

**INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION
ON YOUTHS IN ENUGU SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA**

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Igwilo Eucharika Anurika, hereby declare that this research work was written by me and has not been submitted or received anywhere for the purpose of acquiring a degree in Mass Communication or any other programme.

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CERTIFICATION PAGE

I, Igwilo Eucharia Anurika, with the registration number GOU/U22/MAS/471 of the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Godfrey Okoye University, Ugwuomu-Nike, Enugu State, have satisfactorily completed the requirements for the award of B.Sc. Degree in Mass Communication. This project is original and has not, to the best of my knowledge, been submitted in part or full for any other certification, diploma or degree programme of this or any other University.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project especially to the Almighty God for his favour, strength, love, guidance, provision and protection towards me throughout these four years.

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I want to first thank God for his guidance, preservation and protection over me throughout these four years. I do not deserve all the love and favour he showed to me, but he still did, he showed up for me at desperate times, I owe it all to you, God. I am eternally grateful.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation.	Meaning
B.Sc.	Bachelor of Science
ENSIEC.	Enugu State Independent Electoral Commission
HND.	Higher National Diploma
INEC.	Independent National Electoral Commission
LGA.	Local Government Area
M.S.S.	Management and Social Sciences
NCE.	Nigeria Certificate in Education

NCC.	Nigeria Communications Commission
OND.	Ordinary National Diploma
PVC.	Permanent Voter Card
SPSS.	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
WAEC.	West African Examinations Council

ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of social media influencers on the political participation of youths in Enugu South Local Government Area. Anchored on the Two-Step Flow Theory of Communication, the study was guided by four research questions that sought to determine the extent of youth exposure to social media influencers, the level of awareness of such influencers, the degree to which influencers affect youth political participation, and the challenges associated with using influencers for political mobilisation. A descriptive survey design was adopted, and data were collected from 393 respondents drawn through a multistage sampling technique from across the ten wards of Enugu South LGA. A structured questionnaire with a 4-point Likert scale was used as the instrument for data collection. Data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, and mean scores via SPSS version 25, with a Bench mark of 2.5. Findings revealed that youths in Enugu South LGA are highly exposed to social media influencer content, primarily through Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter/X, and possess strong awareness of influencers as digital opinion leaders. Influencers were found to significantly shape various dimensions of youth political participation, including online activism, voter registration, and political discussion, though offline participation such as rally attendance and voting remained comparatively lower. Challenges including misinformation, data costs, poor connectivity, and youth preference for entertainment content were identified as key barriers to effective influencer-driven political mobilisation. The study concluded that social media influencers function as modern digital opinion leaders consistent with Two-Step Flow Theory, but structural and behavioural constraints temper their full mobilisation potential. It is recommended that INEC, civil society organisations, and political actors design strategic influencer partnerships that account for platform-specific behaviours and address identified barriers to maximise youth political engagement in local government contexts.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Youth participation plays an important part in making democratic governance stronger, supporting lasting development across Africa, yet young Nigerians continue to face important barriers to useful political involvement. Political participation refers to the actions through which people take part with political systems and seek to shape governance results. Dunu, Uzochukwu (2015) describe it as actions done by choice meant to shape leadership choices, policy choices, or the whole political setting. Okoro with Santas (2017) make this meaning wider to include both usual actions such as voting, campaigning, with joining political parties, as well as new forms,

including online civic action, political discussions on social media, petition signing and sharing of content. According to Nwankwo, Hamman and Chukwu (2019), youths make up about 60% of of Nigeria population, showing a large population force that could reshape the of the nation political path if enough mobilised.

Despite this benefit in number, Ojebode, Onekutu and Adegbola (2015) show that youth voter turnout in Nigerian elections has with steadiness remained below 40%, showing a worrying pattern of low political involvement among young people. Usual political structures have by plan kept out youths from decision processes, creating a culture of low interest and loss of trust with usual politics. Ekwueme, Folarin with Egbunike (2017) show that past factors such as violence in politics, corruption and the control by older leaders of Nigerian politics have contributed to youth feeling pushed away from formal political actions.

In spite of this, the rise of digital tools has begun to change these patterns, giving other paths for political expression and civic participation. digital tools are digital tools with platforms that allow information creation, storage and exchange across networks. Also, Adibe with Odoemelum (2021) note that social platforms have created new chances for young Nigerians to access political information, take part in political talk and organise group action outside usual institutional systems. This change in technology has at base challenged usual ideas about youth political apathy, showing instead that youths may only be seeking new forms of political involvement that match with their digital ways of life and communication choices.

