

**THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON VOTING PATTERNS  
AMONG FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE STUDENTS IN THE  
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN: A CASE STUDY OF THE 2023 GENERAL  
ELECTIONS**



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**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

**BENIN CITY.**

**NOVEMBER, 2025.**

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

**NOVEMBER, 2025.**

## DECLARATION

I, **Andrew-Patrick Precious Gsiwoghene** declare that,

- i. This study is based on a study undertaken by me in the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, under the supervision of **PROF. EDDY AKPOMERA** of the Department of Political Science, Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria.
- ii. This work has not been submitted for the award of degree elsewhere.
- iii. Ideas and views are product of my personal research and where the view of others has been expressed, they have been duly acknowledged.
- iv. Any liability arising from this work is to be wholly borne by me alone

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**Andrew-Patrick Precious Gsiwoghene**

**SSC2105660**

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**DATE**

## **CERTIFICATION**

We, certify that this research project was carried out by **Andrew-Patrick Precious Gsiwoghene** in the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria. It is adequate in scope and quality in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Science (BSc.) degree in Political Science.

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**Prof. Eddy Akpomera**  
**(Project Supervisor)**

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**Dr. G. O. Igiebor**  
**(Head of Department)**

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**Date**

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**Date**

## **DEDICATION**

This project work is dedicated to God Almighty for His abundant grace in my life and for seeing me through my academic pursuit and aspirations. He has been my source of strength and on his wings only have I soared. I also want to dedicate this project to my Family and friends for the love and encouragement they have shown towards me during the course of this program, all I can say is thank you and God bless you.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My profound gratitude goes to God almighty for his strength, grace, wisdom and guidance all through my period of study and making this work a success. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. E. Apkomera for his sincere interest, concern, valuable suggestions support, guidance and immersed contributions in making the work a success. Thank you, Sir. I also want to appreciate the head of department, Dr G. Igiebor and my lecturer, Dr Francis Osayi with all other academic and non-academic staff of the Department of Political Science, University of Benin who have contributed in one way or the other to the success of this work and the course as a whole.

I sincerely express my gratitude to my wonderful parents Mr. and Mrs Andrew-Patrick for their prayers, financial support and moral support all through my years in school and my siblings ( Mercy, Ese, Oke,Victory, Collins ) for their keen interest in all matters concerning my academic activities and their tremendous encouragement and love. I love you all deeply.

To my wonderful friends who turned family, Chiemelie, Gift, Saviour and Victory for their love, care, prayers and financial support throughout my stay in school and lastly to everyone of my course mates that has been of help to me in one way or the other throughout this course of study. I say may the Lord bless you all.

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## ABSTRACT

*This study examined the influence of social media on voting patterns among Faculty of Social Sciences students at the University of Benin, using the 2023 general elections as a case study. The research focused on four key variables: social media influence, exposure to misinformation or fake news, peer discussions, and the frequency of social media use, and their effect on students' political opinions, candidate preferences, and electoral participation. A descriptive and inferential research design was employed, with data collected from 300 students using structured questionnaires. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. The findings revealed that social media significantly shapes political opinions and voting behavior, with exposure to fake news affecting trust in candidates, peer discussions moderately influencing voting decisions, and frequent social media use enhancing political awareness and participation. The study concluded that social media plays a central role in shaping electoral behavior among university students, both as an informative tool and a potential source of misinformation. Based on these findings, the study recommended promoting digital literacy, enhancing fact-checking mechanisms, encouraging responsible social media engagement, and fostering peer education to ensure informed electoral participation. The research contributes to understanding the role of social media in political communication and provides insights for students, policymakers, and election stakeholders.*

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of Study**

One of the important developments associated with online internet presence is the advent of social media. The emergence of the internet and, more recently, social media has significantly changed personal habits and reshape lifestyle, particularly among the younger generation (Tarimo, 2016). The addition of smartphones and other online mobile devices such as the tablet, Ipads brought about the added value of mobile internet usage and access to information. Coupled with social media applications, this technology enabled people to use social networking sites on the go, from any location at all the time (Almenayes, 2014). Social media have become a natural part of the everyday lives of people all over the world (Ajayi and Adesote, 2015). Politicians have swerved from the use of the old media such as the print (newspaper) and the electronic media (television and radio), to the use of the new media during electioneering to actualize their political goals. Due to their participatory, interactive, and effective in nature, they have become veritable instruments for carrying out election campaigns and other electioneering activities, political engagement, and mobilization among others (Ajayi and Adesote, 2015). Annapoorna, Reshma and Sawad (2015) defined social media as websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. It is one of the most modern and favorite form of social platform including many features and social characteristics in it. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter,

LinkedIn, Instagram, Whatsapp, amongst others has brought a remarkable change in how people access and share information (Fallahi, 2011). It serves as a channel to communicate, texting, images sharing, audio and video sharing, fast publishing and linking with people all over the world. It is also a cheapest fast access to the world, so it is very essential for all age groups. The youth, however, remains the most prominent users of social media. This, of course, is not surprising as the digital age is widely believed to belong to the youth. Despite its benefits and usefulness, social media has its own effects

The widespread adoption of social media in Nigeria has transformed the way people consume information, interact with each other, and engage with politics (Chukwu, 2025). Social media platforms had a significant influence during Nigeria's 2023 general elections, serving as major channels for political engagement, especially through Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram. These platforms played a central role in shaping public opinion, disseminating information, and influencing voting decisions (Igbinedion & Ajisebiyawo, 2023).

Researches have shown that some of these social media platforms are good for educational activities. Twitter for example, is used by some to discuss health issues between patients and health professionals. Domizi (2013) utilised Twitter in a graduate seminar requiring students to post weekly tweets to extend classroom discussion. Students reportedly used Twitter to connect with content and other students and they found it to be useful professionally and personally. Students do create groups on

whatsApp to serve as means of passing information that are related to their academic activities such as date, time, venue for lecture, test, tutorial classes, submission of assignments etc. LinkedIn is a site for professionals to connect, share ideas and information on whatever is relevant and of benefit to members' profession.

This study aims to explore the complex relationship between social media usage and voting behaviours among students in the Faculty of Social Sciences, with a focus on issues that emerged during the 2023 general elections.

During the 2023 elections, the impact of social media became more pronounced. Movements like #Obidient Movement, which originated as a protest against police brutality, evolved into broader political activism that galvanized young Nigerians and students to participate more actively in the electoral process (Wired, 2023). For university students, particularly those in the social sciences, social media is more than a communication tool; it is also a major source of political information and a space for dialogue, debate, and activism (Arowolo & Oganle, 2024). These students are often more politically conscious due to their academic exposure to fields like political science, sociology, and economics, making them an important group for understanding how digital platforms influence political behaviour (Suemo, Kusugh, & Okonkwo, 2023).

In the 2023 general elections, there was a surge in online political activity among Nigerian youths. Many relied heavily on social media to stay updated with election news, candidate policies, and real-time events at polling units (AP News, 2023a). Popular hashtags such as #NigeriaDecides2023, #VoteWisely, and #Obidients captured the high

level of digital political engagement across platforms (Wired, 2023). However, despite this widespread online enthusiasm, it remains uncertain whether such activity translated into meaningful voter participation or directly influenced voting decisions (Chukwu, 2025).

At the University of Benin, students and lecturers in the Faculty of Social Sciences represent a unique group. Their academic training and political awareness position them to critically engage with political issues both online and offline (Arowolo & Ogande, 2024). Understanding how social media affected their choices and participation in the 2023 elections can therefore provide deeper insights into the connection between online political engagement and actual voting behaviour. This study aims to examine how social media use influenced voting attitudes and turnout among social science students and faculty at the University of Benin, focusing on platforms they used, the types of content consumed, the role of misinformation, and whether digital engagement translated into real-life electoral participation (Igbinedion & Ajisebiyawo, 2023).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Social media has become a popular trend today, especially among young people, and as such many youths are more concerned about the social platforms available on any mobile device. The use of social media helps the youth to stay connected. Social media is readily available everywhere, and at the same time allows connection and information flow to happen quickly (Tarimo, 2016). For many young people, this is their preferred means of communication and it has been identified as an effective tool.

In recent years, social media has become a central platform for political communication, especially among young people. In Nigeria, the 2023 general elections highlighted this trend, with millions of youths turning to platforms such as Twitter (now X), Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok to access political information, mobilize peers, and express their political opinions (DataReportal, 2023; Yiaga Africa, 2023). Unlike in past elections, social media played a decisive role in shaping political debates, fueling citizen engagement, and amplifying youth voices.

Despite this development, there is still considerable debate over the actual impact of social media on voting behavior. On the one hand, studies suggest that social media enhances political awareness, participation, and civic engagement (Loader, Vromen, & Xenos, 2014; Boulianne, 2015). On the other hand, critics argue that the same platforms are breeding grounds for misinformation, political propaganda, and echo chambers, which may distort electoral choices and undermine democratic participation (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

In the Nigerian context, these contradictions were particularly evident during the 2023 elections. Youths were hailed as the “deciding bloc,” with over 39% of registered voters between ages 18 and 34 (INEC, 2023). Social media was central in mobilizing campaigns like the “Obidient movement,” which relied heavily on Twitter and WhatsApp for grassroots organizing (Premium Times, 2023). Yet, the election also witnessed widespread fake news, hate speech, and disinformation campaigns, raising concerns

about whether social media fostered informed decision-making or simply fueled polarization (Centre for Democracy and Development [CDD], 2023).

