

**THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SHAPING POLITICAL DISCOURSE
AND CITIZEN'S ENGAGEMENT IN POLITICAL PROCESSES IN 2023
OBIDIENT MOVEMENT IN NIGERIA: THE LAGOS STATE
EXPERIENCE.**

BY

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FEBRUARY, 2024.

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**BEING A PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE,
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE
AWARD OF BACHELOR
OF SCIENCE (B.SC) DEGREE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE
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BENIN CITY,**

FEBRUARY, 2024.

DECLARATION

I, OKERE NGOZI GRACE hereby declare that this research project is entirely my own work and composition. All references made to work of other persons have been duly acknowledged.

OKERE NGOZI GRACE
(RESEARCH STUDENT)

DATE: _____

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this work was carried out by OKERE NGOZI GRACE of the Department of Political Science in the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City.

(Project Supervisor)

(Head of Department)

Date:

Date:

EXTERNAL EXAMINER Date

DEDICATION

Without delay, this work is dedicated to God Almighty, for His mercies, the grace and protection in finishing strong.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

COVER PAGE	i
TITLE PAGE	ii
DECLARATION	iii
CERTIFICATION	iv
1.5 Scope of the Study	4
1.6 Significance of the Study	16
1.7 Definition of Terms	17
CHAPTER TWO	17
LITERATURE REVIEW	19
2.0 Introduction	19
2.1 The concept of Social Media	19
2.2 Benefits of the Social Media	21
2.3 The concept of political Discourse	24
2.4 The concept of citizen Engagement	26
2.5 Social Media and Politics in Nigeria	29
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
ABSTRACT	x
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Research Problem	3
1.3 Research Objectives	5

- 1.4 Research Questions 5
- 2.6 Theoretical Framework (The Uses and Gratification Theory(UGT)): The origin
27
- 2.9 History of the Uses and Gratification Theory 29
- 2.10 Principles of Uses and Gratification Theory (SCOT). 37
- 2.11 Application of the Uses and Gratification Theory 42
- 2.12 Criticism of the Uses and Gratification Theory
- 2.13 The relevances of the Uses and Gratification Theory to the study
- 2.14 The Six Degrees of Separation Theory
- 2.15 History of the Six Degrees of Separation Theory
- 2.16 Principles of the Six Degrees of Separation Theory
- 2.17 Application of the Six Degrees of Separation
- 2.18 Criticism of the Six Degrees of Separation Theory
- 2.19 The relevances of the Six Degrees of Separation Theory to the Study

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Research Design
- 3.3 Sources of Data
- 3.4 Population of the Study
- 3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques
- 3.6 Instruments for Data collection
- 3.7 Study- Area
- 3.8 Validity and Reliability test
- 3.9 Ethical Considerations

3.10 Duration of data collection (when)

3.11 The Technique of Data Presentation and Analysis

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Data Analysis

4.3 Discussion of Findings

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Summary

5.3 Conclusion

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

5.5 Recommendations

REFERENCES

APPENDIX

ABSTRACT

This study examines how social media was utilized to shape Political discourse and citizen ' s engagement in political processes during the 2023 obedient movement . It reveals the strategies employed By organizers of the campaign on social media and the challenges encountered. Data was collected from respondents via interviews and analyzed through thematic analysis using survey research methods. The findings indicate a strong link between social media, political discourse and citizen's engagement during the Obedient movement with social media being vital in maintaining its momentum. However, a major challenge in using social media for the movement was the spread of false information among youths. After a thorough investigation, the researcher recommended that youths focus on educating themselves about media literacy and always analyze and verify information before dissemination.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Studies have shown the vital role that social media plays in determining changes and results in political processes. It is evident that social media has had a major influence on political discourse and citizens' engagement worldwide. Sites like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, among others, have made significant contributions to the success of political campaigns. According to Nwoye and Okafor (2014), social media and other social networks are becoming more important in Nigerian politics, owing to the fact that social media allows internet users to communicate freely and virtually immediately with members of the political elite, wherever they are and at any time.

It is safe to say that Nigeria, with its large population and diversity, has not been immune to the impacts of social media, especially on the political scene. The use of social media enables voters to make wise and informed decisions about candidates and parties they choose to vote for. Additionally, to improve the administration and implementation of elections, electoral bodies worldwide have used recent innovative methods seen on social media to produce a more inclusive and transparent electoral process.

The advent of social media has brought about a different kind of campaign and political process that involves developing social media strategies to effectively engage people and produce a positive advantage that benefits both society and the candidates. Undeniably, utilising smartphones, computers, and other readily

available communication devices, access to social media is easy and could be done anywhere ((Edegoh&Samson, 2014)).Any of these devices can be used by voters to access details about any candidate.

While conventional media remains relevant and is still a primary tool of communication, social media has become a powerful and major tool of communication in Nigerian politics. Critics have argued that politicians control and own Nigerian traditional media such as newspapers, television, and radio, using it to their advantage.

In Nigeria, social media has developed into an effective instrument for political campaigns, giving parties and candidates the ability to interact with voters, reach a large audience, and influence public opinion (Agbim,et al 2023).

Politicians and citizens utilizing websites, blogs, and other social media platforms to address political issues have increased political discourse in Nigeria, thereby initiating citizens' engagement in political processes.

In the 2023 obedient movement in Nigeria there was an awakening of interest in the Nigerian youths as regards any involvement in political discourse or engagement. The obedient movement brought back lost hopes in the credibility of political parties and elites through its campaign for a better Nigerian.

The Obidient movement is a social media campaign awareness on various media platforms for the political aspiration of Peter Obi, the Labour Party Presidential candidate in the 2023 Nigeria election.

The youngest and presently most well-liked candidate in the race was Peter Obi. According to Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), 71% of those who completed their voter registration were between the ages of 18 and 34,

indicating that young Nigerians were yearning for a new era and are set to demonstrate that (Chukwurah, 2022).

Through the campaign of the Obidient Movement, the Labour Party emerged third in the presidential election. Of particular interest was the party's victory in Lagos State, which was one of the major strongholds of the ruling APC leaders (Tinubu, Buhari, Adamu, Lalong, etc.). The Labour Party's revolution, "the Obidient Movement," is the next most coordinated youth action against the status quo, having a major impact on citizen engagement and political discourse, especially among youths.

This study aims to assess the role of social media in shaping political discourse and citizen engagement in political processes during the 2023 Obidient Movement in Nigeria, focusing closely on the Lagos State experience.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Concerns over the decline in citizens' engagement in political discourse and processes are rapidly growing and have become a major problem in Nigeria, as both young and old show a lack of interest in political processes.

In recent years, issues such as electoral malpractice, insecurity, pressure from incompetent electoral candidates, and illiteracy among citizens have contributed to the decline in political discourse and citizen engagement in political processes. There seems to be an increase in political apathy, characterized by a lack of engagement, interest, or enthusiasm in political processes. This apathy has taken various forms, from a lack of motivation and disinterest in political affairs, elections, political issues, and government policies to low voter turnout, cynicism, and informed inaction.

However, the emergence of social media brought a turnaround to this narrative. It has changed the way political information is discussed, shared, and consumed, resulting in a drastic change in citizens' engagement and participation in politics.

Aondover et al., (2022) observed that social media has become a powerful social and political force in society.

Social media are well-liked hubs for social interaction that produce material created by users. As such, they have a significant and lasting impact on their users. 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).

These platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and YouTube, have made it much easier for users to interact and share political information.

Social media has become a tool used to mobilize and empower citizens to participate in politics, thereby creating a wider arena for political activities. Through social media, citizens can engage in political interactions that are private and secure, providing them the opportunity to debate and express their opinions on political issues.

The aim of the study is to provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media has directly influenced the level of political discourse and citizen engagement in political processes in Nigeria. There is a need to understand the extent to which the creation and sharing of information on social media can increase political discourse and citizen engagement in politics.

Previously, studies have focused more on social media and its influence on political participation across the geopolitical zones in Nigeria. However, this study explores

the role of social media In shaping political discourse and citizens engagement in political processes using the obidient movement in Nigeria, the Lagos experience, as a case study. In order to understand the elements affecting political discourse and citizens engagement in political processes, this study is centered on Social Media its tactics, and effects on political dynamics and processes.