The spread of social media into Nigerian society has followed a clear path over the past decades, at base changing communication patterns and ways of using information among the youth population. Social media refers to online platforms that allow users to create, share, with exchange content while supporting interaction and community. Ezeah, Asogwa with Edogor (2016) describe

it as technology driven by content made by users, interaction and networking, features that move control of information from media organisations to people. Over the past decade, the growing use of social media among Nigerian youths has moved beyond entertainment to become a main channel for political information with mobilisation. Adibe with Odoemelam (2021) note that online platforms now allow youths to access political content, take part in public debates and follow political discussions outside usual institutional spaces. In urban local government areas such as Enugu South, many youths encounter political issues in the main through posts, videos and commentaries shared by well known online persons. This pattern shows that the key issue is no longer whether youths are active online,, whose messages they consume with how these messages shape their political views and actions (Nwankwo, Hamman & Chukwu, 2019).

Within this setting, social media has created space for a new group of opinion leaders who are not usual politicians, journalists but work as influential persons within digital networks. Okon with Eke (2021) explain that these content creators gain trust through seen honesty and steady interaction with followers. By selecting political issues to show, shaping debates in language that youths can relate to, with supporting participation in actions such as voter registration, rallies, with online support work, these influencers shape how many youths understand and take part with politics (Ekwueme, Folarin & Egbunike, 2017). This development places influencers at the centre of current youth participation in settings such as The LGA. Influencers are people who have built large followings on online platforms with can affect audience views and actions. Asogwa, Ugwuanyi with Iyeke-Ofoedu (2022) define influencers as people who have built large followings on online platforms with possess the ability to affect the views, actions, with buying choices of their audiences through their content and seen authority.

Unlike usual celebrities, political persons, these influencers come from their trust from their seen honesty, closeness and steady involvement with their followers rather than from formal institutional positions (Okon & Eke, 2021). The influencer system includes different groups ranging from mega-influencers with millions of followers to micro-influencers whose smaller but to a high degree engaged audiences may yield more important effects on behaviour in specific settings. Chibuwe with Ureke (2016) note that influencers build trust through one-sided online relationships, where followers develop one-sided feeling links that make them more open to the by the influencer messages and recommendations.

Influence, in this setting, refers to the ability to change others thoughts, feelings, or actions through communication processes. Ekwueme, Folarin with Egbunike (2017) distinguish it from persuasion, which targets views,, force, manipulation, which in a re way on force or deceit. Adibe with Odoemelum (2021) explain that influence is relationship-based, involving an starter, a open audience, a message, with a communication channel, with may occur aware through careful reasoning, unaware through social signs and norms. Nwankwo, Hamman with Chukwu (2019) note that it includes thinking, feeling, with behaviour parts with works within wider social structures shaped by power, culture and organisations.

Political participation, as earlier noted, extends beyond the usual act of voting to include a wide range of actions through which people take part with political processes and seek to influence government decisions. Dunu with Uzochukwu (2015) conceptualise political participation as encompassing both usual actions such as voting, attending rallies, with joining political parties, as well as new forms including online civic action, political discussions on social media, petition signing and sharing of content. Okoro with Santas (2017) stress that digital technologies have

expanded the range of ways to participate available to youths, allowing forms of involvement that need lower barriers to joining and offer more freedom than usual political actions.

The meeting point of social media influence with youth political behaviour, represents a complex matter where content creators serve as opinion leaders who can in a possible way mobilise their young followers toward different forms of political involvement, though the exact ways and success of this influence remain areas of continuing academic study.

New events both around the world with within Nigeria have showed the growing importance by influencers in political mobilisation and civic involvement among young groups. The EndSARS movement of October 2020 provides a strong example of how influencers can start large political action, as Nigerian celebrities with content creators used their platforms to organise protests, share information and keep the movement going for weeks despite resistance from government (Apuke & Apollos, 2017). Aziza with Saka (2018) record similar patterns during the 2015 presidential elections, where influencers with online activists played important roles in shaping political stories with encouraging youth voter registration and turnout.

In spite of this, despite these well known examples and growing recognition of influencer power in political settings, important gaps remain in academic understanding of how these patterns work in specific local government areas such as Enugu South. Ngonso (2019) notes that most existing studies focus on events at national level, large city areas, leaving not studied enough the particular ways that influencer impact appears in smaller urban centers with distinct social and political features. Also, Ifeanyichukwu (2018) finds method challenges in measuring the real behaviour results of social media exposure, as much research mixes online signs of political interest with real offline political participation. The The LGA presents a with special focus relevant

setting for studying these issues, given its position as an urban centre with large youth population, large social media spread and active local political culture.