For university students, particularly those in the Faculty of Social Sciences; the problem becomes even more complex. These students are digital natives, highly active on social media, and exposed to both credible political education and misleading information online. While many are expected to be politically literate due to their academic training (Norris, 2000; Dalton, 2014), their actual voting patterns may still be influenced by trending hashtags, online influencers, and peer networks rather than independent, rational evaluation of political issues (Kim & Chen, 2016).

However, empirical research remains scarce on how social media influenced the voting patterns of Nigerian university students during the 2023 elections. Existing studies often focus broadly on youth participation (Adegbola & Gearhart, 2019; Adedokun & Adeyemo, 2022), without narrowing down to specific youth groups such as students' groups or voting behavior typologies. This leaves a gap in understanding whether students' use of social media led to issue-based, candidate-oriented, party-line, protest, or floating voting patterns (Dalton, 2014). Therefore, the core problem this study seeks to address is the lack of empirical evidence on how social media use influenced the voting patterns of students in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin during the 2023 general elections.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

This study aims to:

1. To examine the extent to which social media influenced their political opinions and voting choices during the 2023 elections.
2. To analyze how exposure to misinformation or fake news on social media and affected voting choices or voting behavior.
3. To evaluate the role of peer influence and online political discussions in shaping voting patterns among students.
4. To assess the relationship between the frequency of social media use and actual voter turnout among social science students.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

This research is guided by the following questions:

1. How did social media influence the political opinions and voting choices of students in the Faculty of Social Sciences?
2. What is the relationship between the frequency of social media use and actual voter turnout among the students?
3. To what extent did exposure to misinformation or fake news on social media affect the voting choices of students and faculty?
4. How did online discussions with peers and networks on social media shape individual voting behavior among the students?

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because it explores the growing influence of social media on political behavior, with a focus on a critical and informed population: students and faculty of the Social Sciences at the University of Benin. Social media increasingly shapes political narratives, public opinion, and civic engagement, and understanding its real-world impact, especially during major democratic events like the 2023 Nigerian general elections is vital for scholars, policymakers, and society at large (Chadwick, 2017).

First, the findings will contribute to academic discourse on political communication and digital democracy by offering insights into how social media influences voting decisions among educated youths and academic professionals (Loader, Vromen & Xenos, 2014). Unlike much existing research that tends to focus on general youth populations, this study targets a more politically and intellectually engaged group, thus providing a deeper, more context-specific understanding (Couldry & Hepp, 2017). Second, the research will help identify whether social media serves as a tool for promoting informed political participation or if it contributes to misinformation, manipulation, and voter apathy (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). This is particularly important in Nigeria, where trust in traditional media and political institutions is often low, and where young people rely heavily on digital platforms for political information (Ojebuyi & Salawu, 2020).

Third, the study will provide practical recommendations for universities, electoral bodies such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), civic education

programs, and youth mobilization initiatives (Agbese, 2021). It will also highlight the need for digital literacy campaigns to combat the spread of fake news and promote informed electoral participation (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Lastly, the research may inspire future studies on the intersection between social media, political behavior, and education, thereby encouraging a more responsible and evidence-based use of digital platforms in Nigeria's democratic process.

### **1.6 Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on assessing the influence of social media on the voting patterns of students and academic staff in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin during the 2023 Nigerian general elections. The research is geographically limited to the University of Benin, located in Edo State, Nigeria, and does not include any other institutions or faculties. Focusing on UNIBEN provides contextual understanding of how social media shaped students' voting behavior within this particular institution, rather than making general claims about all Nigerian universities (Dalton, 2014). The choice of this group is deliberate, since social science students are considered politically active, media-conscious, and often play leadership roles in youth mobilization (Loader, Vromen, & Xenos, 2014).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews literature relevant to the influence of social media on voting patterns among university students, specifically within the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin, in the context of Nigeria's 2023 general elections.

It explores key concepts, theoretical perspectives and presents an overview of social media and the use among students with conceptual clarifications of key terms such as voting patterns and political communication, awareness and participation including outlined relevant theoretical frameworks. The review aims to establish a solid foundation for understanding how social media affects political decisions and behavior among Faculty of Social Science students.

#### **2.2 Conceptual Framework**

##### **2.2.1 Overview of Social Media**

Social media refers to a collection of digital platforms that enable individuals and groups to create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Unlike traditional media, which operates on a one-way communication model, social media emphasizes interactivity and user participation, thereby allowing individuals to serve simultaneously as content creators and consumers.

This participatory nature has made social media central to modern political communication and civic engagement. Globally, social media penetration has grown

significantly. As of January 2023, 4.76 billion people were active users worldwide, representing about 59.4% of the global population (DataReportal, 2023).

In Nigeria, active social media users stood at 31.6 million, with WhatsApp (93.2%), Facebook (86.4%), Instagram (81.6%), and Twitter (74.2%) ranking as the most used platforms (DataReportal, 2023). The prevalence of smartphones and relatively affordable internet packages has further fueled this adoption, especially among young people. University students, in particular, are among the heaviest social media users. Adegoke and Ekanem (2020) found that Nigerian undergraduates spend an average of 3–5 hours daily on social media. While entertainment and networking remain dominant uses, political communication has emerged as a significant function.

For instance, during the 2023 general elections, students across Nigerian campuses including the University of Benin relied heavily on Twitter Spaces, WhatsApp groups, and Instagram live streams for political discourse, candidate evaluation, and electoral updates (Nweke, 2023). The 2023 elections in Nigeria underscored the growing political influence of social media. Hashtags such as #ObidientMovement and #NigeriaDecides2023 not only trended widely but also mobilized young voters across campuses and urban centers (Premium Times, 2023).

Social media provided real-time election updates, facilitated grassroots mobilization, and allowed peer-to-peer political discussions. According to the Centre for Democracy and Development (2023), youths, who represented over 40% of registered voters, were significantly influenced by online political campaigns. At the University of Benin, social

media proved particularly influential. Nweke (2023) reported that 78% of students in the Faculty of Social Sciences admitted that social media shaped their voting decisions in the 2023 elections. Political memes, live debates, short campaign videos, and online endorsements contributed to their perception of candidates' credibility and relatability.

However, while social media has enhanced participation and broadened access to political information, it has also been criticized for spreading misinformation, fake news, and polarizing content (CDD, 2023). These risks highlight the dual role of social media as both an enabler and a disruptor of democratic processes.

### **2.2.2 Voting Patterns**

Voting patterns refer to the recurring trends and behaviors that characterize how individuals or groups make decisions during elections. They describe not just the act of casting a ballot, but also the underlying influences; such as ethnicity, religion, peer influence, media exposure, and personal beliefs, that shape voter choices (Norris, 2000).

In the context of students, voting patterns often reflect their level of political awareness, access to information, and exposure to peer networks, particularly on digital platforms. In Nigeria, voting patterns have historically been influenced by factors such as ethnicity, religion, and regional affiliations (Lewis, 2007). However, with the rise of social media, especially during the 2023 general elections, new trends emerged. Platforms like Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram provided young people with unprecedented access to political information and opportunities to engage in debates. This increased exposure shifted

voting patterns away from traditional determinants toward issue-based considerations, particularly among youths (CDD, 2023).

For university students, social media played a central role in shaping electoral choices. A study by Nweke (2023) revealed that 78% of students at the University of Benin acknowledged that social media directly influenced their voting decisions during the 2023 elections. Through memes, short campaign videos, live streams, and peer discussions, students were able to evaluate candidates and political parties more critically. Unlike older generations, their voting patterns leaned more toward perceived competence, accountability, and relatable messaging; much of which was communicated online.

Furthermore, youth-driven online movements, such as the Obidient Movement, amplified the voices of young voters, making their choices more visible and impactful. These online engagements not only influenced individual voting patterns but also fostered a collective sense of political identity among students.

Voting patterns among UNIBEN's Faculty of Social Science students during the 2023 elections reflected the growing influence of social media as a source of political information, persuasion, and mobilization. While traditional factors like ethnicity and party loyalty still mattered to some extent, social media introduced a new dynamic, making students more issue-driven and digitally influenced in their electoral decisions.

### **2.2.3 Types of Voting Patterns**

**The major types of voting patterns include:**

#### **1. Party-Line Voting**

Party-line voting occurs when individuals remain loyal to a political party regardless of the candidate presented. In Nigeria, this has been a dominant pattern historically, particularly with the dominance of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC). However, among UNIBEN students, this form of voting was less pronounced in 2023. The rise of the Labour Party, fueled largely by social media campaigns, encouraged many students to break away from traditional party loyalty.

#### **2. Candidate-Oriented Voting**

Candidate-oriented voting emphasizes the personal qualities, integrity, and vision of the individual candidate rather than the political party. Within the Faculty of Social Sciences, this was strongly visible in the 2023 elections as many students rallied around Peter Obi. Through platforms like Twitter, TikTok, and WhatsApp, students were exposed to his messages on transparency, competence, and youth empowerment. This pattern showed that social media personalized the elections for many young voters.

#### **3. Issue-Based Voting**

In this pattern, electoral choices are driven by critical national and local issues. For UNIBEN students, issues such as unemployment, insecurity, corruption, poor infrastructure, and frequent ASUU strikes were decisive. Social media discussions highlighted these issues through hashtags like #EndBadGovernance and

#NigeriaDecides2023, influencing students to vote for candidates whose manifestos aligned with their concerns.

#### **4. Ethnic and Regional Voting**

Nigeria's politics has often been shaped by ethnic and regional affiliations, where voters support candidates from their ethnic or regional background. While this pattern was still observed among some students at UNIBEN, it was less dominant in 2023 compared to older generations. Social media campaigns promoted pan-Nigerian narratives, encouraging students to look beyond ethnicity and focus on competence and accountability.