1.3 Research objectives

- 1) To examine the relationship between social media, political discourse, and citizen engagement in political processes.
- 2) To evaluate the positive role of social media in shaping political discourse and citizen engagement in political processes in Nigeria.
- 3) Analyzing the challenges faced in political discourse and citizen engagement in political processes in Nigeria.
- 4) To assess the extent to which social media has shaped political discourse and citizen engagement in political processes, focusing on the 2023 Obidient movement in Lagos State, Nigeria.

1.4 Research Questions

- 1) What is the relationship between social media, political discourse, and citizens' engagement in political processes?
- 2) What is the role of social media in shaping political discourse and citizens' engagement in Nigeria?

3) What are the challenges faced in political discourse and citizens' engagement in political processes in Nigeria?

4) To what extent has social media shaped political discourse and citizens' engagement in the political process, with a focus on the 2023 Obidient movement in Lagos State, Nigeria?

1.5 Significance of the study

This study aims to provide an understanding of how social media influences political discourse and citizen engagement in political processes in the contemporary landscape. The purpose is to use existing research to better understand the mechanisms through which social media shapes political discourse, opinion, and political engagement, particularly in the digital age. This study will influence policymakers and government officials, as insights from the study can be used to develop more programs and effective policies that promote citizen engagement in political processes, encourage productive political discourse, and address negativism within the Nigerian political system.

On a larger scale, this study's findings can also contribute to the understanding of politics, political culture, and communication in this digital age by showing how technology transforms the ways citizens engage with political issues and with each other. This study can influence academic debates on the relationship between social media, citizens, and politics by highlighting their complex nature and importance, especially in a region like Lagos State, which is often overlooked in international scholarship.

By using the 2023 Obedient movement in Lagos State as a case study, the state's unique characteristics can be observed, contributing significantly to the body of knowledge on dynamics in Nigeria and beyond. Insights from this research can also inform political... discourse and citizen engagement efforts in other parts of the country, as well as in Africa and the entire world.

1.6 Scope of the study

The study examines the role of social media in shaping political discourse and citizen engagement in political processes in Nigeria, using the Obidient movement in Lagos State as a case study. The study determines the extent to which social media utilization promoted the Obidient movement during the 2023 general election and identifies the platforms that played a major role in the movement.

The study is supported by pertinent literature from diverse sources, such as articles, journals, and online repositories, to ensure comprehensive coverage. Despite this, the study has been limited in capturing the full details and patterns of social media use during the 2023 general elections. The scope of the study is restricted to Lagos State.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Social Media: Social media is a collective term for websites and applications that focus on communication and community-based input, that builds interactions among people through creating, sharing, and exchanging ideas and information.

Political Discourse: Political discourse refers to a form of discussion and communication involving an exchange of ideas among groups or individuals in the political scene.

Citizen Engagement: Citizen engagement refers to the active involvement of citizens in the political and democratic processes of a country.

Political processes: Simply put, are procedures through which power is exercised, decisions are made, and policies are formulated and implemented.

Obidient Movement: The Obidient movement is an organized nationwide rally. It was a massive tool used to raise awareness and increase political education. The Obidient movement became a powerful political force that raised the stakes dramatically through its campaign for democratic change.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The literature review aims to present scholars' perspectives on the topic, identify knowledge gaps, and suggest concepts for further study. This section explores the impact of social media on political discourse and citizen engagement in Nigeria's 2023 general elections, focusing on the Obidient movement as a case study.

2.1 The Concept of Social Media :

The role of social media in shaping political discourse and citizen engagement in politics has grown significantly over the years, transitioning from traditional media, which includes radio, newspapers, and television, to the introduction of digital media. Digital media, however, has intensified the influence of media on political discourse and citizens' engagement in political processes. Digital platforms allow for rapid dissemination of information, creating new opportunities and challenges for political communication (Chadwick, 2013).

From a historical perspective, the rise of digital media can be traced back to the 18th and 19th centuries with the emergence of print media, including newspapers and pamphlets.

This played a vital role in sharing political information and influencing public opinion.

Broadcast media in the early 20th century introduced radio, adding a new dimension to political communication by enabling live broadcasts of political debates and

speeches to reach a wider audience. The broadcast media also introduced the use of television, which further enhanced political discourse with visual elements, making it more impactful to the audience.

The emergence of the internet and social media began with the arrival of the internet in the late 20th century and the introduction of social media platforms in the early 21st century. This development brought a drastic change in political discourse, as the internet provided a new way of disseminating information and enhancing political engagement, breaking away from traditional media. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube revolutionized political communication, creating a more participatory form of politics. Social media, in particular, has played a crucial role in organizing political movements and protests, as seen in the Arab Spring and other global uprisings (Howard&Hussain, 2013).

According to Bottle PR Social media is defined as “Software tools that allow groups to generate content and engage in peer-to-peer conversations and exchange of content (examples are YouTube, Flickr, Facebook, MySpace, etc). Anvil Media also defined social media as “An umbrella term that defines the various activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and the construction of words and pictures.” Hongjiang Xu categorizes social media into several types, each with examples:

- Microblogs, blogs, wikis (e.g., Twitter, Tumblr, Pinterest, Instagram)
- Social Networking Sites (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, TikTok, Zoom)
- Presentation Sites (e.g., YouTube, Google Slides, Prezi, Apple Keynote)
- Social Shopping Websites (e.g., Kactoos, Polyvore, Luvocracy, Faveable)
- Group Buying Websites (e.g., Groupon, Living Social, RetailMeNot, Zulily)

Caplanou clarify the concept of social media by saying that “ Social media are works of user-created video, audio, text or multimedia that are published and shared in a social environment, such as a blog, wiki or video hosting site.” LazWorld(2010) defined social media as “A category of sites that is based on user participation and user-generated content. This includes social networking sites like LinkedIn, Facebook, or My Space, social bookmarking sites like Del.icio.us, social news sites like Digg or Simpy, and other sites that are centered on user interaction. Boyd and Ellison(2008)defined Social Media as a platform that is used to create profiles, make and create explicit traverse relationships.

According to Google (2023)Social Media is a collective term for websites and applications that focus on communication, community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. It has often been used by people to stay in touch and interact with friends, family and various communities.

Wikipedia(2009) posited that "Social media are primarily Internet-based tools for sharing and discussing information among human beings.”

Social media has profoundly impacted political discourse and citizen engagement by facilitating a wider spread of information and enhancing political participation. It remains a powerful tool for political engagement and discourse, capable of shaping and influencing the course of politics in any country.

2.2 Benefits of social Media:

The benefits of social media is immense, as it facilitates communication among large groups by overcoming geographical and other barriers. Additionally, it serves as a digital marketing tool, making previously inaccessible goods and services more accessible and providing a platform for advertising.

Babafemi Jacobs(2013) highlighted the use of social media for propaganda, political, and commercial purposes. Social media offers various advantages, including enhanced communication within and outside organizations, effective marketing, and collaborative knowledge sharing. It provides general benefits and specific advantages for different industries and user types. Vonderschmitt (2012) notes that the rise of social media platforms has greatly expanded the user base, offering politicians an effective way to connect with their constituents.

In the 2008 U.S. Presidential Election, Barack Obama successfully used social media to engage and motivate his volunteers, leading to significant online fundraising amounting to millions of dollars. This campaign reached an unparalleled level. Success was achieved by employing a novel approach, which evidently translated into tangible electoral support.

Vonderschmitt (2012) emphasized that while online campaigns hold significant importance, the value of face-to-face interaction cannot be overlooked as it contributes to the effectiveness of a campaign. Therefore, the utilization of social media has become an essential component for any political campaign or candidate to incorporate into their electoral strategy.

In Nigeria for instance, the unwholesome reliance on godfatherism is gradually giving way to online tactical crafting and packaging of persuasive messages by campaign managers and political parties with an aim to consciously persuade Nigerian voters to vote in their candidates (Ezebuenyi & Ejezieh, 2012).

According to Okoro & Santas (2017) Social media has become instrumental in grassroots mobilisation efforts during election campaigns. Political parties and candidates utilise online platforms to organise volunteers, coordinate campaign

activities, and rally supporters for events, rallies, and door-to-door campaigns. Real-time monitoring of public opinion and responses to political campaigns is made possible by social media. Candidates and parties can observe public reactions to their messaging, policies, and campaign activities to adjust their strategies accordingly.

