

**ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE IN WOMEN'S POLITICAL  
PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*This study which analyzed the use of social media by women for political participation in Nigeria was anchored on Public sphere theory. The study adopted survey research method with a population of 373, 762 consisting of women in Enugu Urban. Non-proportionate and systematic sampling techniques were used to distribute the 204 copies of the questionnaire to the women in Enugu Urban. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive technique such as frequency counts, percentage and charts. The study revealed that 64.5% of women do not use the social media for political issues, given that social media is an avenue for political discourse, mobilization and participation, as observed by many studies. Based on the findings, the researchers recommended that, since the benefits of the use of social media by women for political discourse, mobilization and participation is to a large extent at 66.6%, women should endeavor to use the social media as a medium for discussing political issues.*

## **Introduction**

Women are extremely under represented at most levels of government, especially in ministerial and other executive positions, they have made little progress in attaining political power in legislative bodies, in achieving the target certified by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution in 1990, recommended targets for increasing the proportion of women in leadership positions: 30% to 35% by 1995 and 50% by 2000 (UN, 1995).

Nse (2015) making reference to the statement of the Deputy Director Gender Division of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Blessing Obidiegwu, noted that 14 females were elected into the House of Representatives and eight women won as Senators in the National Assembly election. This means that there are only 14 females out of 360 lawmakers for this current House of Representatives and 8 women out of 109 senators, these figures are sparing, 5.6 and 6.5 percents respectively. Again, out of the 14 candidates that contested for the seat of the president, the only woman amongst the contenders came out in the 12th position (Akor, 2015). The Nairobi World Conference to review and appraise the achievements of the UN Decade for women in 1985, and the Beijing fourth world conference on women in 1995, both had top on their agenda issues concerning women and the media. These conference brought to the fore the importance of the media in the quest for gender equity in development.

Before the advent of the new media, the conventional media - radio, television, newspapers, magazines, etc, ruled the world, and had directly or indirectly blocked full participation of citizens in the electoral process. This is because there has always been scarcity of space and airtime given by the conventional media to the citizens to have their say in politics, governance and in the electoral process.

Conventional media critics such as Graber (1976), Fallows (1996), Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) argue that there is absence of serious debate in the conventional media that could make people to learn the substance of issues and policies proposals as well as related arguments, and that this disallows citizens from participating actively in political discourse.

Meanwhile, social media are interactive, web-based media. They belong to the new genre of media that focus on social networking, allowing users to express themselves, interact with

friends, share personal information, as well as publish their own views on the Internet. The universal access of these online devices no doubt, has democratising effects as they offer citizens opportunities for full engagement in the political process.

Considering the fact that social media is increasingly being used world-wide with its power of reaching a large mass of audience, it should not be ignored in the political scheme of things. Thus, it is here posited that social media could significantly influence the acceleration and acceptance of women in politics. Scholars such as Nnadozie (2007), Chukwu( 2007) and Jega and Ibeanu ( 2007) have observed that, potential synergies between Information Communication Technology developments and democratic renewal arise from the two-way, interactive nature of new digital media and their technical enhancement of citizen capacities to access, produce, distribute, share and debate political information made available through digital networks.

### **Statement of Research Problem**

Women deciding to participate in politics seem to be a problem in Nigeria. It is not new that women have been given certain roles in the society, such as being mothers, school teachers, hairdressers, secretaries, nurse, maids and social workers. These believe is of course wrong given that women, just like their male counterpart have desires and aspirations which can better the political landscape of the country (Beverly, 1995). Many politicians have sought their political desires through the conventional mass media.

Despite the growing benefit associated with the social media, especially in its power to dissolve the difficulties inherent in the use of traditional mass media (TV, radio, newspaper) in political discourse and participation, most politicians (women) still have not found it necessary to use the social media in achieving their political goals.

The social media which appear to be less capital involving in content creation and management during political process have in most cases been used by politicians to further their political agendas. The Goodluck Jonathan's political campaign made good use of the social and the same was reported of President Barrack Obama. But the way social media have been put to use by women, during the political process especially in Nigeria, seems to be in doubt. One is forced to ask, could it be that women did not see the social media as a channel for political

discourse and campaign or that they don't believe in its ability to reach the majority of the electorates who are youth or that they don't recognize the cause effectiveness of social media?

It is in view of this that this study seeks to examine the usage of social media by women for political participation in Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objective of the study was to review the usage of social media by women in Nigeria, as a way forward for increase in political participation in Nigeria.

