384	100.0

Source: Field Work, (2025)

The table represents data on the desperation of payment of salary to civil servants. The majority of the respondents, with the following percentage 36.8% answered with strongly agree while a total number of 26.3% dispatched to disagree, and 36.9% of the respondents indicates twitter and WhatsApp. This means that a number of 63.1% respondents in the study area fall within this category, which constitutes the highest proportion in the sampled. During an In-depth Interview, a member of social media leader who resides in Layout Katsina stated that:

Quite enough facebook contribute in spreading information unlike other platforms, this because is it the social media that half of the people in Nigeria

have access to, not even Nigeria but in the world at large. It is the only media that a normal keypad phone has the application in the menu. This makes an ordinary individual able to advertise a political candidates, whether credible or not (IDI with Social Media Leader, 2025).

Table 2: Does Social Media Platform Contribute Towards the Winning of APC in the 2023 General Election in Katsina Local Government Area?

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	231	60.1
No	153	39.9
Total	384	100.0

Source: Field Work, (2025)

From the data above, a total number of 60.1% of the respondents said Yes, while 39.9% among them said No to the question. This implies that majority of the respondents who said Yes constitutes the highest number in the sampled. During an key informant interview session, a participant who worked at a special assistant for youths revealed that:

Yes, social media is the mechanical tools that contribute significantly towards the winning of the ruling party. The reasons why I suggest that is because an individuals who does not have a phone or access to a phone, those with an Android phone may come with a video clip or any political banner to show them as part of manifestation of that candidate. This may attract them to go for that candidates without knowing the full imagine of the candidate (KII with SA for Youths, 2025).

Table 3: Does Social Media Platform was used to Youth have Dilemma in the 2023 General Election?

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	262	68.2
No	122	31.8
Total	384	100.0

Source: Field Work, (2025)

The table above from the study explains the social media platform was used to youth have dilemma in the 2023 general election. A total number of 68.2% of the respondents said Yes, while 31.8% said No. This implies that those who said No constitutes the highest proportion in the sampled, and they can lead to dilemma in the 2023 general election. An Key Informant Interview conducted with a Senior Staff of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) revealed that:

Yes, the dilemma here, is that. Because people don't know the consequences of spreading false information without a source or without knowing who said or write it, or without the permission of the owner. The person who sends the message is also among those who receive information from others. That is one of the dilemma of social media and it contributed to the 2023 general election (KII, with INEC Staff, 2025).

Table 4: Are the Party Manifestation of APC is Shenanigan's to the People of Katsina Local Government Area?

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	222	57.9

No	162	42.1
Total	384	100.0

Source: Field Work, (2025)

Table 4: The above table shows that 57.9% of the respondents in the study area responded Yes, while 42.1% respondents responded No. This implies that those who said Yes constitutes the majority of sampled. An Key Informant Interview held with a stakeholder affirmed that:

Yes, the manifestation of ruling party ended in dishonesty to the citizens of Nigeria. All the promises of the APC address during campaigns were not fulfilled. In the end, the party brought another hardship the removal of subsidy. This removal of subsidy has pushed half of the people of Nigeria into suffering, where many people can no longer afford to visit their relatives or wards who live far away. (KII, with District Head, 2025).

Table 5: The Challenges Youth Faced toward the Use of Social Media in Political Participation in the 2023 General Election in Katsina Local Government Area

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of Money	148	38.6
Distrust in electoral processes	112	29.1
Political maneuver	124	32.3
Total	384	100.0

Source: Field Work, (2025)

The table above shows that 38.6% of the respondent identified lack of money, 29.1% mentioned distrust in electoral processes, 32.3%, cited political maneuver. This implies that the items listed in the table are participation in the 2023 general election in katsina local government area. Finally, stakeholder will be selected, and questionnaires along with key informant interview will be administered to the respondent in the analysis of the research findings. An Key Informant Interview conducted with former bursar stated that:

Of course, youths have faced numerous challenges in the 2023 general election. Challenges like lack of money, political godfatherism, political power, and other challenges among other. As observed, youths are the backbone of everything. This put a phobia no the faces of politicians because of the ways youths came out to cast their vote for the candidate who are after the service of humanity (KII, with PDP Candidate, 2025).

Table 6: What Types of Strategies would Address the Challenges of Political Participation in Katsina Local Government area?