Social media is a tool that allows youths to learn about different new groups. According to The Pew Research Center(2018) in today's world teenagers use social media to meet with people of different backgrounds, get different views, and show their support for the cause. Social media are also an important intermediary between governments, governments, citizens, and government agencies and companies (Sandoval-Almazan and Gil-Garcia, 2012).

using social media tools can provide information on citizen opinions, emotions, intentions, behaviours,and characteristics (Chun et al.2012).

Also the use of social media in the public sector is considered an agent of technological innovation and transformation According to Lee and Kwak, (2012)and is thought to open up unprecedented new possibilities. Social media also provide public relations professionals with various opportunities to interact with the public (Curtis et al., 2010).

When we think of social media, platforms like Facebook, Twitter, 2go, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Flickr come to mind. These are interactive websites and chat rooms that allow users to comment and engage in discussions. Social media has various features that extend beyond mere social interactions among friends. Notably, it enables individuals to create a profile or identity to present themselves to others. - Create links and lists to things one supports and likes.

- Easily share information with and among groups.
- Pass comments and messages from one person that others can read.
- Establish connections to other people.

These characteristics of social media are summarized as social presence, media richness, autonomy, playfulness, privacy, and personalization. The fact that social media platforms are easily accessible, inexpensive, and enhance political participation, especially among youths who form the majority of its users, does not in any way create room for abuse.

Social media helps shaped political communication by segmenting its audience through diversified coverage and exposure. By weakening the gatekeeping role, social media forms and shapes political communications. Unlike traditional media, which is usually flooded with press releases and government-generated information, social media permits the sharing of current breaking news. This produces a significant influence on socioeconomics and political settings while building a network of online relationships.

A social media platform provides users with round-the-clock access to information, allowing them to post and respond from any location at any time. Governments aiming for effective communication with citizens can leverage social media to boost political engagement.

2.3 The Concept of Political Discourse:

In a general sense, discourse can be defined as a conversation or text that includes verbal components and results from communication and can be easily interpreted by the recipient.

While Political discourse refers to a form of discussion and communication involving an exchange of ideas among groups or individuals in the political scene. Political discourse involves the interaction between the state, society, and individuals, directly influencing the recipient's perspective of the world.

it is the concentration on important political and social issues and a high level of language culture that helps achieve agreement on any social or political issue through discussion, reasoned expression, and coordination of different views.

Social media has had a major influence on political discourse, changing how politicians, individuals, and governments interact and engage with one another.

Ezema and Ezema (2023) discovered that social media platforms ranked highest in mobilising the residents of Enugu metropolis during any form of elections than the face to face communication.

One major way in which social media has influenced political discourse is by allowing disadvantaged sides or perspectives to be seen and heard by giving groups that are seemingly underrepresented a voice. Social media has enabled individuals to draw attention to topics important to them and broaden their perspectives thatch . This process encourages diversity and inclusivity in political discourse, allowing the representation of a wide spectrum of viewpoints. Nigeria's former president Goodluck Jonathan on Wednesday September 15, 2010, made a bid for the presidency via Facebook. Within 24 hours of his announcement, his followers grew from 217,000 to 221,000, and on election day which was slated for April 16, 2011, he had over half a million followers (Madueke et al., 2017). Clearly showing the effects of social media on political discourse and online politics.

Social media is an effective tool in political discourse that promotes communication by giving citizens the ability to interact directly with politicians and governmental agencies, fostering a sense of active engagement in political discourse and processes. Political discourse on social media has transformed political campaigns, enabling politicians to directly campaign for votes and reach a larger audience. For example, politicians have incorporated social media into their campaigns since Barack Obama's groundbreaking use of it in 2008, significantly transforming political discourse.

Social media's influence on political discourse differs greatly between countries, shaped by their cultural, political, and regulatory contexts. In democracies like the United States and the United Kingdom, media often provide a platform for a range of political views and discussions. In contrast, in authoritarian regimes like China and Russia, media are usually controlled by the state to promote government agendas and silence opposition. For example, in the United States, the media landscape is characterized by a high degree of freedom and a wide range of viewpoints, but also significant partisanship and polarization. In contrast, China's media system is tightly controlled by the state, with strict censorship and propaganda serving to maintain the Communist Party's control over public discourse.

2.4 The Concept of Citizens Engagement :

Citizen engagement involves the active participation of individuals in a nation's political and democratic activities. Social media empowers citizens to engage in politics and expand the scope of political activities. It enables digital citizens to participate in secure, private, and cross-border political discussions and interactions.

Social media has developed into a powerful tool for political campaigns in Nigeria, providing candidates and parties with new avenues for voter engagement, public opinion influencing, and political mobilization. Through social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp, political parties and candidates may interact directly with a sizable audience (Shadrach and Apuke, 2020).

The traditional methods of citizen engagement, such as town halls and consultation exercises, have been unsuitable, unwieldy, and remote.

Citizen engagement methods have moved online in this era of digitization and digitalization of communication.

The internet and wireless communication have transformed societal communication from a one-way mass communication model to a system based on messages from many to many, multimodal, at chosen times, with interactivity where senders are receivers and receivers are senders. Access to a multimodal hypertext on the web constitutes the endlessly changing backbone of communication processes. The advancement of communication through the Internet and wireless technology has created a new landscape for social and political interaction, minimizing government and corporate control over citizen engagement.

Consequently, the Internet has empowered individuals to openly discuss public interest topics. The rise of social media has altered how people communicate, characterized by "user-generated content using Internet-based publishing technologies," unlike traditional print and broadcast media. It thrives on a two-way communication model, connecting people through social networking sites (Twitter

and Facebook), photo-sharing sites (Instagram and Flickr), and video-sharing sites such as YouTube and Vimeo.

Social media has been essential in organizing and engaging Nigerian youths for activities like protests and elections, due to the high engagement of young Nigerians on these platforms. According to Obi (2006), the military's oppressive regime and severe crackdown on peaceful protests from marginalized groups have contributed to this trend. The use of social media in communication has revolutionized citizen engagement, moving away from traditional methods like protests, boycotts, editorials, and sit-ins, which often demand significant effort and can be risky. Nowadays, mobile devices allow individuals to obtain information, comprehend issues, and express their views in global discussions, including across Africa. In essence, the digitalization of communication has improved citizen engagement.

This shift in political involvement is widely recognized. In Nigeria, using social media for civic engagement depends on citizens' initiative to influence decisions on matters concerning them. The #EndSARS movement, initiated through Twitter and leading to the mobilization of millions of Nigerians for a physical protest, is an example of civic engagement and social activism. The 2020 End SARS protest was unprecedented in Nigeria due to the large participation of youths and their organized approach in voicing demands to the government. Discussions have continued on how the youths effectively raised awareness and mobilized nationwide to accomplish this goal. During this period of the protest, it was known that a large demonstration was forthcoming. However, the police, other security agencies, and the government couldn't identify the means of mobilization or hold anyone accountable, and thus couldn't suppress the movement.

In the southeastern region of Nigeria, specifically in Enugu and Owerri, there was a shutdown in Aba and Okpara Square leading to the Criminal Investigation Department office, causing significant traffic congestion (Eze, 2020). This situation highlighted organizational challenges. In the North, where literacy levels are low and areas are predominantly rural, questions arose about how the youth were mobilized for the End SARS protest in Narayi High Coast in Kaduna and other northern locations. In the Southwest of Nigeria, particularly in Lagos and Ogun State, where there was a significant turnout, challenges arose regarding self-mobilization, effective communication of the meeting point, fundraising for the movement, and raising awareness. These issues of mobilization during the End SARS protest were efficiently resolved through the use of social media showing how social media is a relevant tool that influences citizens' engagement in political processes.

2.5 Social media and politics in Nigeria:

Politics and the media have long been interconnected. From the inception of democratic systems in Ancient Greece, there has been a clear connection to the evolution of methods for communicating ideas between political figures and citizens. The development of rhetorical techniques, the creation of spaces for public discourse, and the establishment of systems to represent the people's will, even though this initially included only free male citizens of the city-state, are early examples of the relationship between politics and media.

Social media and politics denotes the utilization of online platforms in political activities and processes, which encompass all actions related to governing a nation or region. This involves political organization, international politics, corruption,

parties, and values. The media's main role is to provide information and notify us of events, influencing our thoughts and actions.