In view of this, this study sought to:

1. Find out the access rate of women to social media application.
2. Ascertain the extent of the usage of social media by women for political discourse and mobilization in Nigeria.
3. Identify the challenges inherent in the use of social media by women for political discourse and mobilization in Nigeria.
4. Find out the prospects of the use of social media by women for political discourse and mobilization in Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. What is the access rate of women to social media application?.
2. What is the extent of women usage of social media for political discourse and mobilization in Nigeria?
3. What are the challenges to women usage of social media for political discourse and mobilization in Nigeria?
4. What are the prospects of women's use of social media for political discourse and mobilization in Nigeria?

## **Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on analyzing the usage of social media by women as an avenue for political mobilization and empowerment for political stability as it concern the low level of women political participation in Nigeria, with the edge of studying women who have attained a certain level of literacy. The reason for choosing women that attained certain level of literacy is because to use social media, one requires somecertain degree of literacy.

The research is carried out in Enugu Urban of Enugu State. The choice of the area is because Enugu Urban is one of the areas that have attained certain level of development in Nigeria and also a trading centre in Nigeria, one of the biggest commercial cities in Africa and as much, the epicenter of the Southeast (Enete & Alabi, 2012).

## **Significance of the Study**

This study is very important because a lot of people raise questions over the issues of why women do not partake actively in politics. It is expected that at the end of this study, that the findings will show the usefulness of social media in mobilizing women for political decision-making, thereby putting women political participation in a good standard.

Also the study will be of relevance to students, studying communication, researchers and scholars who will like to enrich their knowledge of social media platform and generate resource materials for their further studies.

In as much as this study of women participation in politics through the use of social media calls for “specific means of transmitting information and influencing those who receive it”, public sphere theory is of good value as defined by Jurgen Habermas (1962) as a “society engaged in critical public debate” and also as a “product of democracy”.

## **Literature Review**

### **Social Media Defined**

When we talk of social media, we mean those Internet-based tools and services that allow users to engage with each other, generate content, distribute, and search for information online. Doris (2014: 5) “Social media, basically, concerns all forms of new media technology that offers

interactive sharing of information, videos, pictures, text and comments with such platforms as Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, Blog, MySpace and LinkedIn”. They belong to a new genre of media that focuses on social networking allowing users to express themselves, interact with friends and share information with greater freedom as well as publish their views on issues on the World Wide Web.

Mayfield (2008: 12) describes these media as “online platforms that promote participation, openness, conversation and connectedness”. Nation (2010: 12) sees them as “social instruments of communication which are different from the conventional instruments like newspapers or magazines. Nnanyelugo and Adibe (2013: 33) “Social media emerged with the advent of the internet and the World Wide Web. They are usually associated with the term “web 2.0” which is used to describe websites that provide opportunity for a user to interact with the sender of a message”.

Nnanyelugo and Aibe (2013, 35) “In many parts of the world today, individuals, groups, organisations and even nations are taking advantage of the opportunities provided by social media and other e-media platforms to mobilize millions of people to support and advance their course. In the political sphere it has become a veritable tool for interacting and mobilising citizens towards active participation in the political process and democratic projects”.

## **The Brief Knowledge of Some Social Media Platforms**

### **Facebook**

Doris (2014: 5) noted that “in 2004, Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg created Facebook as a way to connect with fellow students. Initially adopted by high school and college students, the social network, according to its 2012 initial public offering filing, has grown to 845 million active users worldwide, with approximately 161 million active monthly users in the US, making it the premiere social media service in the world. If Facebook were a country it would be the third largest behind China and India”. Facebook originally began as a service only offered to universities, but continually expanded its availability until Facebook allowed global registration in September 2006.

## **Twitter**

Launched in July 2006, Twitter is an online social networking and micro blogging service that has grown to over 300 million users as of 2011. It allows users to exchange photos, videos, and messages of 140 characters or less (Doris, 2014).

Twitter is an “information network that connects you to the latest information about what you find interesting”. Users communicate via “Tweets” which are short posts limited to 140 characters, also allowing for embedded media links. Twitter users can “follow” or essentially subscribe to the updates of other users, some of which include conventional media sources, such as Newsweek or Al-Jazeera, celebrities, and friends. Additionally, tweets can be categorized using “hashtags” which “group posts together by topic or type”. Molocea (2011), explained that twitter is today one of the fastest growing, most popular and most used social networks in existence.