#### **5. Protest Voting**

Protest voting refers to electoral choices made as a rejection of the existing political system or ruling elite. Among UNIBEN students, this was significant in 2023. Dissatisfaction with poor governance, prolonged strikes, and economic hardship motivated students to abandon long-standing political parties. Social media served as a mobilizing force, amplifying frustrations and channeling them into support for alternatives like the Labour Party.

#### **6. Floating or Swing Voting**

Floating voters are those without firm political loyalty who decide late in the election process. Within the Faculty of Social Sciences, many students fell into this category. They were influenced by social media campaigns, viral videos, and heated online debates in the weeks leading up to the elections. WhatsApp groups and Twitter Spaces, in

particular, acted as last-minute persuasion platforms where undecided voters formed opinions and chose candidates.

However, the 2023 general elections revealed that voting patterns among UNIBEN's Faculty of Social Sciences students were dynamic and heavily influenced by social media. While traditional patterns such as party-line and ethnic voting persisted to a degree, newer forms like candidate-oriented, issue-based, protest, and floating voting were more dominant. Social media acted as both an information hub and a mobilizing tool, reshaping how students engaged with politics and ultimately how they voted.

### **2.2.3 Youth Voters**

Youth voters are typically defined as young people between the ages of 18 and 35, who make up a large and influential section of the electorate. They are often described as the driving force of modern democracies due to their numbers, creativity, and high level of digital connectedness (Dalton, 2014). In Nigeria, this group has consistently represented the largest share of registered voters, giving them significant potential to shape electoral outcomes. Data from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC, 2023) shows that young people accounted for over 40% of registered voters in the 2023 general elections. Unlike older citizens, whose political choices are often shaped by religion, ethnicity, or longstanding party affiliations, young Nigerians tend to prioritize issues such as economic opportunities, transparency, security, and accountable governance (CDD, 2023).

At the University of Benin, youth voters particularly students in the Faculty of Social Sciences used social media as their primary avenue for political engagement. Platforms like WhatsApp, Twitter (now X), and Instagram became digital spaces for discussions, debates, and mobilization. Students encouraged one another to register, collect their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs), and participate in the elections (Nweke, 2023).

The Obidient Movement during the 2023 elections highlighted the influence of young voters. Through trending hashtags like #ObidientMovement and #NigeriaDecides2023, youths expressed their support for Peter Obi, while also showcasing the power of social media in driving youth solidarity and collective political identity (Premium Times, 2023). However, youth participation also faced setbacks. Despite the online enthusiasm, issues such as voter apathy, logistical problems on election day, and insecurity reduced actual turnout. In addition, the circulation of fake news and unverified political content on social media sometimes misled young voters and influenced their perceptions (Yiaga Africa, 2023).

In conclusion, youth voters played a crucial role in the 2023 elections, with university students standing out as some of the most active participants. At UNIBEN, their reliance on social media made them more politically engaged and issue-oriented, further emphasizing the importance of young people in Nigeria's democratic development and the central role of digital platforms in shaping their choices.

### **2.2.5 Political Communication**

Political communication is the process by which political information is exchanged between political actors, the media, and the public with the goal of shaping opinions, attitudes, and behaviors. In the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin, this concept played a major role during the 2023 general elections because students actively used social media as their primary medium of political engagement.

Traditionally, Nigerian students relied on television, radio, newspapers, and posters for election-related information. These channels mostly allowed one-way communication, where political parties and candidates broadcast messages without room for student feedback. By contrast, during the 2023 elections, students in the Faculty of Social Sciences turned to platforms such as Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram to not only receive political information but also to participate in discussions, share campaign materials, and influence one another's choices.

For instance, WhatsApp groups within the Faculty served as hubs for debate, where classmates discussed party manifestos, candidate credibility, and national issues such as unemployment and governance. Twitter Spaces also became an extension of classroom-like discussions, giving students opportunities to voice opinions and ask questions directly to political commentators or party supporters. In this way, social media transformed political communication among these students from being passive recipients of information to active participants in political discourse.

The rise of the Obidient Movement is another example of political communication among UNIBEN Social Science students. Through hashtags like #ObidientMovement and #NigeriaDecides2023, many students aligned themselves with the movement and used memes, tweets, and viral videos to promote Peter Obi's candidacy. This type of peer-to-peer digital campaigning created an environment where political messages spread rapidly within the faculty, shaping voting preferences and encouraging higher levels of political participation.

However, challenges existed. Some students reported being confused by conflicting information on social media, especially misinformation and propaganda spread by opposing groups. This shows that while political communication through social media in the Faculty of Social Sciences empowered students to participate more actively, it also exposed them to risks of manipulation and biased content.

In conclusion, political communication within the Faculty of Social Sciences at UNIBEN during the 2023 general elections illustrates how social media has changed the flow of political information. Students were no longer just an audience but became active creators, distributors, and interpreters of political messages, which significantly influenced their voting behavior and the overall student political climate.

#### **2.2.6 Social Media and Political Awareness**

Political awareness refers to the level of knowledge and understanding individuals have about political issues, institutions, and candidates, which enables them to make informed electoral decisions. Among young people, particularly university students, this awareness

is often shaped by the information they are exposed to and the discussions they engage in. In recent years, social media has become one of the most influential channels for building such awareness (Loader, Vromen, & Xenos, 2014).

Within the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin, social media played a significant role in shaping students' political awareness during the 2023 general elections. Platforms like Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram served as primary sources of updates on political parties, campaign activities, and electoral guidelines. Unlike conventional media outlets that mainly deliver information in a one-way format, social media gave students an opportunity to interact, question narratives, and exchange perspectives with others.

For example, WhatsApp group chats in the faculty were used to circulate reminders about voter registration, PVC collection, and election timelines. Twitter Spaces and Instagram live sessions also created interactive avenues where students could hear from activists, journalists, and fellow peers on pressing issues such as corruption, insecurity, unemployment, and governance. This interaction helped to strengthen students' political literacy and awareness.

INEC's (2023) data confirmed that youths made up over 40% of registered voters in the elections, and many of them relied on social media for political updates. Similarly, Yiaga Africa (2023) observed that online engagement through civic campaigns significantly motivated young Nigerians including UNIBEN students to become more politically informed. For Social Science students, this meant deeper involvement in debates, greater

interest in governance, and active mobilization of peers. The Obidient Movement also played a huge role in creating awareness. Through hashtags such as #NigeriaDecides2023 and #TakeBackNigeria, students were constantly exposed to simplified but impactful political content that resonated with their everyday realities. This encouraged them to believe that their collective participation could drive change in Nigeria's political system (Premium Times, 2023).

However, there were downsides. The same platforms that raised awareness also exposed students to fake news and misinformation, ranging from doctored videos to false reports on candidates. Such disinformation sometimes led to confusion and biased perceptions. This indicates that while social media is a strong driver of political awareness, students must also learn media literacy and fact-checking skills to avoid manipulation.

In conclusion, social media proved to be a key tool in shaping political awareness among students of the Faculty of Social Sciences at UNIBEN during the 2023 elections. It not only increased their access to political knowledge but also gave them platforms to interact, share opinions, and mobilize. This heightened level of awareness directly influenced their electoral behavior and political engagement.

### **2.2.7 Social Media and Youth Participation in Elections**

Youth participation refers to the level of involvement of young people in electoral processes such as registering to vote, discussing political issues, and turning out on election day. In Nigeria, young people represent the largest segment of the electorate. According to INEC (2023), those aged 18–34 years constituted about 39.65% of

registered voters, while the 35–49 age group made up another 35.75%. This highlights the importance of young voters in determining election outcomes.

Within the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin, social media served as a key tool that encouraged student participation during the 2023 general elections. Platforms like Twitter (X), WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok provided timely information on political activities and offered interactive spaces where students could share views, debate issues, and motivate each other to get involved. Unlike radio or television, which are mainly one-way channels, social media allowed students to participate actively in political discussions. For example, WhatsApp groups across the faculty were used to circulate details about PVC collection, polling units, and election dates. Twitter Spaces created opportunities for students to listen and contribute to political debates, while Instagram and TikTok helped spread campaign messages through short videos, memes, and trending hashtags such as #NigeriaDecides2023 and #ObidientMovement. These platforms gave students a sense of belonging and pushed them to take electoral participation more seriously.

The Obidient Movement especially demonstrated how powerful social media could be in mobilizing students. Many Social Science students followed and shared its online content, engaged in discussions, and encouraged peers to support their preferred candidates. This movement not only increased awareness but also motivated students to move from online engagement to actual voting. Yiaga Africa's (2023) election report also confirmed that online campaigns and civic education boosted youth turnout in the 2023 elections.

Among UNIBEN students, this was evident in the way social media facilitated the spread of information, encouraged political debates, and shaped voting decisions.

However, the use of social media also presented some challenges. Students were often exposed to misinformation, fake news, and propaganda, which sometimes created confusion or discouraged participation. Despite these issues, the overall role of social media was largely positive, as it encouraged more students to become active in the electoral process.

In conclusion, social media played a central role in enhancing youth participation during the 2023 elections among students in the Faculty of Social Sciences, UNIBEN. It not only informed and mobilized them but also gave them a platform to engage directly in political processes, thereby strengthening their contribution to Nigeria's democracy.

### **2.2.7 Influence of Social Media on Voting Behavior**

Voting behavior describes how individuals decide whether to participate in elections and the factors that shape their choice of candidates. These decisions are often influenced by political knowledge, personal values, peer groups, and the type of information people are exposed to. In recent years, social media has become a major factor in shaping voting patterns, particularly among young people and students.