The media can pressure the government to act by signaling a need for intervention or showing that citizens want change. The internet has created communication channels that are crucial for circulating news, and social media can alter not just the message but also the dynamics of political corruption, values, and conflict in politics.). In many parts of Nigeria, ICTs have been instrumental in advancing democracy, and they appear to be rekindling hope for the nation's social and political change (Okoro, et al., 2019).

Through social media use in election processes, global conflict, and extreme politics, diplomacy worldwide has become less private and more susceptible to public perception. Over time, social media has become a significant source of news about global events. Moog (2000), averred that the internet opens up new possibilities for citizens to engage in interactive debate, unmediated communication between political groups and prospective members and direct access to politically relevant material.

Social media and the internet have enabled the spread of political information that challenges the centralized and hierarchical nature of mainstream media, which often has high entry barriers. According to Tanja (2014), social media encourages more people to deliberate. The lowered hierarchies between information sender and recipient imply that common people can interact with authorities and with one another directly in addition to expressing their opinions.

Social media platforms are influential in shaping political opinions due to the wide range of ideas and viewpoints they host. It is found that news consumption leads to political persuasion; therefore, the more people use social media platforms for news, the more their political opinions will be affected. Social media can be used by individuals, groups, and independent candidates to change public opinion, contest prevailing narratives, and bring attention to crucial topics (Mamman, 2019).

In Nigeria, the social media site “Twitter” has a growing impact on how social phenomena are shaped. Users freely share their thoughts and participate in debates that have a big influence on society. Twitter facilitates easy communication between users and the creation of narratives around political and policy issues (Adam, et al., 2018). Social media has emerged as a significant instrument for political campaigns in Nigeria, enabling candidates and parties to connect with a broad audience, interact with voters, and influence public opinion which has brought about growth in politics.

A successful social media campaign strategy is required to create engaging and shareable content, such as well-crafted graphics, videos, and written posts that convey the candidate's vision, policies, and accomplishments and help promote political views and amongst candidates. Social media has also shown the importance of using customized messages to appeal to specific target audiences or candidates to address their issues.

The use of the social media platform “Twitter” allows political candidates, parties, and activists to disseminate information about their platforms, policies, campaign events, and achievements. It provides a platform for spreading awareness about

political issues, mobilizing support, and engaging with a wide audience. Twitter is increasingly shaping the political agenda, a role that was formerly dominated by television. Twitter is now followed by television, or at the very least, broadcast news (Ott, 2017).

Twitter's networking features aid in forming groups of people with similar interests who may get together offline. In Nigeria, Political candidates can directly engage with their supporters and potential voters on Twitter. They can respond to queries, address concerns, and provide real-time updates (Chinedu-Okeke & Obi, 2016).

The use of Twitter has no doubt improved the political involvement of Nigerian citizens.

Also The ENDSARS movement in Nigeria was largely driven by its use of Social media. The Soro Soke online radio and the #ENDSARS hashtag on social media platforms amplified the movement's momentum and expanded its reach. This movement began mainly to support the end of police oppression and brutality in Nigeria and the use of social media helped in advancing this movement.

The development of Obi and the obidient movement as the third political force in the general election of 2023 was largely attributed to the internet's accessibility and the growing importance of smartphones among young people (Okwelum, 2023).

“Obididents” such as Aisha Yusuf (quoted in Akinsuyi, 2022) asserted that the “office of the citizen” is the highest office in the nation and that what they needed was not an emperor but a president who was answerable to the people.

The above statement shows how young people have become influential in the information network, with politicians relying on them to convey messages to the

public and serve as channels for public feedback. This largely shows how the use of social media has created room for the youths to be more included in politics.

Politicians, government agencies, candidates and political parties use social media platforms to create awareness of their agenda which has eventually resulted to increased voter awareness and education.

Hashtag campaigns increase awareness, create online dialogue, and mobilise support for specific candidates or issues (Hadma, &Anggoro, 2022). With social media, campaign awareness are raised reaching a larger audience.

Employing social media, politicians and their parties were able to disseminate messages and enlist a large number of volunteers to help with their campaigns. Political campaigns create and utilise campaign-specific hashtags to amplify their messaging, increase interaction, and mobilise supporters (Opeyemi, et al., 2018).

According to Dunu (2018), many

politicians, including those running for governor, the presidency and other offices, used social media platforms to engage with voters and constituents during the 2011 general elections. Through the means of social media voters are much more aware and can make informed decisions during elections.

In addition, The Nigerian Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) utilized the opportunity to enhance its social media presence and engage with users on Facebook, YouTube, and X. With the creation of INEC's Situation Room, individuals can now directly report misconduct and express concerns about the election to the institution. The commission experienced 25 million website visitors in the first three days of the presidential election and received approximately 4,000 tweets during that period. Over 70,000 Nigerians were able to report incidents

directly to the commission and contact them directly to receive answers to their queries. This improvement by INEC brought about a better and an easier way of handling issues relating to the elections.

2.6 Theoretical Framework: The Uses and Gratification Theory: The Origin.

Uses and gratifications theory is a communication theory that explains why and how individuals engage with media to fulfill particular needs. The theory suggests that media is readily accessible, audiences are its consumers, and they select media to address specific needs along with social and psychological purposes like gaining knowledge, relaxation, forming social connections, and entertainment.

The Uses and Gratification Theory shifts focus from media sources and how message impacts audience to how audiences utilize media content. The uses, (meaning media exposure), and gratification, (referring to benefits or gains), are shaped by the audience's needs. This theory emphasizes what people do with media rather than what media do to people, explaining the practical application of media. According to the core principles of the theory, individuals are attracted to specific types of informational media due to their accessibility and satisfaction with the content they receive. Furthermore, users at all levels participate in selective processes of initiative. According to Katz et al., (1974), "Uses and Gratifications theory asserts that people are active users of media and select how they will use it". There are various accounts on the development of the Uses and Gratification Theory (Egede & Chuks-Nwosu, 2013).

Starting in the 1940s, researchers identified patterns in radio listeners through the lens of the uses and gratifications theory. Initial studies focused on subjects like children's engagement with comics and the impact of newspaper strikes. During this

period, there was a growing interest in psychological interpretations. By 1944, researchers explored early forms of uses and gratifications by categorizing the reasons behind individuals' media choices. Herta Herzog who was a pioneer in the field, through his work on radio listenership laid the groundwork for the theory. He interviewed various soap opera fans and identified three types of gratifications for listening to soap operas: emotional, wishful thinking, and learning.

Lasswell in 1948, On a macro-sociological level introduced the concept of a four-functional

interpretation of the media, which are the functions of surveillance, correlation, entertainment and cultural transmission for society and individuals.

Also, Wright in 1960 later adds the mobilisation function, which basically expanded Lasswell's stance.

Early research concentrated on the propaganda and persuasive capabilities of the mass media; but, as time went on, attention shifted to the behavioural sciences in an attempt to explain the potential impacts of communications and the media on society (Egede, 2013).

Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch in the 1970s solidified the theory's foundation, which was the theory's fourth stage of development.

Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch concluded that the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) examines how social and psychological needs create expectations from mass media or other sources, leading to varied media exposure patterns or engagement in activities, which fulfill needs and produce various consequences, often unintended.

The theory focuses on audience motifs and analyses message and social system, analysing users' media seeker behaviour and satisfaction with its type, content, and method of use (Mehrad & Tajer, 2016).

2.7 Major Proponents of the Uses and Gratification Theory:

The Uses and Gratification Theory has gained recognition and was shaped by several major scholars who have contributed to its development over the years.

Harold Herzog's research in 1944 on radio audiences is regarded as a foundational and significant contribution to the development of the Uses and Gratification Theory. His study aimed to comprehend the reasons behind people's radio listening habits and the benefits they derived. Herzog identified motivations such as entertainment, information, and companionship, paving the way for future researchers to delve into audience gratification.

Building on Herzog's foundational work for the Theory, Another Major proponents of this theory is Donald Horton and R. Richard Wohl.

They introduced the concept of "parasocial interaction" in 1956, which proposed that audiences develop emotional connections with media figures like radio or television hosts. This idea is crucial to the Uses and Gratification Theory, as it implies that audiences engage with media to satisfy social and emotional needs. Horton and Wohl's contributions broadened the theory's reach by emphasizing the significance of social and emotional gratifications in media.