## **YouTube**

Founded in 2005 by Steve Chen and Chad Hurley, YouTube provides a forum for the distribution of video content – everything from cute kittens sleeping to first-run television programs to eyewitness videos of political protests. The two created the site based on their own frustration when trying to share video files”. YouTube was the first website dedicated solely to uploading and sharing personal video. Odinakadotnet (2012) observed that “over 3 billion videos are viewed each day on YouTube, reaching 700 billion playbacks in 2010. As well as uploading and viewing media, users can also leave comments on videos. YouTube is the third most frequented website online”.

## **Weblog (Blog)**

Another social media platform is weblogs, commonly referred to as blogs. According to Geraldine, Melanie and Herlitz (2014)“Blogs are websites hosted and authored by individuals or groups who regularly publish editorial content. Blogs are characterized by the fact that posts can be commented on and linked, enabling the creation of content networks”. Blogs are “an easy-to-use content management tool. When one ‘blog’, one is instantly adding new content to one’s site via a web interface. No technical or programming skills are necessary.” Blogging requires merely

Internet access and typing skills, and these low-cost barriers have led to personal blogs proliferating worldwide.

Social media are used for different purposes. They are part of modern identity management as they offer platforms for self-presentation and individual articulation of thought. They are used for relationship management and information management (Schmidt, 2008: 24).

## **Political Participation**

Political participation is citizens' involvement in the acts, events or activities that influence the selection of and/or the actions taken by political representatives. Anifowose (2004: 205) defines political participation as "those voluntary activities such as holding public and party office, being a candidate for office, attending election campaigns, voting and exposing oneself to political stimuli". It refers to the various mechanisms through which the public express their political views and/or exercise their influence on the political process (Chatora, 2012).

Lewu (2005: 63) however, defines political participation as a "variety of ways in which people try to exercise influence over the political processes". Abubakar (2011) described political participation as the involvement of people, in any political process before a collective decision is arrived. In other words, political participation is when a citizen engages himself in the dialogue of socio-political and economic issues which serve as yardsticks for choosing would be leaders. It may also include assessing the capabilities of the incumbencies and advocating ways of improving societal ills for a more prosperous country.

OpCit Research (2013: 28) citing Verba and Colleagues (1995) provide a useful eight point scale of civic political participation

1. Voting;
2. Working in and contributing to electoral campaigns and organizations;
3. Contacting government officials;
4. Attending protests, marches, or demonstrations;
5. Working informally with the others to solve some community problem;



6. Serving without pay on local elected and appointed boards;
7. Being active politically through the intermediation of voluntary associations;
8. Contributing money to political causes in response to mail solicitations.

### **Women Political Participation in Nigeria**

Okafor and Akokuwebe (2015: 2) noted that “in many African countries, such as Nigeria, intolerable social norms, political exclusion and economic unevenness dictate the presence and voice of women in public life. According to the 2006 Nigerian population census figure, women constituted 49% of the total population, yet, there has been a gross gender gap between men and women, especially in political representation, economic management and leadership. Political equality is still incomprehensible in African countries, although some progress has been made. As men have control over assets and have relatively better education, they have a dominant position in terms of political power. For instance, men councilors may not necessarily be highly educated but such positions are not given to women who have the same low educational level with them. Lack of awareness leads to situations where they become dependent on male political positions or political parties. Men's participation in leadership will focus more on issues of men's interest than on women's concerns. In Nigeria, a lot of women lack effective power or influence, especially in federal government structure. Many of them do not have the necessary skills to present ideas effectively. Lack of awareness of political participation means inadequate contribution to public affairs and women's empowerment. When women are given the opportunity of participation in leadership, they will recognize these problems and address them to accommodate full participation of women in leadership at all levels of the arms of government”.

Okafor (2010: 47) said that “Nigeria politics is replete with political thuggery, arson, political killings and excessive use of money, rituals, blackmail and other forms of electoral violence. These vices discourage a good number of women from participating in politics”.

Okafor and Akokuwebe (2015: 2) further observed that “one of the important reasons why women have not received adequate benefits from years of planning and development is their inadequate representation, non-participation and non-involvement in the preparation and execution of plans for their economic development and social justice through decentralized institutions”. Most political parties do not even maintain data on their women membership and

few women are granted tickets for elections (Shamim and Kumari, 2002). Since politics is traditionally a male domain and all financial, economic, commercial and political negotiations conducted outside the home are by males, Nigerian women have very limited access to decision-making process, and they have a severe lack of access to and control over financial resources. This effectively reduces women's chance of contesting elections.