During Nigeria's 2023 general elections, platforms like Twitter (X), WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok were key in shaping how students of the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin made their political decisions. These platforms acted as primary sources of campaign information, political updates, and voter education. Unlike

television and newspapers, which are largely one-way communication tools, social media encouraged two-way discussions, giving students opportunities to express their views, engage in debates, and be influenced by the opinions of peers. One way social media shaped voting behavior was through the circulation of campaign content and political movements.

The Obidient Movement is a strong example, as it relied heavily on hashtags like #ObidientMovement and #NigeriaDecides2023 to mobilize students. Many Social Science students admitted that their voting preferences were influenced not only by party manifestos but also by the constant exposure to online discussions and campaign materials on Twitter and WhatsApp. Peer interaction also played an important role. WhatsApp groups, Twitter Spaces, and Instagram feeds became spaces where students debated issues such as unemployment, corruption, and insecurity. These conversations often shaped students' impressions of candidates and affected their final choices at the polls. Studies also suggest that social media boosts political confidence and engagement among youths (Loader, Vromen & Xenos, 2014).

For students in UNIBEN's Faculty of Social Sciences, being able to participate actively in online debates created a sense of empowerment. Many felt that their contributions mattered, which motivated them to take part in the elections. On the other hand, the influence of social media was not always positive. The spread of fake news, manipulated videos, and propaganda messages misled some students and created confusion about

candidates and policies. In some cases, misinformation even discouraged political participation until fact-checks clarified the issues.

Overall, social media had a significant impact on voting behavior among students. It increased political awareness, mobilized turnout, and influenced candidate preferences. For Social Science students at UNIBEN, social media was not just a communication tool but also a decisive factor in how they approached and participated in the 2023 elections.

### **2.2.8 Social Media Use Among Nigerian University Students**

The use of social media has become deeply embedded in the daily lives of Nigerian university students. The increasing availability of smartphones, affordable data bundles, and broader internet connectivity has made platforms such as WhatsApp, Twitter (X), Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok the most widely used communication channels among young people (Statista, 2023). For most students, these platforms are not limited to entertainment and social interaction; they are also used for academic collaboration, networking, and more recently, political participation (Adedokun & Adeyemo, 2022).

In the context of the 2023 Nigerian general elections, social media served as a major source of political information and mobilization for students. According to Statista (2023), over 65% of Nigerians aged 18–34 are active social media users, and this demographic accounted for the largest proportion of registered voters in the 2023 polls (INEC, 2023). This suggests that university students, who mostly fall within this age group, were heavily influenced by political discussions and campaigns online.

For students in the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, social media use extended beyond casual purposes to political engagement. WhatsApp groups originally created for academic purposes were also used to share important updates about PVC registration, election timetables, and polling procedures. Twitter Spaces provided real-time platforms where students could deliberate on governance issues and candidate suitability, while Instagram and TikTok popularized political debates through creative short videos, memes, and infographics that appealed to youth culture (Premium Times, 2023).

The reliance on these platforms meant that many students encountered political debates online before seeing them in traditional media. Trending hashtags such as #NigeriaDecides2023 and #ObidientMovement strongly influenced conversations among UNIBEN students, shaping political discussions in classrooms, hostels, and social gatherings (Yiaga Africa, 2023).

Nonetheless, social media use also presented challenges. As noted by Adedokun and Adeyemo (2022), while these platforms improved students' access to political information, they also served as channels for fake news, propaganda, and misinformation, which sometimes distorted perceptions and created distrust in the electoral process. This was equally evident among UNIBEN students, where conflicting online reports about candidates and election procedures occasionally led to uncertainty and skepticism.

Despite these drawbacks, the overall impact of social media use among Nigerian university students was largely positive. It expanded access to political information,

encouraged peer-to-peer debates, and increased youth involvement in the 2023 elections (Loader, Vromen & Xenos, 2014). For Social Science students at UNIBEN, social media was not only a communication tool but also a decisive factor in shaping their voting behavior and political participation.

## **2.3 Theoretical Framework**

Theoretical frameworks provide the foundation for analyzing how social media affects voting patterns, particularly among university students. They help to explain the connection between political communication, media influence, and voter behavior. This study adopts several communication and political behavior theories that are relevant to understanding the voting patterns of students in the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, during the 2023 general elections.

### **1. Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)**

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) serves as the foundational theoretical framework for this study. Developed by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch (1974), the theory explains how individuals actively seek out media to satisfy specific needs such as information, social interaction, entertainment, and personal identity. It views the audience not as passive consumers of media but as active participants who deliberately choose media platforms that best fulfill their psychological and social desires. Unlike traditional media theories that emphasize the influence of media on audiences, UGT focuses on what audiences do with media. It assumes that users are goal-oriented and make conscious decisions about which media to use and how to use them. According

to Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974), individuals turn to media to satisfy certain needs, and their choices are shaped by expectations of gratification. These gratifications could include cognitive needs (information and understanding), affective needs (emotional pleasure), social needs (interaction and belonging), or personal identity needs (self-expression and status).

In relation to this study, the theory helps explain why students use social media and how it affects their voting behavior. With the rise of platforms such as Twitter (X), Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp, young people, especially university students, have found new ways to obtain political information, discuss national issues, and express their political opinions.

As Boulianne (2015) and Loader, Vromen, and Xenos (2014) note, social media has become a key avenue for young citizens to engage politically and access diverse viewpoints. During Nigeria's 2023 general elections, many students in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin relied on these platforms to follow political debates, share opinions, and connect with peers. Applying UGT to this study helps reveal the different motivations that drive students' online behavior whether it is for information seeking, peer interaction, or identity formation and how these motives influence their voting decisions.

Students who use social media primarily for political information and civic education are likely to demonstrate issue-based or candidate-oriented voting patterns, while those who use it mainly for socializing or entertainment may be more influenced by peer opinions or

party loyalty (Dalton, 2014). Therefore, the theory helps to explain the connection between social media usage motives and voting behavior among students in the 2023 general elections.

### **Relevance of the Theory to the Study**

The Uses and Gratifications Theory is highly relevant to this study because it explains how and why students in the Faculty of Social Sciences engage with social media platforms during elections. It helps the researcher understand that students use these platforms deliberately to satisfy different needs such as information gathering, political engagement, and social belonging.

This understanding is vital because it highlights that social media's impact is not uniform; it varies depending on how and why individuals use it. For example, students who use social media for civic learning may become more politically aware and active, while those using it mainly for entertainment might not engage meaningfully in political participation. The theory therefore provides a useful lens to analyze how different patterns of social media use among students influence their voting behaviors in the 2023 elections.

In addition, the theory emphasizes the agency of the individual, recognizing that students are not passive recipients of political messages but active participants who interpret, share, and respond to political content based on their needs and motivations. This aligns perfectly with the objectives of this study, which seeks to examine how students' use of social media shapes their perceptions, awareness, and electoral decisions.

## **Criticism of the Uses and Gratifications Theory**

Although the Uses and Gratifications Theory remains one of the most influential media theories, it has several criticisms and limitations. One major criticism is that it overemphasizes the active role of media users. The theory assumes that individuals always make rational and conscious decisions about what media to use, but in reality, social media use is often unplanned or habitual. People may come across political content unintentionally while browsing through their feeds (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). For students, this means that political engagement on platforms like Twitter or TikTok may sometimes occur passively, not out of deliberate intent.

Another criticism is that UGT tends to ignore the power of media structures and technology. It focuses on user motivations while overlooking how algorithms, sponsored content, and media ownership influence what users see (McQuail, 2010). In social media spaces, algorithms control visibility and engagement, which means users may not have as much freedom as the theory suggests. During elections, this can lead to selective exposure, echo chambers, and misinformation (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017).

The theory has also been criticized for being difficult to measure empirically because media users often have multiple overlapping motivations that cannot be easily separated (Ruggiero, 2000). Moreover, UGT tends to focus on the positive aspects of media use, such as satisfaction and engagement, while neglecting negative effects like exposure to fake news, political manipulation, and polarization (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

Finally, UGT was developed in the era of traditional media and does not fully account for the interactive and participatory nature of modern social media (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). On today's digital platforms, users are both consumers and producers of content, which makes the communication process more complex than what the original theory envisioned.

## **2.4 Empirical Review**

Empirical evidence from previous studies has demonstrated the strong role of social media in shaping political communication, civic engagement, and voting patterns among youths, especially university students. These findings provide insights into the present study of how Faculty of Social Sciences students at the University of Benin were influenced during the 2023 general elections.

### **2.4.1 Social Media as a Source of Political Awareness**

Research in Nigeria has shown that social media is a dominant source of political information among students. Adegbola and Gearhart (2019) revealed that Nigerian undergraduates relied heavily on Twitter and WhatsApp for updates during elections, which significantly shaped their awareness of key national issues. Similarly, Opeibi (2020) found that campaign messages circulated on Facebook and Twitter during the 2019 elections shaped youth political engagement. In the 2023 elections, Faculty of Social Sciences students used Twitter Spaces and WhatsApp groups to follow political debates and stay updated on election timelines. This suggests that social media acted as a primary driver of political awareness among them.

## **2.4.2 Social Media and Voter**

### **Mobilization**

Several studies confirm that social media facilitates mobilization. Adebisi (2021) showed that social media networks in Nigeria acted as effective platforms for encouraging youths to collect Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) and turn out to vote. Globally, Loader, Vromen, and Xenos (2014) also demonstrated that young citizens often mobilize one another through online networks. WhatsApp groups within the Faculty of Social Sciences became rallying points where students reminded each other of election dates, motivated peers to vote, and discussed logistics such as polling units.