Furthermore, the influential 1974 paper "Utilization of Mass Communication by the Individual" by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch is regarded as the cornerstone of the Uses and Gratification Theory. The authors posited that people engage with media to fulfill particular needs and desires, viewing media use as

intentional and purposeful behavior. They highlighted key assumptions, such as audiences being active in their media consumption and motivated by a quest for satisfaction or enjoyment.

Another significant advocate is Denis McQuail. In 1983, McQuail advanced the theory of media use and gratification, focusing on the significance of audience needs and motivations. He outlined crucial elements of the theory, noting that audiences possess varied needs and gratifications and that media consumption is affected by individual differences like personality, demographics, and experiences. McQuail also underscored the role of contextual factors, such as social environment and culture, in influencing media use and gratification.

Also, in 1985 Philip Palmgreen and James Rayburn extended the uses and gratifications theory by examining the motivations and satisfactions related to television viewing. Their study identified key gratifications like entertainment, relaxation, and social interaction. They also emphasized the role of individual differences, such as personality and demographics, in influencing television use and gratification.

These scholars, alongside others who have advanced the Uses and Gratification theory, have significantly shaped the theory and its application across different fields. Their research has been pivotal in enhancing our comprehension of users' choices in consuming and interacting with social media content and how these platforms affect their political behaviors and engagement.

2.8 Assumption and Uses of Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT):

Uses and gratifications theory is based on two principles regarding media users. First, it views media users as actively choosing the media they consume, rather than

passively engaging with it. They are involved and driven in their media choices. Second, individuals understand their reasons for selecting various media options, using their awareness of motivations to choose media that fulfill their specific desires and needs.

Based on these principles, uses and gratifications theory presents five assumptions:

1. Media use is goal-directed. People are motivated to consume media. According to the Uses and Gratification theory, the audience is crucial and determines what is desired from the medium in all cases (Egede & Chuks-Nwosu, 2013).
2. Media is selected based on the expectation that it will satisfy specific needs and desires. Two major questions form the basis of the theory: 1) why are people attracted to certain media? and 2) what kind of satisfaction does media provide for people? (Mehrad & Tajer 2016). The two questions posed in “ Use and Gratification ” will eventually define the benefits and drawbacks of using particular media opined Balakrishnan and Loo (2012).
3. Media influence on behavior is filtered through social and psychological factors. Thus, personality and social context impact the media choices one makes and one's interpretation of media messages.

The question in Katz (1959) is not, “What do the media do to people?” but rather “What do people do with the media?”

4. Media competes with other forms of communication for an individual's attention. For example, a person may choose to have an in-person conversation about an issue instead of watching a documentary about it.
5. People are usually in control of media and therefore are not particularly influenced by it.

Uses and gratifications theory stresses the power of the individual over the power of the media. Individual differences mediate the relationship between media and their effects. This results in media effects being driven as much by the media user as by the media content itself. So, even if people take in the same media message, each individual will not be impacted by the message in the same way.

Uses of the Uses and Gratification theory(UGT):

Users engage actively in communication and utilize media to accomplish specific objectives. Theorists suggest that a media user selects a source that best fulfills their needs, with the assumption that alternative options are available to meet those needs.

(Katz,Gurevitch, and Haas,

1973) classified the uses and

gratifications theory into some needs,such as

affective,cognitive,personal,integrative, and tension-free needs(Bracken & Lombard,2001) .

Theorists indicates that media usage goals can be categorized into five Needs :

* Cognitive Needs

* Affective Needs

* Personal Integrative Needs

* Social Integrative Needs * Tension free Needs

Cognitive Needs :

People use media to gain knowledge, information, and facts. Within the audience, some individuals have a strong desire for intellectual and academic learning, which is relatively uncommon. People have varying needs; for instance, quiz shows on television provide factual knowledge, staying informed about current events

requires regular news viewing, and search engines on the internet are popular because they allow easy access to information on any topic at any time.

Affective Needs:

It encompasses various emotions, pleasures, and moods of individuals. People use media, such as television, to fulfill their emotional needs. A prime example is when viewers become emotional or even cry during a sad scene in a movie or soap opera.

Personal Integrative Needs:

This pertains to the need for self-esteem. Individuals use media to affirm their status, gain credibility, and achieve stability. By watching television, they reassure themselves of their respectable societal standing. For instance, advertisements for jewelry, furniture, and apparel influence people to purchase these items to enhance their lifestyle. Thus, media plays a role in facilitating this process.

Social Integrative Needs:

It includes the necessity to connect with family, friends, and others in society. Currently, instead of meeting in person on weekends, people tend to use social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr to fulfill their social needs. Additionally, individuals might begin watching a specific program not out of personal interest but because a neighbor or friend watches it, providing them with a common topic for discussion.

Tension free Needs:

People often turn to media as a way to escape reality and alleviate stress. For instance, they find relaxation in watching television, listening to the radio, or

browsing the internet. Media captivates audiences by emotionally engaging them with situations and characters.

In summary, these uses are specific in nature to the individual and how the media satisfies the need is subjective. For example, some people may watch the news to relax while others may get tensed or agitated by the same. The media is the same, but people use it for different needs.

2.9 Criticism of the Uses and Gratification theory:

The uses and gratifications theory focuses on how audiences actively interact with media content according to their preferences and needs, rather than the media's effects on individuals. Although people choose what to watch, listen to, or read, the media influences these choices through its policies. The theory also recognizes that media consumption can be routine and indiscriminate, particularly when access to varied media sources is limited. The impact of socio-cultural background, social class, and peer groups on program selection is acknowledged, with people often watching without critically analyzing the content. In some cases, such as during football matches, the media's presentation of content limits individual influence over their preferences, highlighting the complex interplay between audience choice and media influence.

According to Atawura (2010) While individuals have the right to choose, the options presented are frequently curated by the media, adding a layer of complexity to the relationship between media and audience in determining both what and how is consumed.

Media hegemony advocates criticize the uses and gratifications theory for overly asserting that individuals have complete freedom in selecting media and their interpretations. Audiences interpret media based on personal perspectives, and arguments for or against this can be validly made, with outcomes varying by context. The impact of each person's actions is entirely situation-dependent. Medacine (2013) Argues that, Uses and gratifications theory does not properly account for these natural occurrences but does hold a valid argument that each individual has unique uses to which the media attempts to meet their gratifications. Morley (1992) argues that the data supporting the theory is difficult to extrapolate and, at times, unavailable. It is extremely difficult to predict how each audience, individual, and group perceives a given media outlet.

A significant issue is the desired interpretation of material by media, producers, and editors. Reports on a new restaurant might be seen as a threat to local businesses, though they were meant to highlight the community's success.

2.10 The relevance of the Uses and Gratification theory to the study:

The theory is relevant to this research, As it examines the reasons and methods by which people utilize social media for political discourse. Within this study's framework, applying the user and gratification theory to social media and citizen engagement provides crucial understanding of how individuals use digital platforms for personal satisfaction and political activity. This theory offers a perspective to comprehend why users decide to engage with social media content and how these platforms affect their political actions and involvement. In the realm of social media, User Gratification Theory explains 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.

In analyzing citizens' engagement in political processes, the Uses and Gratifications theory shows how social media users interact with political content to fulfill their need for information. Social media acts as a venue where users can find news articles, opinion pieces, and engage in political discussions. People can customize their media intake to receive information that matches their political views, thereby reinforcing their current beliefs. Additionally, when it comes to political discourse, social media enables interactions with political figures and organizations, allowing users to get real-time updates, participate in discussions, and express their opinions. User Gratification Theory also comes into play when understanding how social media enhances political engagement through social interaction. Social media platforms enable users to join political groups, participate in online discussions, and share their perspectives with a global audience. This dynamic interactivity satisfies users' needs for social engagement and empowerment, fostering a sense of participation and connection to larger political conversations.

Entertainment, a significant factor in User Gratification Theory, intersects with political engagement on social media. Users are often attracted to engaging and entertaining political content, like satirical videos, memes, and political humor. This content not only entertains but also influences users' views on political matters and personalities.

According to Mojave & Aondover, (2022) 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.