However, Matland (2005) identifies three stages women must pass before entering national parliament: 1) they need to select themselves; 2) they need to be selected as candidates by the parties; and, 3) they need to be selected by the voters. Matland, also observed, that at this first stage 'already, there are more men than women.

OpCit Research (2013: 33) notes that "In order for a woman to make the first 'stage' of a journey into politics, the literature identified that interest in politics is an important prerequisite".

### **Use of Social Media for Political Discourse**

Studies (Flew, 2005:26; Boyd and Ellison, 2007) have noted that the possibilities for promoting an expanded conception of democratic political participation through information and communications technologies (ICTs; social media) have been widely observed. (Nnadozie, 2007:4; Chukwu, 2007:75; Jega and Ibeanu, 2007) observed that, potential synergies between social media developments and democratic renewal arise from the two-way; interactive nature of new digital media and their technical enhancement of citizen capacities to access, produce, distribute, share and debate political information made available through digital networks.

In his study, *From e -Government to online deliberative democracy*, Flew (2005:26), identified six requirements for using social media to enhance the democratic process: (1) widespread and effective access to decision-makers; (2) provision of relevant and timely information; (3) interaction within and between institutionally, politically or geographically distinct networked communities; (4) access to various positions in relation to policy issues; (5) the capacity to register choices, and awareness of the implications of different choices; and (6) evidence that such deliberations have informed actions by governing institutions or elected representatives in relation to those issues.

Adibe, Odoemelam and Chibuwe (2011) observed that President Goodluck Jonathan who also made use of social media, on Wednesday, September 15, 2010 announced his bid for the highest political office in the land on Facebook. He informed his 217,000 fans on the world's most popular networking platform of his intent: twenty four hours later, 4,000 more fans joined his page. By the day of the election, on 16 April 2011, he had over half a million followers. In addition to the approximately 3 million registered Nigerians on Facebook and 60,000 on Twitter.

Velencia (2015), observed that Hillary Clinton took to the internet to officially launch her campaign for president via a video posted on YouTube and on her campaign website. She then made an announcement on twitter, setting off a media spark "I'm running for president, everyday Americans need a champion, and I want to be that champion".-H hillaryclinton.com. This, at that moment got her 99, 875 fans talking and 105, 176 likes.

## **Empirical Review**

A study carried out by Luka R. C. (2011), entitled '*Women and Political Participation in Nigeria; The Imperative of Empowerment*' in a Journal of Social Science and Public Policy, strived to find out the specific factors responsible for the low level of political participation of women and to proffer recommendations that will enhance women's participation in political activities. In achieving this, the study made use of existing data.

The researcher found out that women actually face massive resistance from participating in politics. Aside the fact that majority of husbands do not allow their wives to participate in politics, the study discovered that a lot of female believed that politics would prevent them from taking absolute care of their families. Fear of broken homes, breeding irresponsible children and the need to perform their domestic activities were identified as major reasons preventing them from going into politics (Luka, 2011)

A work for *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal* by Sulaimon Adigun Muse, (2014) titled; '*Social Media and Public Participation in Nigeria: Challenges and Possibilities*', set out with the aim of looking at the challenges and the possibilities of social media in public participation in Nigeria. It states the challenges to be: inadequate electricity supply, High cost of tariffs, poor coverage, and government perception. While the possibilities are: Better space for

engagement, moving citizens closer to the government, reduction of anarchy, protest and riots, means of public enlightenment, feedback mechanism. The study however provided an introduction on the subject matter and equally backed up the work with the theory of participatory democracy, as this is one of the essences of making use of the social media, for citizens to participate effectively in governance. The study also provided some recommendations that if taken seriously by the government and the service providers will not only make more Nigerians benefit from social media applications, but will equally help them to become active citizens, that is also able to benefit from participatory democracy.

A study by Anyadike D. O, Ebeze U. V, Odoemelam C. C. (2014) titled “*Social Media In E-Governance And Political Participation In Enugu State, Nigeria*” of The International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Invention, aimed at finding out whether social media, which is the newest phenomenon in internet technology, helps to foster political engagement and participation among citizens in Enugu State. To ascertain the situation, the study triangulated the research technique by using Desk study, Survey and qualitative content analysis methods in the data gathering process. In summary, survey data showed that, the government scored low (2.5 below the accepted level of mean score) in the use of social media to bring their programmes and services to the people, an action which has the potentials of alienating the people from the government. As a result of this finding, the study recommended among others that, there should be a policy that mandates all government departments and agencies to have social media presence and to encourage their clients to transact via the social media platform.