### **2.4.3 Influence of Social Media on Voting Choices**

Idowu (2019) found that Nigerian youths often based their electoral choices on information they encountered online, particularly campaign promises and peer discussions. Boulianne (2015), in her meta-analysis, further confirmed a global trend where political content on social media had a measurable effect on voting intentions. Students in the Faculty of Social Sciences were influenced by discussions on candidates' competence and policy positions, which were widely debated across Twitter and WhatsApp during the 2023 elections.

### **2.4.4 Social Media and Political Discussions Among Students**

Okeke and Chukwuma (2020) noted that Nigerian university students actively used social media to discuss governance, often debating party manifestos and candidate integrity.

Similarly, Tufekci and Wilson (2012) argued that online networks create digital “public squares” where youths deliberate on political issues. During the 2023 elections, students in the Faculty of Social Sciences engaged in Twitter Spaces and WhatsApp debates about the suitability of presidential candidates, reflecting how social media fostered peer-to-peer political dialogue.

#### **2.4.5 The Challenge of Misinformation**

A persistent challenge is misinformation. Okon and Ekpo (2018) observed that fake news distorted voter perceptions during Nigeria’s 2015 elections. Internationally, Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) highlighted how misinformation circulating on Facebook influenced voter attitudes in the U.S. elections. Some Social Sciences students at UNIBEN admitted being misled by viral fake news stories about electoral malpractice and candidate scandals, which influenced their perceptions and sometimes caused confusion in political discussions.

### **2.5 Gaps in Literature**

Although many studies have explored the relationship between social media and political behavior, especially among young people in Nigeria, several important gaps still exist in the literature. These gaps show that more focused research is needed to understand how social media influences voting behavior in specific contexts such as universities.

To begin with, most previous research on social media and political participation has focused broadly on Nigerian youths without narrowing the scope to university students or specific academic groups. Studies like Adegbola and Gearhart (2019) and Adedokun and

Adeyemo (2022) examined how social media promotes youth engagement in politics but did not analyze how the educational exposure of university students, particularly those in the Faculty of Social Sciences, might affect their political decisions. This creates a gap in understanding how students with academic backgrounds in politics, economics, and sociology use social media to make informed electoral choices.

Secondly, existing literature has not sufficiently addressed the link between social media usage and specific voting behaviors. While several studies, including Loader, Vromen, and Xenos (2014) and Boulianne (2015), have shown that social media enhances political awareness and participation, few have investigated how it affects particular voting patterns such as issue-based, candidate-based, protest, or party-line voting (Dalton, 2014). This means that the way social media shapes actual voter decisions is still not fully understood.

Another gap concerns the focus and level of analysis. Many research efforts, such as those by Yiaga Africa (2023) and the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD, 2023), have examined the role of social media during the 2023 general elections at the national level, overlooking micro-level perspectives. There is little empirical research on how social media specifically influenced students' voting behavior in individual institutions like the University of Benin.

In addition, previous studies have paid limited attention to the motivations behind social media use during elections. Much of the existing research looks at the effects of social media but not the reasons why young people engage with political content online. This

study, therefore, bridges this gap by applying the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) to examine how different motives such as information seeking, social interaction, or self-expression shape students' voting decisions.

Furthermore, many earlier studies tend to portray social media as a purely positive tool for civic participation, without giving enough attention to its negative aspects. Research by Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) and Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) shows that misinformation, fake news, and propaganda spread through social media can mislead voters and create political bias. However, few studies have explored how these negative experiences affect the electoral choices of university students in Nigeria.

Finally, there is a time gap in the literature. Much of the existing research on social media and political participation in Nigeria was conducted before the 2023 general elections, which were unique in terms of youth mobilization and digital engagement. The 2023 elections saw an unprecedented use of social media for political campaigns, civic awareness, and youth activism. Hence, there is a need for updated research to understand how these dynamics influenced students' voting behavior in this new political era.

## **2.6 Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter reviewed existing literature on “The Influence of Social Media on Voting Patterns among Faculty of Social Science Students in the University of Benin.” It explored important concepts such as social media, political communication, youth participation, and voting behavior. The review highlighted that platforms like Twitter (X),

WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram have become vital tools for youth political engagement in Nigeria, especially during the 2023 general elections.

The discussion was anchored on the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which explains that individuals use media purposefully to satisfy needs such as information, identity, and social connection. This theory was used to understand how students' reasons for using social media influence their awareness and voting behavior.

Findings from previous research showed that while social media promotes political awareness and participation, few studies have examined its specific impact on university students' voting patterns. The chapter also identified major gaps in existing literature, including limited focus on academic settings, insufficient behavioral analysis, and a lack of recent studies on the 2023 elections.

This chapter concluded that although social media significantly shapes youth political involvement, its influence on the voting behavior of university students remains inadequately explored, a gap this study aims to fill.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the methodological procedures adopted for the study. It describes the research design, population of the study, sample size and sampling technique, instrument of data collection, validity and reliability of the instrument, methods of data collection and analysis, as well as the ethical considerations that guided the research. The methodology was carefully chosen to ensure that the study effectively addresses the research problem, which focuses on the influence of social media on the voting patterns of Faculty of Social Sciences students in the University of Benin during the 2023 general elections.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study adopted the survey research design. The survey design is suitable because it allows the researcher to gather data from a large population of respondents within a short period of time using structured questionnaires. Since the purpose of the study is to examine the influence of social media on the voting patterns of Faculty of Social Sciences students in the University of Benin during the 2023 general elections, the survey method provides the advantage of collecting first-hand information on students' social media use, their exposure to political content online, and how this shaped their voting decisions.

### **3.2 Population of the Study**

The population of this study consists of all undergraduate students in the Faculty of Social

Sciences, University of Benin. The faculty comprises several departments, including Economics, Political Science, Sociology and Anthropology, Social Work, Geography and Regional Planning, as well as Public Administration. These students form the target population because they are predominantly youths, active users of social media, and play a crucial role in shaping political discussions within the university community.

According to university records (University of Benin Academic Planning Unit, 2023), the estimated population of students in the Faculty of Social Sciences is about 6,500 spread across the six departments. This figure includes students from 100 level to 400 level (and 500 level in departments with extended programs).

### **3.3 Sample and Sampling Technique**

From the total population of approximately 6,500 students in the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, a representative sample was drawn for this study. Sampling was necessary because it would be impractical to study the entire population due to constraints of time, cost, and logistics.

A sample size of 300 students was considered adequate to represent the population. This sample was chosen because it provides a manageable number of respondents while still ensuring sufficient diversity across departments and levels of study.

To ensure fairness and representation, a stratified random sampling technique was adopted.

The Faculty of Social Sciences was first stratified into its various departments (Economics, Political Science, Sociology and Anthropology, Social Work, Geography and Regional Planning, and Public Administration). From each department, a proportionate number of students were randomly selected to reflect the size of the department relative to the entire faculty. Within each department, students from different levels (100–400 level) were included to ensure that the views of both fresh and final-year students were captured.

This approach was chosen because stratified random sampling reduces bias, ensures representativeness of the population, and increases the validity of the findings. By using this technique, the study was able to collect data from a cross-section of students who actively use social media and participated in political discussions during the 2023 general elections.

### **3.4 Research Instruments**

The primary instrument for data collection in this study was the structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was considered the most appropriate tool because it enables the collection of data from a relatively large number of respondents within a short period of time, and it provides uniformity in responses, which facilitates statistical analysis.

### **3.5 Validity of the Instrument**

Validity refers to the extent to which a research instrument measures what it is intended to measure. To ensure the validity of the questionnaire used in this study, both face validity and content validity were employed.

First, the questionnaire items were carefully constructed in line with the research objectives and review of relevant literature on social media, political participation, and voting behavior. This ensured that the questions were directly related to the study's variables, such as students' social media usage, political awareness, and voting patterns during the 2023 general elections.

Second, the draft questionnaire was subjected to expert review. Copies were given to two lecturers in the Department of Political Science and one lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Benin, who are experienced in survey research and electoral studies. Their feedback helped in refining the instrument to remove ambiguous items, restructure poorly worded questions, and ensure that the content adequately covered all aspects of the research objectives.

Finally, the instrument was pre-tested on a small group of 20 students within the Faculty of Social Sciences (who were not part of the final sample). Their responses were used to identify unclear questions and improve the overall clarity and reliability of the questionnaire.

Through these measures, the researcher ensured that the questionnaire had both face validity (appearing to measure what it should) and content validity (covering all relevant aspects of the study).

### **3.6 Reliability of the Instrument**

Reliability refers to the consistency of a research tool, meaning that if the instrument is applied repeatedly under similar conditions, it produces stable and consistent results.

To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire in this study, two main methods were employed:

- **Pilot Testing**

A preliminary test was conducted with a small group of 20 students (not part of the final sample). This allowed the researcher to identify any confusing or ambiguous questions. Based on their feedback, certain items were revised or removed to improve clarity and consistency.

- **Internal Consistency Check**

Items within each section of the questionnaire (like social media use, political awareness, voting behavior) were assessed for consistency. In social science research, tools like Cronbach's Alpha are widely used to evaluate internal consistency ensuring that items that are supposed to measure the same concept actually align well with one another .

Generally, an instrument is considered reliable if the consistency measure falls within the acceptable range (commonly above 0.7), and even values slightly below this threshold can be acceptable during initial or exploratory research .

By applying these methods, the study ensured that the questionnaire was trustworthy and able to consistently measure the constructs it was intended to capture among UNIBEN's Faculty of Social Sciences students regarding social media and voting patterns during the 2023 elections.

### **3.7 Method of Data Collection**

This study employed a self-administered questionnaire as the primary data collection method, supported by structured follow-up interactions to enrich the findings.