The theory clearly grants users direct authority, facilitating the deduction of how citizens were mobilized through social media to join the Obidient movement. By applying this theory to examine the obedient movement, we can understand how and why social media facilitated its level of citizens engagement in political processes and enabled it to share opinions with a broader audience, and influenced policy discussions and political discourse.

According to Cantril,(1942).Early in the history of communications research, an approach was developed to study the gratifications that attract and hold audiences to the kinds of media and the types of content that satisfy social and psychological needs.

In summary, the Uses and Gratification theory is relevant to the study as it helped analyze how the Obidients utilized social media to gather political support by framing messages, engaging with the public, forming alliances and coalitions with other civil society organizations sharing their objectives, and organizing personnel and resources.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the population of the study, sample size and sampling techniques, Instruments for data collection, validity and reliability, Research Design, sources of data, the ethical considerations, when the data was collected and the technique of data presentation and analysis.

3.2 Research Design

The survey method was employed in this study due to its effectiveness in gathering information from Lagos State, located in the western part of Nigeria, where the respondents were selected.

3.3 Sources of Data

To generate data for this study, both secondary and primary sources were used. The secondary data sources included journals, newspapers, textbooks, articles, and seminar papers obtained from the internet, while the primary data were sourced through interviews.

3.4 Population of the Study

The population of this study was the citizens representing the southwestern part of Nigeria, that is (Lagos State).

3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

For this study, a sample of 12 respondents was selected from Lagos State, representing the southwestern part of Nigeria. The purposive sampling technique was used, focusing on the peculiarity of the Obidient Movement.

3.6 Instruments for Data collection

In this study, data was collected through interviews.

3.7 Study- Area

The study area of this research is southwestern Nigeria, specifically Lagos State.

3.8 Validity and Reliability test

The primary data were verified using secondary data such as articles, newspapers, textbooks, and journals. To ensure reliability, respondents remained objective when answering the interview questions.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

For this study, the interviewer obtained informed consent from the respondents before interviewing them. Due to the sensitivity of the responses, the anonymity and confidentiality of some interviewees are ensured.

3.10 Duration of data collection (when)

The data collection took place between November 22nd, 2024 and December 5th, 2024.

3.11 The Technique of Data Presentation and Analysis

The data collected from the survey research were analyzed qualitatively through thematic analysis. This was done by grouping the responses of the interviewees into themes to appropriately answer the research questions raised at the beginning of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter three analyzed the research methods and procedures; this chapter focuses on presenting and analyzing data. The primary data collected will be analyzed using themes.

4.2 Data Analysis

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: What is the relationship between social media, political discourse and citizen's engagement in political processes?

To answer the first research question, the theme below will be examined based on the field data collected.

SOCIAL MEDIA AS A MEANS OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE AND CITIZEN 'S ENGAGEMENT FOR THE OBIDIANT MOVEMENT.

Most respondents used social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to stay updated on the movement. They preferred these platforms for real-time updates, easy information sharing and audience engagement.

Mercy, an interviewee from Lagos State, described social media as universal because almost everyone uses it today. It has played a crucial role in raising political awareness, increasing political discourse, and spreading information, successfully attracting a large audience for the Obidient movement. In her words:

“The Obidient movement showed us the possibility of political change. It wasn't just a campaign for a political party; it made us more conscious of politics and current

events. Everyone started talking on Twitter, even those who previously had little interest in politics.”

The response from the interview indicated that social media played a crucial role in informing people about the movement by providing essential information for the campaign. The Interview respondents emphasized that youths were motivated to join the Obidient movement due to the information and news circulating on social media, highlighting how powerful social media is in political discourse.

Mr. C, (name withheld) a respondent in the interview, told the interviewer that to mobilize his friends for the Obidient movement in Lagos, he used Twitter by retweeting posts about the ongoing protest and inviting friends through WhatsApp. He said;

"I mainly use Twitter, where I tweet and get opinions and views on the movement. I also used WhatsApp to post updates on my status and inform my friends about any information I could get concerning the election and the Obidient movement."

The Obidient movement shows the power of social media in influencing political discourse and informing supporters, thereby enhancing political awareness and citizen engagement. Nigerian youths were mobilized to participate in the movement through social media. Additionally, adults previously uninvolved in politics or elections were motivated by the information seen on social media concerning the Obidient movement to obtain their permanent voter cards and participate in the electoral process.

Mrs. K (name withheld), a respondent in the interview, told the interviewer how the activities of the Obidient movement on social media and the quest for political

change influenced her decision to participate in the 2023 general elections, despite never having voted before.

She said;

“ I have never voted before in my life. But because of the Obidient movement campaign on Facebook, I and my family members got our PVC to vote Peter Obi as the next president of Nigeria.”

Therefore, it is accurate to state that social media platforms were utilized to disseminate information among youths and globally, allowing people worldwide to learn about the Obidient movement, thereby promoting citizen engagement in the political process.

Furthermore, Research indicates that the Obidient movement, within a few months, disrupted the two major parties, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressive Congress (APC), and led to an unprecedented increase in voter registration. Nearly 10 million people registered as voters for the first time, with 84 percent being under 35 years old.

This was solely achieved through social media.

According to Mercy an interviewee, people were obviously convinced with the information they saw on social media which made them excited to engage in the elections. In her words:

“I noticed we had alot of first time voters even people in their 30s were first time voters which is interesting because we ’ ve had a medium of passing information which is through school and history as part of the curriculum yet people were still not interested in voting but now with social media people were seeing information

they hadn't seen before, they were excited to come out to vote and it showed that they were being convinced.”

The impact of the obedient movement shows the relationship between social media and political discourse, demonstrating how social media directly influences citizens' engagement in political processes.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: What is the role of social media in shaping political discourse and citizen's engagement in Nigeria?

To answer the second research question, the following themes will be examined based on the field data collected.

SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN INFLUENCE OF POLITICAL VIEWS OR OPTIONS FOR THE OBIDIENT MOVEMENT

Social media maintained the influence and reach of the Obidient movement through continuous interactions, posts and active online engagement. The widespread information online influenced not only Nigerians but also people worldwide, who began sharing their political views or opinions about the Obidient movement through social media.

Mr. C, one of the interviewees, told the researcher that people rapidly shared their opinions on social media. Broadcast channels were also swift in disseminating information about the movement. If he needed any details about the Obidient movement, he simply had to use his phone to search on social media. Quoting him;

“People were so quick to share their opinions online. The obidient movement didn’t influence Nigerians alone, people from other countries also shared their options on social media. Even international news channels carried it.

If you needed any information on the movement all you had to do was to search on any social media platform.”

Furthermore, social media played a crucial role in shaping how information about the Obidient movement was shared. Much of the news broadcast on television, radio, and in newspapers was primarily sourced from social media. Political TV programs and debates that covered the movement heavily relied on insights gained from social media to understand its essence and objectives. Without social media, they would have lacked a comprehensive understanding of the movement and its purpose.

Mercy, an interviewee from Lagos State, discussed with the researcher on how most local television channels broadcast programs about the Obidient movement, focusing their discussions on content sourced from social media. In her words:

“Without social media, Television stations would not have had a clue of what was happening in Nigeria concerning the Obidient movement.

Their political discussions were based on social media posts.”

The Obidient movement effectively utilized social media to instill a sense of urgency and significance regarding the election.

Supporters shared information on social media about the importance of voting and the necessity for change in Nigeria's political scene. This greatly influenced people's views, especially among Nigerians in Lagos state and it also directly increased political discourse among the people. Social media helped them understand the

significance of voting and how their votes could change the country's political scene.

Temi an interviewee from Lagos state stated that social media greatly increased the number of people actively involved in politics, whether as candidates, supporters, or voters and this was directly influenced by the Obidient movement on social Media. In his words,

“The obidient movement made people around me who were never interested in voting or being a part of anything politics begin to reconsider and it was because of the trends they saw Twitter....it definitely got their attention. My friends around me started talking about voting and how it could really change the situation of things in the country.”

The interactions on social media clearly show that social media shaped political discourse and the views or opinions of people during the Obidient movement, demonstrating how social media can shape political discourse and citizen’s engagement in Nigeria.

SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL FOR PROMOTING POLITICAL PROPAGANDA DURING THE OBIDIANT MOVEMENT.