Another study carried out by Andrew Perrin (2015) on “*Social Media Usage: 2005-2015*” of Pew Research Center surveys, focused on analyzing social media usage among adults from 2005 to 2015. The study noted that social media has affected such things as work, politics and political deliberation, communications patterns around the globe, as well as the way people get and share information about health, civic life, news consumption, communities, teenage life, parenting, dating and even people’s level of stress. Using survey method, the study found that women were more likely than men to use social networking sites for a number of years, although since 2014 these differences have been modest. Today, 68% of all women use social media, compared with 62% of all men.

A study by Susanna T. and Vilma K. (2014) on “*The Role Played by Social Media in Political Participation and Electoral Campaigns*”, under the [Members' Research Service](#) had the objective of finding out various roles played by the social media in political participation. From the findings of the study, personal communication via social media brings [politicians and parties closer to their potential voters](#). It allows politicians to communicate faster and reach citizens in a more targeted manner and vice versa, without the intermediate role of mass media. Reactions, feedback, conversations and debates are generated online as well as support and participation for offline events. Messages posted to personal networks are multiplied when shared, which allow new audiences to be reached.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on a communication theory called the Public Sphere theory, propounded by Jurgen Habermas in the year 1962. Habermas opinion of public sphere is such that society will have to engage in critical public debate as part of their function in democracy.

The concept of public sphere refers to a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed with guarantee of freedom of assembly, association and freedom to express and publish opinions about matters of general interest with the aim of influencing political actions or government policies and possibly reach a common judgment. Habermas (1962) argues that the public sphere requires “specific means of transmitting information and influencing those who receive it”. His argument shows that the media are of particular importance for constituting and maintaining a public sphere.

This theory is relevant to this work because it provides a forum for explaining how women’s interest in politics through the platform of social media, could be brought to the public domain for participatory discourse on their political world view. The underlining principles of the public sphere involves an open discussion of all issues of general concern in which politics key for the general interests and good of the people or public. The public sphere thus presupposes freedoms of speech and assembly, a free press, and the right to freely participate in political debate and decision-making (Habermas, 1989:171). Thus, with freedom provided by the

social media as mentioned by Habermas, women could create political web page of their own on social media platforms, for political discussions, where they will make it open for the citizens to be part and passel of everything going on there and as well air their views and complaints. This step can get the public interested in what the woman is capable of doing on political sit.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The study used survey research design. Survey allow for the study of people's opinion on a given issue of public interest. According to Onwukwe (2011), survey research deals with the data gathering for the purpose of describing and interpreting a certain condition, practice, beliefs, attitudes, etc. It has to do with administering questionnaires personally to gather data, and collecting them back from the various respondents in other to analyze the data for a better result. The purpose is usually to describe systematically the facts, qualities or characteristics of a given population, events, or areas of interest concerning the problem under investigation.

### **Area of Study**

The study was carried out in Enugu metropolis, Enugu State, as the epicenter of the Southeast, where women with certain level of literacy were randomly sampled in other to get their answers and reactions to the extent social media can be an avenue for women to mobilize themselves for political gains.

Some of the important towns in the State are Enugu Urban, Oji, Udi and Nsukka Urban. Enugu Urban which is the study area, according to Enete & Alabi (2012: 77), is made up of Enugu East, Enugu North, and Enugu South. Enugu Urban is the educational, commercial, industrial and administrative base of Enugu State. There are 17 prominent residential areas in Enugu Urban. These are: Enugu East: Abakpa, Trans-Ekulu, Nike and Emene; Enugu North: GRA, Ogui, Asata, New Heaven, Ogbete, Iva valley and Independence Layout; Enugu South: Achara Layout, Ugwuaji, Maryland, Awkanaw, Uwani and Obiagu.

## Population of the Study

The population of this study consisted of women in Enugu Urban area.

Enugu Urban Female Population.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA	POPULATION
Enugu East	146, 273
Enugu North	123, 227
Enugu South	104, 262
Total	373, 762

Source: National Population Commission (Census 2006)

## Sample Size

To determine the sample size of this study, Taro Yamani's formula for sample size was used and was given as 204.