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Civic education	106	27.7
Electoral reform	128	33.3
Digital engagement	89	23.1
Combating misinformation	61	15.9
Total	384	100.0

Source: Field Work, (2025)

The table above shows that 27.7% of the respondent identified civic education, 33.3% mentioned electoral reform, 23.1%, cited digital engagement, 15.9% emphasized combating

misinformation. This implies that the items listed in the table are considered as types of strategies that address the challenges of political participation in Katsina Local Government Area. Finally, stakeholder will be selected, and questionnaires along with key informant interview will be administered to the respondent in the analysis of the research findings. During an Key Informant Interview conducted with participant who resides at Sabon Titin Kwado stated:

There is many strategies for addressing political participation in Nigeria. These include the following: public lectures on political matter, political dialogue, civic education, advertisement through political platforms, addressing the manifestos of political candidates, electoral reforms, digital engagement, and combating misinformation these are a few strategies among others (KII, with Party Chairman, 2025).

Table 7: Do the Strategies Could Help in Addressing those Challenges?

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	284	73.9
No	100	26.1
Total	384	100.0

Source: Field Work, (2025)

From the above data in the table a total number 73.9% indicate Yes, while 26.1% said No. This implies that those who said yes have the highest proportion in the sampled.

I am give you an assurance that if Nigerian elites and the politicians are willing to solve the problem of any political maneuver they can do it in a second, as we all know nobody is above the law. This can help a candidate who comes out to contest for any political office to understand that only his/her good qualities can favour them during the election period. It can also serve as a source of zeal and courage for them to present a proper manifesto (KII, with party stakeholder, 2025).

Table 8: How Does Strategies Help in Addressing those Challenges?

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Political apathy	87	22.7
Disenfranchisement	85	22.1
Lack of access	107	27.9
Franchise	105	27.3
Total	384	100.0

Source: Field Work, (2025)

The table above presents the strategies help in addressing the challenges of 2023 general election where a specific number of respondents indicate political apathy with the percentage of 22.7%, 22.1% are the number of respondent who strictly said disenfranchisement, 27.9% indicates lack of access while 27.3% said franchise. This indicates that the followings strategies are practical tools that can help in addressing those challenges. During a final key informant interview session a participants revealed that:

It could help address those challenges. If the youths and the elites involve themselves in ensuring proper administration, this can help provide an infrastructure and job opportunities that align with true democracy. This

prevents make many individuals from coming out to vote during elections because, even if the candidate receives the highest number of votes, it is unlikely that he will be declared the winner if he is not with the government. (KII, with youth leader, 2025).

Discussion of the Major Findings

The findings of the study carried out from the literature review of different scholars which explain the followings results stated In the Nigeria youth context, the campaigns involving youth participation were more focused on economic issues such as unemployment and desire to have a better future. They wanted a country free of corruption, propaganda and racial issues Pandian, (2020). Due to the campaign themes or political manifestos that influenced them, the Nigeria youth were excited to vote during election (Azis et al., 2020). For example, in political manifestos includes cash rebates on mobile purchases priced under RM500, the reduction education loan system, lower car prices, implement better minimum salary and this were expectedly influence the young generations. An updated political strategy that used the application of universal requirements and adapted to particular social circumstances replaced the earlier type of political campaigning that involved racial disparity. This prevents make many individuals from coming out to vote during elections because, even if the candidate receives the highest number of votes, it is unlikely that he will be declared the winner if he is not with the government. This is similar to the work of Pandian's (2020), findings which revealed that the behavior of young people, in terms of political involvement was no longer influenced by racial or religious inclinations. Today's generation regardless of race or religion, desires to be active in a more inclusive and multiracial politics. The finding found from the interview conducted in the field. There is many strategies for addressing political participation in Nigeria. These include the following: public lectures on political matter, political dialogue, civic education, advertisement through political platforms, addressing the manifestos of political candidates, electoral reforms, digital engagement, and combating misinformation these are a few strategies among others

Conclusion

Political parties must also implement effective mechanisms to capture the interest of youth voters, particularly in the areas of representation and party struggle. The introduction of new faces into the party and the dissemination of information on social media can transform the political landscape by harnessing the power of social media to assist youth in making political decisions. Political parties should use alternative media platforms to provide the best input, especially young influencers, to help this youth group understand the issues the party is fighting for. Nevertheless, the existing political leaders and politicians who continue to drift with old political order patterns will miss opportunities to shape their influence, as social media is an important channel for them to spread their agenda and gain the trust of the community, especially the young generation across the country

Recommendations

- i. Youths should use social media as a means of spreading message and information that are meaningful and relevant to the context of reality.
- ii. The elites, political parties and youths should support and advertise an individuals who can represent the true interests of their constituencies.
- iii. The government should enforce journalist and other information agencies filter and verify all the messages before releasing them to the public.

- iv. The youths should establish an organization that supports their political activities, such as purchasing nomination form, organizing campaigns, and producing political banners.
- v. Individuals should avoid selling their votes or compromising their integrity for a small amount of moneys, as this allows unqualified candidates to gain power without addressing the people's problems.

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