Social media was crucial in spreading political propaganda during Nigeria's 2023 general elections. Candidates and their supporters utilized platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to influence narratives and enhance the attractiveness of their messages to a broad audience. The leading political parties effectively used social media to gain momentum and engage with the public.

However, social media facilitated the dissemination of false information and propaganda, as some candidates and their supporters employed fake news and various tactics to undermine their opponents.

One of the respondents Temi from Lagos state reported that Influencers were payed to promote candidates and parties and to share their contents on social media. In his words:

“It was actually cheaper to do campaign on social media than television or radio. So most political parties payed all this social media influencers to post about them. They used it to promote their party and also to bring down their opponents by spreading news and propaganda that can bring them down. Especially the ones in the forefront of the elections.... that was their strategy.”

Also, the use of inflammatory terms such as "Labouring in vain," "Obidiots," and "Obituary" to belittle and ridicule supporters of the Obidient movement was widespread on social media platforms. Conversely, the opponents were also targeted, with supporters of the All Progressive Party being accused of advancing an Islamic agenda by fielding candidates of the same religion in the presidential election all this was done using social media.

The role of social media in shaping narratives of the political campaigns is clearly obvious and it is intriguing to observe the effect it had on the election process. As another respondent Mercy noted that:

“The tribalism card was also played and several other propagandas which did affect me, though not to make me vote but to make me see how people are easily influenced by what they see social media...”

Political parties used propaganda and fake news on social media to undermine opinions during their campaigns. Although fake news spread rapidly, it did not deter the Obedient Movement supporters from demanding political change in the country. Social media has become an important element of political campaigns in Nigeria, significantly influencing political discussions and citizen engagement. According to this responses and observations, its role and impact are anticipated to increase in future elections beyond 2023.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3:What are the challenges faced in political discourse and citizen ' s engagement in Nigeria?

To answer the third research question, the following themes will be examined based on the field data collected.

SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL OF POLITICAL MOBILIZATION DURING THE OBIDENT MOVEMENT.

One major challenge faced in political discourse and engagement in Nigeria is the inability to mobilize citizens to engage in political processes. This is one limitation that has hindered the progress of politics in the country. The root of this major challenge can be traced to the dissatisfaction of the citizens with the government. Over the past decade, Nigeria has faced significant economic challenges and security threats, leading to widespread national discontent with major political parties that consistently fail to fulfill their promises. Peter Obi's candidacy and the Obident movement aimed to transform the country's political scene.

Through the movement which started on social media, it became more easy to create awareness concerning the movement and mobilize citizens to engage in the electoral process. Quoting a response gotten from the interview:

“ Social media actually helped to mobilize Nigerians. It brought everybody together, no matter where you were.... it brought everyone together under one umbrella through the different groups on social media.”

Nigerian citizens were primarily mobilized through social media, as many were active online, making it convenient to engage in the movement using their phones and data.

The responses from the interview indicated that online discourse and interactions were effective, allowing individuals to advocate for their rights from home. This approach also addressed distance issues, enabling participation without the need for travel.

According to Mrs k, a respondent:

“I don’t think we would have been able to communicate well without social media, except through phone calls but that would have been too slow because most social media platforms like Twitter, WhatsApp and Facebook helped us to communicate fast and we knew what was happening and where we were to meet “

Social media erased several limitations in mobilization especially distance. It also enabled individuals who lacked the courage to speak out or be active in person to express their opinions online.

According to Mr C, mobilization was done offline but it was very much effective because of the information on social media In his words:

“So I participated offline because that was the best way I thought was possible so what I did for myself was... i didn’t attend rallies but I made sure the company I worked at participated during the elections.

What I did was to let them know we had to be patriotic. I sighted examples on how we needed to go out and get our PVC regardless of what party you want to vote for and the information on social media also helped me to convince them.

I needed to participate in offline mobilization for this thing to happen. The small community I had was my family my friends and the company I worked at.

luckily for us we were able to get two days off for us to get our PVCs.”

This mobilization through the use of social media eventually led to a significant turnout of citizens on Election Day, demonstrating the ripple effect of online engagement.

SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL USED TO GAIN TRUST AMONG THE YOUTHS DURING THE OBIDIENT MOVEMENT

Social media was used by youths as a tool to express their dissatisfaction with the current ruling parties this dissatisfaction as expressed online comes from their disconnect with the needs and aspirations of the youths. Several posts were shared on social media about the actions of the current ruling parties over the years which clearly shows that they do not care about the interests of the youths or even the country but are only concerned with controlling power without bringing about a lasting solution to the challenges that has constantly plagued the country.

During the 2023 election campaign the youths were primarily online, which facilitated gaining their trust since most of them were on social media where information about the movement was publicized. Their active social media engagement made it easy to earn their trust, as posts about the Obidient movement renewed hope for many youths. In turn, they shared these posts, allowing their

friends to see them, thereby helping the Obidient movement gain more trust and attention online.

According to Mercy a respondent:

“The obidient movement on social media brought out information we needed to be able to facilitate our offline engagement. so basically when you tried to do your research information was right in front of you.

They were really doing a lot of research, for instance someone may ask what has this person done? And they’ll bring out pictures even people that are still benefiting from the government of years ago were coming up to validate the candidate.”

The credibility of the obidient movement leadership was helped to win the trust of the youths. Peter Obi’s previous works like his former role as the governor of Anambra State, the impact he made and his focus on promoting creativity and innovation to boost national productivity won the heart of the youths.

The Obidient movement also earned the trust of young people by focusing on visionary and accountable leadership, which resonated with youths seeking a better future for Nigeria. The promise of a better and more accountable leadership brought back lost hope of a bright future for the country.

One of the respondent described the leadership of the movement in this words:

“Peter Obi was a breath of fresh air to the Nigerian politics.”

Another thing that helped the movement to gain the trust of the youths was Peter Obi’s dedication to effective governance which appealed to the young people who were frustrated with the corruption and inefficiency of past administrations. He emphasized transparency and proper accountability in governance as the solution to the corrupt practice in the Nigerian politics. This challenges that limited political discourse and citizen’s engagement in political processes were resolved through the

use of social media as it resulted to a Large turn out of youths who took part in the 2023 elections.

RESEARCH QUESTION 4:To what extent has social media shaped political discourse and citizen' s engagement in political process, with a focus on the 2023 Obidient movement in Lagos state, Nigeria?

To answer the third research question, the following themes will be examined based on the field data collected.

SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL OF UNITY AMONG THE YOUTHS IN THE OBIDIENT MOVEMENT.

Nigeria, a nation with various ethnic groups, faces challenges related to ethnicity, tribalism, and religion. It might have seemed that organizing the youth for the 2023 elections would be difficult due to these divisions. However, the interview carried out shows that the youth were united and this was largely because of social media. Social media turned out to be the tool that was used to unite the youths of Nigeria and also eliminate the several challenges that have been faced in elections in previous years.

According to Chioma a respondent from the interview, social media helped unite the youths who had a strong desire for a better Nigeria. In her words :

“ The Obidient movement was pushed by young people who wanted a change. I feel like the obidient movement was not just about Peter Obi. It was about a desire to see a better future for Nigeria.

The constant retweets on Twitter, posts that were shared on Instagram made me conclude that if anyone else had this vision, the youths would have been behind that person too.

Obidient movement was synonymous to saying Nigerians must Obey or Nigeria must become better, that's basically what was posted all over social media." With the above response it is safe to say that

the desire for a better Nigeria united the youths behind the movement. The youths used social media platform like Twitter, Instagram and Facebook to experience themselves and share their opinions on decline in living standards, the constant threats to life and property due to insecurity, and other longstanding challenges in the country. This interactions on social media began to build a desire to change the country's narrative. It also led the youths to stand united under the Obidient movement. They finally saw a leader who prioritized Nigeria's interests over his own and with the help of social media they were able to stand with him and express support for the movement. According to a respondent in the Interview, Peter Obi knew what he wanted to accomplish as the president and he was willing to use every means within his disposal to make Nigerians see that he could take the country to a better place. He used social media to share videos of himself speaking passionately about his intentions. In her words:

" I first saw him in a viral video post in 2019. I think it was the electional debate, he was very eloquent. And when he spoke I was sold! You could tell he knew exactly what he was saying and he had a plan to move Nigeria forward. Fast forward to 2023 I was wowed to see him again on an Instagram post.

he was coming up again and I was convinced he would be able to take Nigeria to the next level.” It was so evident that the 2023 Obidient movement was for a just cause so the youths didn't care about what ethnic group or tribe they belonged to. Through several videos and pictures of the Obidient movement flying around social media they were convinced that their engagement was for a good cause. This was actually the point where social media came in as a tool for unity.