## Sampling Technique

To determine the number of questionnaire to be administered to each of the 17 areas in Enugu urban, the researcher used non- proportionate quota sampling technique, since the exact population of each of the areas are not know. This method is used when it is important to ensure that a number of sub-groups in the field of study are well covered, you specify the minimum number of sampled units you want in each category, by dividing the number of the sub-groups with the determined sample size of the study (SlideShare, 2016).

$$\frac{204}{17} = 12$$

Therefore, each of the areas gets 12 copies of the questionnaire.

Using systematic sampling to determine the process of administering the required copies of the questionnaire to the occupants of the areas, the researcher chose the first house in each of the area. Given that the first house was "n", the researcher chose an interval of 6. Administering the first copy of the questionnaire to the first "n", counts six other houses and administers another to the next "n".

Given that an “n” house could have a woman of low level of literacy, the researcher goes for the next house and then takes the interval of 6 to the next “n”, as explained in the scope of this study, to examine only women who have some certain level of literacy.

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

The measuring instrument used in gathering information for this study was questionnaire. The questionnaire had close-ended questions. The close-ended questions were used to make study easier for the researcher by making the responses measurable.

The questionnaire also included an introductory letter and was 204 copies in number. The items in the questionnaire were divided into two parts, consisting of 20 questions. The first part dealt with demographic variables of the respondents while the second part was directly on respondents’ exposition to the issue of study and answered the research questions earlier posed.

### **Validity**

The instrument for this study was valid because it was ideal for measuring what it was designed for, which was analyzing the social media usage by women for political participation in Nigeria.

Obasi (2008:20) notes that “validity is the appropriateness of an instrument in measuring what is intended to measure” for this reason, the researcher went further to test the validity of the instrument using face validity. The copy of the questionnaire will be checked by the supervisor to give the instrument validity.

### **Reliability**

Reliability says of what extent is the result reliable, thus, the researcher used the constructed questionnaire and tested it among a few students in the department of Mass Communication at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu.

The instrument was reliable because the researcher made use of pilot study on the questionnaire and the questions were given the desired result.

### **Method of Data Collection**



In this study, the researcher adopted the primary method of data collection. Since the study was an empirical one, the data for this exercise was obtained from information gathered from the items on the questionnaire, distributed and collected by the researcher.

The copies of questionnaire were face to face-self administered. Two hundred (200) copies of the questionnaire were retrieved, while four (4) were lost due to unavoidable absence of four women.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

The aim of this study was to analyze the usage of social media by women in the area of political participation in Nigeria. In this chapter, the researcher presented and analyzed the data generated through the administration of questionnaire instrument. Two hundred and four (204) copies of questionnaire were administered to the various respondents, out of which 200 copies were retrieved and used for the analysis.

The research questions include:

1. What is the access rate of women to social media application?
2. What is the extent of women usage of social media for political discourse and mobilization in Nigeria?
3. What are the challenges to women usage of social media for political discourse and mobilization in Nigeria?
4. What are the prospects of women's use of social media for political discourse and mobilization in Nigeria?

The questionnaire which comprised of closed ended questions was divided into two segments. Part A was made up of items that dealt with the demography of the respondents, while part B answered questions on the psychographic data of the respondents.

### **Discussion of Findings**

This section discusses the findings of the study in relation to the four research questions raised.

#### **Research Question 1: What is the access rate of women to social media application?**

It was revealed that 83.3% of women have high access rate to social media application. This finding is in conformity with the findings of Andrew Perrin in his study on social media usage: 2005-2015, which states that women were more likely than men to use social networking sites for a number of years, with the attribution of 68% of all women use social media, compared with 62% of all men.

The implication of this finding is that between 2015 and 2016, it is safe to say that there has been an increase of 15.3% in the women access rate to social media applications. This means that the rate at which women have access to social media applications is constantly on the increase.

### **Research Question 2: What is the extent of women usage of social media for political discourse and mobilization in Nigeria?**

This study further revealed that to a large extent at 64.5%, women do not use the social media in achieving their political goals. This finding is in relation with the findings of Anyadike Dominic O, Ebeze Uche Victor, Odoemelam Chinedu Christian, 2014 on Social Media in E-Governance and Political Participation in Enugu State, Nigeria. From their study, the government scored low (2.5 below the accepted level of mean score) in the use of social media to bring their programmes and services to the people, an action which has the potentials of alienating the people from the government. Comparing the two studies, it can be understood that there is no doubt saying that women do not make use of social media for political discourse or participation, even after having access to the platforms.