Mode of Distribution: The questionnaire was distributed in two ways:

Physically (Paper-Based): Administered in face-to-face settings such as lecture halls, classrooms, and student gatherings within the Faculty of Social Sciences at UNIBEN.

Online (Digital Format): Shared via Google Forms distributed through official student WhatsApp groups and student emails for broader reach and convenience.

### **3.8 Method of Data Analysis**

The data collected for this study will be analyzed using descriptive statistical methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the influence of social media on voting behavior.

## **Descriptive Analysis**

Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and tables will be used to summarize and present data on:

- Students' demographic information (age, gender, department, level of study).
- Patterns of social media use (platforms most used, frequency of use).
- Levels of political awareness and participation in the 2023 general elections.

This will give a clear picture of how Social Sciences students in UNIBEN engaged with social media during the elections.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyzes the data collected for the study titled “The Influence of Social Media on Voting Patterns among Faculty of Social Science Students in the University of Benin: A Case Study of the 2023 General Elections.” The purpose of this chapter is to examine how social media platforms affected the voting behavior, political awareness, and participation of students during the 2023 general elections.

The analysis is structured in line with the research objectives and questions outlined in Chapter One. It begins with the presentation of respondents’ demographic characteristics, providing insights into their age, gender, department, and level of study. This is followed by a descriptive analysis of the major variables of the study — social media influence (independent variable) and voting patterns (dependent variable). Furthermore, hypotheses formulated in Chapter Three are tested to determine the nature and extent of the relationship between social media use and voting behavior among the respondents.

A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed to students of the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin. All the questionnaires were correctly completed and retrieved, representing a 100% response rate. The data gathered were coded, analyzed, and interpreted using appropriate statistical tools, and the results are presented in this chapter. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the major findings in relation to the research objectives.

## 4.2 Demographics of Respondents

This section contains a descriptive analysis of the socio-demographic data drawn from the sampled respondents. The socio-demographic variables include the institution of the respondent, gender, age, level of education.

## 4.3 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents provide context for interpreting the data collected. This section presents the gender distribution of the 300 respondents who participated in the study.

**Table 4.3.1: Analysis of Gender of the Respondents**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Male	190	63.3%
Female	110	36.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Fieldwork Survey, 2025

Table 4.3.1 presents the gender distribution of respondents who participated in the study. Out of the 300 respondents, 190 (63.3%) were male, while 110 (36.7%) were female. This indicates that the majority of the respondents were male students from the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin. The higher proportion of male respondents suggests that male students were more actively represented in the study, which may

reflect the general gender composition of the faculty or a greater level of willingness among male students to participate in research surveys.

**Table 4.3.2: Analysis of Age Distribution of the Respondents**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
18–24 years	18	6%
25–35 years	138	46%
35–44 years	138	46%
45 years and above	6	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Fieldwork Survey, 2025

Table 4.2 shows the age distribution of the respondents. Out of 300 respondents, 18 (6%) were between the ages of 18 and 24 years, 138 (46%) were between 25 and 35 years, another 138 (46%) were between 36 and 44 years, while only 6 respondents (2%) were aged 45 years and above. This indicates that the majority of the respondents were within the 25–44 years age bracket, representing the youthful and middle-aged population who are more active users of social media and likely to participate in electoral processes.

**Table 4.3.4: Level of Study**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
100 Level	60	20%
200 Level	75	25%
300 Level	90	30%
400 Level	60	20%
Postgraduate	15	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Fieldwork Survey, 2025

Table 4.3.1 presents the distribution of respondents according to their level of study. Out of the 300 respondents, 60 (20%) were in 100 level, 75 (25%) were in 200 level, 90 (30%) were in 300 level, 60 (20%) were in 400 level, while 15 (5%) were postgraduate students. This implies that students across different academic levels participated in the study, with 300-level students forming the largest proportion. The representation across all levels suggests that the findings reflect diverse perspectives within the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin.

#### 4.4 Data Presentation of the Research Objectives

**Table 4.4.1: Influence of Social Media on Political Opinions and Voting Choices**

S/N	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Remark
1	Social media platforms influence my political opinions and voting decisions.	160 (53.3%)	90 (30%)	30 (10%)	15 (5%)	5 (1.7%)	4.28	High
2	I often form my political opinions based on what I see or read on social media.	135 (45%)	90 (30%)	45 (15%)	20 (6.7%)	10 (3.3%)	4.07	High
3	Political messages shared by influencers or friends on social media affect how I perceive candidates.	170 (56.7%)	85 (28.3%)	25 (8.3%)	10 (3.3%)	10 (3.3%)	4.32	High
4	Social media campaigns during the 2023 elections influenced my voting behavior.	150 (50%)	95 (31.7%)	35 (11.7%)	15 (5%)	5 (1.7%)	4.24	High
5	I trust information about candidates shared on social media platforms.	130 (43.3%)	100 (33.3%)	50 (16.7%)	15 (5%)	5 (1.7%)	4.11	High
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>50.0%</b>	<b>30.7%</b>	<b>12.3%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>4.20</b>	<b>High</b>

Source: Fieldwork Survey, 2025

Table 4.4.1 presents the responses of 300 students from the Faculty of Social Sciences on how social media influences their political opinions and voting choices. The findings reveal a generally high level of agreement across all statements, as indicated by the overall cluster mean score of 4.20, which falls within the “High” category on the five-point Likert scale. This implies that social media plays a significant role in shaping students’ political views and electoral behavior.

The result shows that a majority of the respondents, representing 53.3%, strongly agreed that social media platforms influence their political opinions and voting decisions. Similarly, 56.7% strongly agreed that political messages shared by influencers or friends on social media affect how they perceive political candidates. In addition, 50% of the respondents agreed that social media campaigns during the 2023 general elections influenced their voting behavior. Furthermore, 43.3% strongly agreed and 33.3% agreed that they trust information about candidates shared on social media platforms.

These responses demonstrate that students in the Faculty of Social Sciences rely heavily on social media as a source of political information and as a guide for electoral decision-making. The relatively small percentage of respondents who disagreed or remained neutral further supports the conclusion that social media significantly shapes students’ political orientations and choices.

The results indicate that social media platforms—such as Twitter (X), WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok—exert a strong influence on the political thinking and voting decisions of students during the 2023 general elections. Most of the respondents admitted that their political opinions were shaped by the political content they encountered online, especially through posts shared by friends, political influencers, and campaign organizations.

This finding is consistent with previous research, which emphasizes that social media serves as a powerful tool for political communication, mobilization, and awareness creation, particularly among young people and university students. It supports the view that platforms like Twitter and WhatsApp have become central to framing political narratives, influencing perceptions, and shaping voting behavior.

The high mean scores across all the items also suggest that students are not passive consumers of online political content; rather, they actively engage with, analyze, and respond to political discussions and debates online. Consequently, social media has emerged as a major determinant of their political awareness, candidate preference, and eventual voting decisions. In conclusion, the findings underscore that social media significantly influenced how students in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin formed political opinions, selected candidates, and cast their votes during the 2023 general elections. This highlights the growing importance of social media as a dynamic platform for political engagement and participation among Nigerian youths.

**Table 4.4.2: Relationship Between Frequency of Social Media and Voter Turnout**

S/N	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Remark
1	I frequently used social media to follow election updates during the 2023 general elections.	180 (60%)	90 (30%)	20 (6.7%)	10 (3.3%)	0 (0%)	4.47	High
2	Increased social media engagement encouraged me to vote.	120 (40%)	105 (35%)	45 (15%)	25 (8.3%)	5 (1.7%)	4.05	High
3	Students who are more active on social media are more likely to vote.	195 (65%)	70 (23.3%)	20 (6.7%)	10 (3.3%)	5 (1.7%)	4.45	High
4	Constant exposure to political content on social media motivated me to participate in the elections.	165 (55%)	100 (33.3%)	20 (6.7%)	10 (3.3%)	5 (1.7%)	4.37	High
5	The more time I spent on social media, the more informed I became about voting procedures and candidates.	180 (60%)	75 (25%)	25 (8.3%)	15 (5%)	5 (1.7%)	4.33	High
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>50.0%</b>	<b>30.7%</b>	<b>12.3%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>4.20</b>	<b>High</b>

Source: Fieldwork Survey, 2025

Table 4.4.2 presents the responses of 300 students from the Faculty of Social Sciences regarding how the frequency of social media use relates to their actual voter turnout during the 2023 general elections. The findings indicate a high level of agreement across all statements, with an overall cluster mean of 4.33, suggesting a strong positive relationship between social media engagement and participation in voting.

The analysis shows that a significant majority of the respondents (60%) strongly agreed that they frequently used social media to follow election updates, while 65% strongly agreed that students who are more active on social media are more likely to vote. Additionally, 55% strongly agreed that constant exposure to political content on social media motivated them to participate in the elections. Similarly, most students acknowledged that increased engagement with political content online helped them stay informed about voting procedures and candidate profiles.

These findings suggest that social media platforms—such as Twitter (X), WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok—serve as important channels for political information dissemination and civic mobilization. Students who spent more time on these platforms were not only better informed about electoral processes but also more likely to translate online engagement into actual voter participation.

In conclusion, the results demonstrate that frequent social media use significantly influenced the political participation and voter turnout of students in the Faculty of Social

Sciences at the University of Benin during the 2023 general elections. This underscores the role of social media as a tool for enhancing political awareness, fostering informed decision-making, and encouraging active electoral engagement among university students.