According to a respondent who participated in the movement in Lagos, he said the accessibility of information on social media by the youths really helped in building the movement. Social media was used to create a community of people driven by a common goal which was a better Nigeria. It was clear that having the same goal strengthened their unity. The youths began to share their personal views, opinions and personal experiences and it brought about a sense of belonging as it brought everyone together. In his words,

“Social media was actually a major tool for the movement.

Communities on social media gave us the platforms to share personal experiences with each other and our expectations for the elections....there was this oneness amongst us”

From the response above we can say that social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram helped to a large extent in shaping political discourse and citizen 's engagement in political processes. Even the features on social media like online communities helped to bring about unity among the Nigeria youths in the 2023 elections.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE USE OF HASHTAGS AS A TOOL OF SUSTENANCE FOR THE OBIDIENT MOVEMENT.

During the 2023 Nigerian general elections, the Obidient movement used various hashtags on social media to promote their cause and mobilize support. Some of the popular hashtags were used on various social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp and TikTok which had a strong presence on social media with many supporters using the hashtags such as #obidients, #peterObi4President2023, #OBIdent ,#PeterObi amongs others to share updates,news and personal stories.

The use of this hashtags on social media helped to sustain the actives of the movement online as several trends kept coming up which had so much engagement. In an interview with a respondent in Lagos state, he said,

“ The major strategy that was used on social media was Hashtags, #Obidients , #PeterObi4President2023, #takebackNigeria, Hashtags was the major strategy.”

The use of Hashtags helped consolidate information and to unify online presence. Youths were posting on social media under the hashtag #Obidients and the main purpose it was used was to make it easier to search for information about the movement on any social media platforms. Another respondent from the Interview commented that,

“ The strategy that was used was the Obidient Hashtag, it helped to actually popularize the movement...so if you Just go on Facebook and type # you ’ ll see a community of obidient movement that you could join “

According to a respondent from the interview, aside from the use of hashtags, groups were also created on social media especially on WhatsApp where information was disseminated. Twitter was actually the major platform where the online campaign took place yet other social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook were used because of those who weren't active on Twitter. Several groups were created on these social media platforms to help the coordination and effective dissemination of information. The hashtags were also used in these groups created. In her words: "Even though Twitter was the major platform used then, other groups on WhatsApp and Facebook were created to help those that were not active on Twitter... just so they're not left out."

Also, the creation of groups on Facebook and WhatsApp was a form of accountability and transparency as the activities on Twitter was constantly posted on the groups.

This helped in sustaining the movement and brought about a form of trust in the movement.

Discussion of Findings

It was discovered that the difficulties youths encountered while using social media to promote the Obidient movement was misinformation or the spreading of false news. Based on the findings from the interview it was revealed that some individuals, backed by the opposition parties, used social media to disrupt the efforts of the Obidient campaign by spreading fake news or misinformation concerning the movement on social media.

This was done in an attempt to scatter the movement or create discord among the youths and to also discredit the party. It was a situation of social media being used negatively by the opposition parties and positively by the youths.

The findings from the research also showed that sharing a common goal and experiencing challenges together as a country can unite the people. Ethnicity, tribalism, and religion didn't affect the obedient movement because the youths aimed at bringing a lasting change in Nigeria. This was the basis of their unity during the Obedient movement, which later blossomed with the use of social media. Although Nigerians may differ in various aspects, the struggle of the country united them and the obedient movement through social media created a sense of togetherness.

Also it was discovered that the youths who had zero interest in politics took part in political discourse. This was because of their constant engagement on social media and the obedient movement which exposed them to information concerning politics and the Nigerian political landscape which about several political discourse and interactions on social media.

Lastly, it was discovered that the obedient movement had the highest citizen's engagement especially from the youths in the electoral process. The support gotten from youths on social media and even offline was the first of its kind as the election witnessed the highest number of citizen's engagement recorded in the history of Nigeria election. This high level of engagement was achieved with the use of social media to create political awareness among the youths.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter consists of the summary, the conclusion and the recommendation of the entire research work.

Summary

This research explores the role of social media in shaping political discourse and citizen ' s engagement in political processes in the 2023 general elections using the Obidient movement as a case study while focusing on the southwestern Nigeria, specifically Lagos State. Earlier chapters of this research included a detailed analysis of scholarly views on the subject and an examination of both dependent and independent variables. The theoretical framework was based on the Uses and Gratification theory and the Six degrees of separation theory.

The researcher examined how social media was utilized and weaponized by youths to organize the Obidient movement and maintain its momentum. The study explored the strategies employed on social media for mobilizing and sustaining the movement , highlighting the complex relationship between social media, political discourse and citizen's engagement during the movement, as well as the challenges faced by organizers in using social media for this purpose.

Conclusion

The challenges encountered in political discourse and citizen's engagement in political processes in Nigeria has been existing for a long period. Despite being a longstanding issue, the 2023 general elections which ushered in the Obidient

movement marked the first large-scale political discourse and citizen's engagement in Nigeria. While using social media for political campaigns in Nigeria isn't new, the Obidient movement demonstrated its effective use and highlighted new facets of social media. This study examines how social media was used as a tool for promoting political discourse and citizen's engagement in political processes and provides insight into the challenges faced when using social media.

Contribution to Knowledge

This research significantly adds to the current literature on social media, political discourse and citizen's engagement in politics in southwestern Nigeria, particularly regarding the 2023 general elections and the Obidient movement. Although prior studies exist, this work provides an in-depth analysis of the relationship between social media and its role in shaping political discourse and citizen's engagement, exploring how social media supported and maintained the Obidient movement and the challenges faced by its organizers. This study could serve as a foundational reference for future research exploring similar themes.

Recommendations

Based on the critical evaluation of the study's findings, the researcher recommends that both the government and the youths work to enhance the efficient and effective use of social media for promoting political discourse and citizen's engagement in politics.

1. The government should create a supportive environment where social media can be used effectively for purposes beyond political discourse and citizen's engagement .

2. The government should utilize social media to involve youths in political and governmental activities in the country.
3. The government should enact a law to punish people for spreading false information, and it should be fully enforced.
4. Youths should prioritize educating themselves and others about media literacy, emphasizing the importance of analyzing and verifying information before sharing it.
5. Youths should avoid promoting any form of division or conflict based on ethnicity, tribalism, or religion, instead fostering a sense of unity.
6. Youths should not allow themselves to be used as instruments of destruction by politicians, as some have allowed themselves to be used in the past.

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APPENDIX INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
DEPARTEMENT OF
POLITICAL
SCIENCE FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERISTY OF BENIN
LETTER OF CONSENT TO PARTICIPANTS

I am final years' students in the above stated institution carrying out a research on the role of social media in shaping political discourse and citizen's engagement in the 2023 Obidient movement in Nigeria, particularly in Lagos state. I need your assistance towards providing the needed data for this research work.

Yours Faithfully

Researcher

Ngozi Grace OKERE

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1) Can you explain your social media habits during the 2023 Obidient movement?

1b) Which platforms did you use most often and why?

2)How did you interact with political discussions on social media during the movement?

2b)

Did you join online conversations, share posts, or create content about the movement?

70

3)Did social media

affect your political views or

opinions during the movement? If so, what specific content or interactions impacted you? 4) How did social media contribute to mobilizing supporters

during the Obidient movement? 4b) Were there specific social media campaigns or hashtags you participated in or found effective?

5) What challenges or limitations did you face using social media to engage with the movement? For example, did you encounter misinformation, online harassment, or technical issues?

6) How did your social media experience during the movement compare to your experience with traditional media, such as television, radio, or print newspapers?

6b) How did demographic and socio-economic factors, such as age, income, or education level, influence social media use and engagement during the movement?

7) Did your social media engagement during the movement translate to offline engagement, such as attending rallies or voting? If so, how did social media facilitate this transition?

8) What lessons can be learned from the role of social media in the 2023 Obidient movement, and how campaigns in Nigeria?