### **Research Question 3: What are the challenges to women usage of social media for political discourse and mobilization in Nigeria?**

This study also observed that at the average of 32.5% response, which is higher than other responses, it cannot be said that women who are interested in politics do not have account with any social media platform. Furthermore, average of 51.8% of the respondents strongly agreed and at the average of 45% the respondents simply agreed on other proposed hindrances or challenges to women usage of social media for political discourse, participation and mobilization. These challenges include:

- a) Lack of personal page or group page on any social media platforms.
- b) Low literacy level in the area of using social media for political discourse and participation.

- c) Lack of network access.
- d) Lack of time.

All the findings except one are different from the findings of Sulaimon Adigun Muse in his study on Social Media and Public Participation in Nigeria: Challenges and Possibilities, 2014. Muse stated the challenges to be: inadequate electricity supply, high cost of tariffs and government perception and has one challenge of poor coverage in conformity with lack of network access. Findings from the two studies imply that challenges given by Muse as at 2014 must have been resolved, except that of poor coverage or lack of network access. This is reflecting the fact that the current challenges can still be resolved or reduced.

#### **Research Question 4: What are the prospects of women's use of social media for political discourse and mobilization in Nigeria?**

From the data presented on this study, to a large extent at 66.6% of the response, it can be agreed that women can use the social media to increase their political participation in Nigeria. The prospects include that:

- a) Women contributing or taking part in political discussions, using the social media, can remove apathy from politics.
- b) Women contributing or taking part in political discussions, using the social media, can increase their understanding of politics.
- c) Women using the social media for political issues and discourse can increase their participation in politics.

These findings are in conformity with the findings of Susanna Tenhunen and Vilma Karvelyte on The Role Played by Social Media in Political Participation and Electoral Campaigns, 2014. The researchers found that personal communication via social media brings [politicians and parties closer to their potential voters](#). This is also in relation with the findings of Sulaimon Adigun Muse on Social Media and Public Participation in Nigeria: Challenges and Possibilities, 2014. The study found that the possibilities of using social media for public participation include better space for engagement, moving citizens closer to the government, reduction of anarchy, means of public enlightenment, feedback mechanism.

Given this three studies, it is clear that truly social media usage by women can be an avenue for increase in politics in Nigeria.

## **Summary of Findings**

In the course of this study, the following findings were made:

1. Women have a very high access rate to social media application. Majority of the respondents at 83.3% agreed to this fact.
2. Prior to having social media application, women to a large extent at 64.5% do not use social media for political issues.
3. With 32.5% of the respondents that strongly agreed and 47%.5 that agreed on the fact that women who have interest in politics have low literacy level of using social media for political discourse, it is safe to say that women do not have the knowledge of using the social media for political discourse, participation and mobilization in Nigeria. Again, for the fact 45% of the respondents strongly agreed and 17.5% agreed that women who are interested in politics do not even have any personal or group page with their social media platforms, then it could be said that most women who have interest in politics are not publicly related to the people.
4. Above all, at a large extent of 66.6%, the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the social media can be a medium for Nigerian women's increase in political participation. It could be said that there are chances that women can increase their political participation using social media.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings, this study concludes that aside having access to social media applications, women in Nigeria do not use the social media for political discourse, participation and mobilization. If women really have political interest, they can take a bold step into increasing their political status, understanding and participation. Thus, being in politics has a connection with the people; certain perceived difficulties in using social media for political discourse and mobilization. These difficulties can be reduced if women realize that they are judged by the public based on the political capabilities they project.

## **Recommendations**

Considering the fact that the findings of this study dwelled on the analysis of social media usage by women for political participation in Nigeria, the following are therefore recommended:

1. Women should endeavor to use the social media as a medium for discussing political issues. This earns the support of public sphere theory which according to Okoro and Diri (2009:303), “the public sphere is an area in social life where individuals can come together freely discuss and identify societal problems and through that discussion influence political action”
2. The benefits of the use of social media by women for political discourse, participation and mobilization at 66.6% outweigh its challenges at 46.3%, as such the challenges should not be allowed to be a barrier.
3. Given the prospects of women using social media for political discourse, participation and mobilization, women should be encouraged to make public their political values, using means of social media platforms.

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