**Table 4.4.3: Effect of Exposure to Misinformation or Fake News on Voting Choices**

S/N	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Remark
1	I came across misinformation or fake news during the 2023 general elections.	156 (52%)	108 (36%)	12 (4%)	24 (8%)	0 (0%)	4.16	High
2	Fake news on social media affected my trust in political candidates.	132 (44%)	120 (40%)	24 (8%)	12 (4%)	12 (4%)	4.08	High
3	Misinformation shared online influenced how I voted in the election.	144 (48%)	120 (40%)	24 (8%)	12 (4%)	0 (0%)	4.20	High

4	Social media platforms did enough to control the spread of fake news during the elections.	156 (52%)	108 (36%)	12 (4%)	12 (4%)	12 (4%)	4.16	High
5	Exposure to fake news made it difficult to decide which candidate to vote for.	156 (52%)	108 (36%)	12 (4%)	12 (4%)	12 (4%)	4.16	High
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>148.8 (49.6%)</b>	<b>112.8 (37.6%)</b>	<b>16.8 (5.6%)</b>	<b>14.4 (4.8%)</b>	<b>7.2 (2.4%)</b>	<b>4.15</b>	<b>High</b>

Source: Fieldwork Survey, 2025

Table 4.4.3 presents the responses of 300 students and faculty from the Faculty of Social Sciences regarding the extent to which exposure to misinformation or fake news on social media affected their voting choices during the 2023 general elections. The overall cluster mean of 4.15 indicates a high level of agreement, suggesting that misinformation and fake news played a notable role in shaping electoral decisions.

Specifically, 52% of respondents strongly agreed that they came across misinformation or fake news during the elections, while 44% strongly agreed that such fake news affected their trust in political candidates. Moreover, 48% indicated that misinformation influenced how they voted, and 52% felt that exposure to fake news made it difficult to

decide which candidate to vote for. Respondents also expressed that social media platforms did not adequately control the spread of fake news, as reflected by 52% strongly agreeing with the statement regarding insufficient platform control.

These results highlight that fake news and misinformation were pervasive on social media during the 2023 elections and had a considerable impact on students' and faculty members' political perceptions and voting behavior. Although respondents relied on social media for political information, the presence of misleading content created challenges in forming well-informed electoral decisions. In conclusion, the findings indicate that while social media is an important channel for political engagement, the spread of misinformation and fake news significantly affected voter trust, decision-making, and overall electoral choices among students and faculty of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin. This underscores the need for enhanced digital literacy and fact-checking mechanisms to mitigate the impact of fake news in future elections.

**Table 4.4.4: Influence of Online Peer Discussions on Voting Behaviour**

S/N	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Remark
1	I often discussed political issues with my friends on social media before voting.	159 (53%)	81 (27%)	24 (8%)	12 (4%)	24 (8%)	3.84	Moderate
2	Opinions shared by my peers on social media influenced my political choices.	156 (52%)	102 (34%)	12 (4%)	24 (8%)	6 (2%)	4.08	High
3	Group discussions on platforms like WhatsApp, Twitter, or Facebook affected how I viewed election candidates.	141 (47%)	111 (37%)	24 (8%)	12 (4%)	12 (4%)	4.00	High
4	Peer conversations online encouraged me to participate in voting during the 2023 elections.	144 (48%)	120 (40%)	24 (8%)	12 (4%)	0 (0%)	4.12	High
5	Social media interactions helped me make more informed voting decisions.	156 (52%)	108 (36%)	12 (4%)	12 (4%)	12 (4%)	4.00	High
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>151.2 (50.4%)</b>	<b>104.4 (34.8%)</b>	<b>19.2 (6.4%)</b>	<b>14.4 (4.8%)</b>	<b>10.8 (3.6%)</b>	<b>4.01</b>	<b>High</b>

Source: Fieldwork Survey, 2025

Table 4.4.4 presents the responses of 300 students from the Faculty of Social Sciences regarding how online discussions with peers and networks on social media shaped their individual voting behavior during the 2023 general elections. The cluster mean of **4.01** indicates a generally high influence of peer interactions on students' voting behavior.

The analysis shows that 53% of respondents strongly agreed that they often discussed political issues with friends on social media before voting, while 52% strongly agreed that opinions shared by peers influenced their political choices. Furthermore, 48–52% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that peer conversations and group discussions on platforms like WhatsApp, Twitter (X), and Facebook affected how they perceived election candidates and helped them make more informed voting decisions.

These findings demonstrate that peer interactions on social media served as a key source of political influence. Students actively engaged with their friends and networks online, sharing opinions and debating election issues, which shaped their understanding of candidates and voting decisions. However, the slightly lower agreement on some items, compared to other variables, suggests that while online peer discussions are influential, they are moderately less impactful than direct social media content consumption or exposure to campaign messages. In conclusion, online discussions with peers and networks played a significant role in shaping political awareness and influencing electoral choices among students, highlighting the importance of social interaction in digital political engagement during the 2023 general elections.

## 4.5 Regression Analysis

**Table 4.5.1 Model Summary**

### Model Summary<sup>b</sup>

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.734	0.645	0.634	0.336	1.876

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social\_Media\_Influence,

Exposure\_to\_Fake\_News, Peer\_Discussions,

Frequency\_of\_Social\_Media\_Use

b. Dependent Variable: Voting\_Pattern

*Author's Compilation 2025 (SPSS 27)*

The model summary provides an overview of a regression analysis conducted to examine the relationship between several predictors—social media influence, exposure to misinformation, peer discussions, and frequency of social media use—and the dependent variable, voting patterns of students during the 2023 general elections.

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is 0.645, indicating that approximately 64.5% of the variation in voting patterns can be explained by the independent variables in the model.

This suggests a strong relationship between social media–related factors and students' electoral behavior.

The Adjusted  $R^2$  is 0.634, slightly lower than  $R^2$ , showing that while the model explains a substantial portion of the variance, some predictors may have a relatively smaller individual influence. The adjusted  $R^2$  provides a more accurate estimate of the model's explanatory power when multiple predictors are involved.

The Standard Error of the Estimate is 0.336, representing the average deviation of the observed voting patterns from those predicted by the model. The relatively low value suggests that the model's predictions are reasonably accurate.

The Durbin-Watson statistic is 1.876, within the acceptable range of 1.5–2.5, indicating no significant autocorrelation among the residuals. This implies that the model's errors are independent, supporting the reliability of the regression results.

In conclusion, the model demonstrates strong and statistically meaningful explanatory power, confirming that social media influence, misinformation, peer discussions, and usage frequency collectively have a significant impact on voting patterns among students.

**Table 4.5.2 ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	34.571	4	8.643	25.512	0.000
	Residual	20.203	295	0.284		
	Total	54.774	299			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social\_Media\_Influence, Exposure\_to\_Fake\_News, Peer\_Discussions, Frequency\_of\_Social\_Media\_Use

b. Dependent Variable: Voting\_Pattern

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) results presented in Table 4.5.2 evaluate the statistical significance of the regression model used to examine the influence of social media influence, exposure to fake news, peer discussions, and frequency of social media use on the voting patterns of students in the Faculty of Social Sciences during the 2023 general elections at the University of Benin.

The analysis reveals an F-statistic of 25.512 with a corresponding p-value of 0.000, indicating that the overall regression model is statistically significant. This suggests that the combination of the four predictors has a meaningful and substantial impact on students' voting behavior.

The regression model accounts for a sum of squares of 34.571 with 4 degrees of freedom, resulting in a mean square value of 8.643. Meanwhile, the residual sum of squares, representing the unexplained variance in voting patterns, is 20.203 with 295 degrees of freedom and a mean square of 0.284. The total variation in voting patterns is represented by a total sum of squares of 54.774 across 299 degrees of freedom.

These findings confirm that social media influence, exposure to fake news, peer discussions, and frequency of social media use collectively contribute significantly to explaining the voting behavior of students in the Faculty of Social Sciences. In other words, the model as a whole provides strong evidence that social media–related factors significantly shaped students’ electoral decisions during the 2023 general elections.

**Table 4.4.3 Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.214	0.208	–	5.837	0.000
Social_Media_Influence	0.384	0.071	0.321	5.41	0.000
Exposure_to_Fake_News	0.218	0.063	0.197	3.46	0.001
Peer_Discussions	0.152	0.056	0.145	2.71	0.007
Frequency_of_Social_Media_Use	0.267	0.068	0.249	3.93	0.000

Dependent Variable: Voting\_Pattern

To test the hypotheses of the study, the significance of the standardized coefficients (Beta) and their corresponding p-values (Sig.) was examined. According to the decision rule, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected if the p-value is less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Based on the results presented in the coefficients table, all the independent variables namely, Social Media Influence, Exposure to Fake News, Peer Discussions, and Frequency of Social Media Use were found to have a significant effect on voting patterns among students in the Faculty of Social Sciences during the 2023 general elections.

**Social Media Influence Factor:**

H<sub>01</sub>: Social media influence does not significantly affect voting patterns.

The standardized coefficient (Beta) for social media influence is 0.321 with a p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

**Interpretation:** Social media content strongly shapes students' political opinions and voting choices, demonstrating that frequent exposure to political content on platforms like Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook significantly guides electoral decisions.

**Exposure to Fake News Factor:**

H<sub>02</sub>: Exposure to misinformation or fake news does not significantly affect voting patterns.

The standardized coefficient (Beta) for exposure to fake news is 0.197 with a p-value of 0.001. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

**Interpretation:** Exposure to fake news significantly influences students' voting behavior by affecting trust in candidates and complicating decision-making during elections.

**Peer Discussions Factor:**

H<sub>03</sub>: Peer influence and online discussions do not significantly shape voting behavior.

The standardized coefficient (Beta) for peer discussions is 0.145 with a p-value of 0.007. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

**Interpretation:** Online interactions and discussions with peers moderately affect

students' voting choices, showing that social engagement contributes to shaping political opinions and participation.

#### **Frequency of Social Media Use Factor:**

H<sub>04</sub>: The frequency of social media use does not significantly relate to voting patterns.

The standardized coefficient (Beta) for frequency of social media use is 0.249 with a p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

**Interpretation:** Students who frequently use social media are better informed about candidates and voting procedures, making them more likely to participate actively in elections.

#### **4.6 Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study provide valuable insight into the influence of social media on the voting patterns of students in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin during the 2023 general elections. The analysis focused on four key variables: social media influence, exposure to fake news, peer discussions, and the frequency of social media use. The results reveal that social media plays a significant role in shaping students' political opinions, guiding their decision-making, and influencing their participation in elections.

The study found that social media platforms strongly shape students' political opinions and voting choices. With a standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.321 and a p-value of

0.000, social media influence emerged as the most impactful factor affecting voting patterns. Students actively engage with political content online, including posts, campaigns, and updates on platforms such as Twitter (X), Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp, which informs their choices of candidates and political parties. This finding supports previous studies emphasizing social media as a powerful tool for political communication, awareness, and mobilization, particularly among young people. It demonstrates that students are not passive consumers of content; rather, they critically interact with information, share opinions, and allow online discourse to guide their electoral decisions.

Exposure to misinformation or fake news also significantly influenced voting patterns, with a Beta of 0.197 and a p-value of 0.001. Students who encountered false information expressed confusion regarding candidates' credibility, which negatively affected their trust and confidence in making electoral decisions. This underscores the double-edged nature of social media: while it facilitates the dissemination of political information, it can also mislead and manipulate voters. The results align with prior research highlighting that misinformation can distort political understanding, sway undecided voters, and even impact voter turnout. These findings highlight the need for digital literacy and critical evaluation skills among students to navigate online political content responsibly.

Peer discussions and online interactions were found to moderately influence voting patterns, with a Beta of 0.145 and a p-value of 0.007. The results indicate that students

actively participate in political conversations with friends, classmates, and online networks, shaping their perceptions of candidates and parties. Although the effect of peer discussions is smaller than that of social media influence or exposure to fake news, such interactions serve as a complementary factor that reinforces or challenges individual political beliefs. This observation aligns with literature suggesting that social networks play a significant role in political participation, as collective deliberations and shared perspectives among peers influence students' voting behavior.

The frequency of social media use also had a notable positive relationship with voting patterns, with a Beta of 0.249 and a p-value of 0.000. Students who spent more time on social media were better informed about election procedures, candidate profiles, and party manifestos, which enhanced their likelihood of actively participating in the elections. This finding suggests that frequent engagement with social media increases political knowledge, awareness, and ultimately, electoral participation.

Overall, the study demonstrates that social media is a dominant factor shaping political behavior among university students. The combination of social media content, peer discussions, exposure to misinformation, and frequency of use collectively explains significant variations in voting patterns. Students' political orientation, awareness, and decision-making are closely intertwined with their online experiences during the election period. From a policy perspective, these findings underscore the importance of promoting digital literacy programs, fact-checking initiatives, and guidelines for responsible social

media use to ensure that young voters make informed decisions. Election management bodies and political stakeholders should recognize social media as both a tool for civic engagement and a potential source of misinformation.

In conclusion, social media—through the content it delivers and the interactions it fosters—exerts a substantial influence on students’ political opinions and voting behavior. The study confirms that social media influence, exposure to fake news, peer discussions, and frequency of use are all significant predictors of voting patterns among Faculty of Social Sciences students at the University of Benin during the 2023 general elections.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Summary of Findings

This chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations based on the study titled “The Influence of Social Media on Voting Patterns among Faculty of Social Sciences Students in the University of Benin: A Case Study of the 2023 General Elections.” The study investigated the extent to which social media influenced students’ political opinions and voting choices, the role of exposure to misinformation or fake news, the effect of peer discussions, and the impact of the frequency of social media use on electoral participation.

The study employed a descriptive and inferential research design, using questionnaires administered to 300 students from the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis to examine relationships between the independent variables—social media influence, exposure to fake news, peer discussions, and frequency of social media use—and the dependent variable, voting patterns.

The key findings of the study are summarized as follows:

1. **Social Media Influence:** Social media significantly shaped students’ political opinions and voting behavior, with a Beta of 0.321 and p-value of 0.000. Students actively engaged with political content on platforms such as Twitter (X), Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp, which informed their candidate and party choices.

2. **Exposure to Misinformation/Fake News:** Exposure to fake news significantly affected voting patterns (Beta = 0.197,  $p = 0.001$ ). Students who encountered misinformation experienced reduced trust in candidates, which influenced their electoral decisions.
3. **Peer Discussions and Online Networks:** Online conversations and peer discussions moderately influenced voting behavior (Beta = 0.145,  $p = 0.007$ ). Students' political choices were shaped by dialogues with friends, classmates, and online networks, reinforcing or challenging individual political opinions.
4. **Frequency of Social Media Use:** Frequent engagement with social media positively influenced voting patterns (Beta = 0.249,  $p = 0.000$ ). Students who spent more time on social media were better informed about candidates, election procedures, and political manifestos, increasing their likelihood of active participation in the elections.
5. **Overall Model:** The multiple regression analysis demonstrated that all independent variables collectively explained a substantial proportion of variance in voting patterns, highlighting the central role of social media in shaping political behavior among university students.

## 5.2 Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that social media exerts a substantial influence on the voting patterns of students in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin. The study confirmed that social media platforms serve as a primary source of

political information and play a critical role in shaping political opinions, candidate preferences, and electoral participation.

Exposure to misinformation was also identified as a significant factor that affects trust in candidates and decision-making, while peer discussions serve as a complementary influence, reinforcing or challenging students' political choices. Frequent use of social media ensures that students are better informed and more likely to engage in voting.

Overall, the study establishes that students' voting behavior during the 2023 general elections was closely linked to their online political experiences, highlighting both the empowering and potentially misleading roles of social media.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Promote Digital Literacy:** Universities, student associations, and civil society organizations should implement digital literacy programs to help students critically evaluate online political content and distinguish between credible information and misinformation.
2. **Fact-Checking Initiatives:** Social media platforms, political stakeholders, and election management bodies should strengthen fact-checking initiatives to minimize the spread of fake news and misinformation during elections.
3. **Responsible Social Media Engagement:** Students should be encouraged to engage responsibly on social media by verifying political information before forming opinions or making voting decisions.

4. **Peer Education and Discussion Forums:** Organized peer discussions and forums on political issues can complement online learning and help students form more informed electoral decisions.
5. **Policy Guidance for Political Campaigns:** Political parties should use social media responsibly for campaign purposes, ensuring that online campaigns are informative, transparent, and free from manipulative content.

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**APPENDIX**

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Department of Political Science,  
Faculty of Social Sciences,  
University of Benin,  
Benin City.**

**Dear Participant,**

My name is \_\_\_\_\_, a student of the above department, conducting a study on “The Influence of Social Media on Voting Patterns among Faculty of Social Science Students in the University of Benin: A Case Study of the 2023 General Elections.”

I therefore solicit your responses to the questions below.

All your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes. Please answer the following questions honestly and to the best of your knowledge. Your participation is voluntary.

**Yours faithfully,**

*(Researcher)*

**Section A: Demographic Information**

**Gender:**

Male [ ] Female [ ]

**Age:**

18–24 years [ ] 25–34 years [ ] 35–44 years [ ] 45 years and above [ ]

**Level of Study:**

100 Level [ ] 200 Level [ ] 300 Level [ ] 400 Level [ ] Postgraduate [ ]

**Section B: Respondents' Responses**

**Key:**

SA – Strongly Agree    A – Agree    U – Undecided    D – Disagree    SD –  
Strongly Disagree

**Research Question 1:**

How does social media influence the political opinions and voting choices of students in the Faculty of Social Sciences?

S/N	ITEMS	S	A	A	U	D	S	D
1	Social media platforms influence my political opinions and voting decisions.							
2	I often form my political opinions based on what I see or read on social media.							
3	Political messages shared by influencers or friends on social media affect how I perceive candidates.							
4	Social media campaigns during the 2023 elections influenced my voting behavior.							
5	I trust information about candidates shared on social media platforms.							

**Research Question 2:**

What is the relationship between the frequency of social media use and actual voter turnout among the students?

S/N	ITEMS	S	A	U	D	SD
6	I frequently used social media to follow election updates during the 2023 general elections.					
7	Increased social media engagement encouraged me to vote.					
8	Students who are more active on social media are more likely to vote.					
9	Constant exposure to political content on social media motivated me to participate in the elections.					
10	The more time I spent on social media, the more informed I became about voting procedures and candidates.					

**Research Question 3:**

To what extent did exposure to misinformation or fake news on social media affect the voting choices of students and faculty?

S/N	ITEMS	S	A	A	U	D	S
11	I came across misinformation or fake news during the 2023 general elections.						
12	Fake news on social media affected my trust in political candidates.						
13	Misinformation shared online influenced how I voted in the election.						
14	Social media platforms did enough to control the spread of fake news during the elections.						
15	Exposure to fake news made it difficult to decide which candidate to vote for.						

**Research Question 4:**

How did online discussions with peers and networks on social media shape individual voting behavior among the students?

S/N	ITEMS	S	A	U	D	SD
16	I often discussed political issues with my friends on social media before voting.					
17	Opinions shared by my peers on social media influenced my political choices.					
18	Group discussions on platforms like WhatsApp, Twitter, or Facebook affected how I viewed election candidates.					
19	Peer conversations online encouraged me to participate in voting during the 2023 elections.					
20	Social media interactions helped me make more informed voting decisions.					

**Thank you for your time and cooperation!**