Against this background, understanding how influencers with focus affect the political participation by youths in Enugu South becomes necessary for developing strategies based on evidence to improve democratic involvement and for contributing to the wider theory-based understanding of digital political communication in Nigerian local settings.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Youth participation in Nigeria remains very low despite wide social media use, with only 34.7% of registered voters aged 18-35 participating in the 2023 general elections, according to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC, 2023). The National Bureau of Statistics (2022) shows that while 71% of Nigerian youths use with activity social media each day, this involvement has not changed into matching political involvement. In Enugu State with focus, the Enugu State Independent Electoral Commission recorded youth voter turnout at only 28.3% in local government elections (ENSIEC, 2021). Different stakeholders have put programmes in place to address this challenge, including of INECs "Get Your PVC" campaign. This worked with influencers to encourage voter registration and civil society organisations like YIAGA Africa using social media campaigns for civic education. In spite of this, Adibe and Odoemelum (2021) note that youths take part more with entertainment content from influencers than with political content, raising questions about success of mobilisation.

The current situation shows a important gap in knowledge about how influencers with focus affect youth participation in local government settings like The LGA. Existing studies by Nwankwo, Hamman with Chukwu (2019) with Okoro with Santas (2017) focus in the main on events at national level, leaving local patterns not studied. Ezeah, Asogwa and Edogor (2016) show

that social media use patterns differ much across Nigerian regions, showing findings from other settings may not apply to Enugu South. While academic organisations and organisations have begun studying social of medias political role, planned research based on evidence on influencer impact at the local government level remains missing. Asogwa, Ugwuanyi with Iyeke-Ofoedu (2022) recognise the need for studies for a specific setting allowing for local political cultures and communication systems. Against this background, this study looks at the influence by influencers on local youth participation.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to look at the influence by influencers on local youth participation. with focus the objectives were to:

1. find how far local youths are exposed to social media influencer
2. find out how far local youths are aware by influencers.
3. find out the level of influencer effect on the local youth participation in politics.
4. find the challenges faced in the use by influencers for local youth participation in politics.

1.4 Research Questions

From the stated objectives, the following research questions will be answered:

1. To what extent are local youths exposed to influencers?
2. To what extent are local youths aware by influencers?
3. What is the level of influencer effect on the local youth participation in politics?

4. What are the challenges faced in the use by influencers for local youth participation in politics?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will be useful to the following stakeholders. as academic work, scholars with researchers in mass communication, political science, with digital media studies will benefit in a theoretical way from this research as it adds to the growing body of knowledge on social media influence and political behaviour. The study will give evidence-based evidence that can guide theory frameworks explaining the relationship between digital opinion leadership with civic involvement, with special focus within Nigerian local government settings where such research remains limited. Future researchers will find the method approaches, findings useful for conducting comparison studies across different geographical settings or exploring related events involving youth political learning through online platforms.

in practice, political parties with campaign organisations will benefit from understanding how to use with effect influencers for political mobilisation and voter education among youths. The study will offer insights into which types of influencer content connect most with youths about political participation, allowing more planned use of campaign resources and development of focused communication strategies. Civil society organisations with youth support groups working to improve democratic participation will gain useful knowledge about the ways through which influencers can be engaged to promote civic education and political awareness among young people. The Independent National Electoral Commission with other election bodies will benefit from understanding the role by influencers in voter mobilisation, in a possible way guiding policies and partnerships that use online platforms for increasing youth electoral participation. In a last way, influencers themselves will gain awareness of their possible impact on political processes,

encouraging more responsible with informed involvement with political content and recognition of their role as opinion leaders who can contribute to democratic development in their communities.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study looks at the influence by influencers on local youth participation, focusing with focus on how exposure to influencer content affects different forms of political involvement among youths. The population scope is limited to youths aged 18-35 years living in the LGA, as this age group represents the main social media user population based and makes up the voting population recognised by law in Nigeria. by place, the study is limited to The LGA in Enugu State, Nigeria, chosen because it represents an urban local government with large youth population, high internet spread and active political culture that makes it suitable for studying social media influence on political behaviour. The idea scope includes different parts of political participation including voting behaviour, political discussions, in a ral way attendance, campaign involvement and online political activism, looking at how influencers impact each of these actions. through method, the study uses a survey research design, which is suitable for gathering data on views, actions and experiences from a large sample by respondents within a defined population. The survey method allows planned collection of number data on the extent of influencer exposure, types of political actions engaged in, seen levels of influence, with challenges experienced by youths, supporting statistical analysis and use of findings for the wider group to the wider youth population in the LGA.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The following made up the limitations to this study. Time limits created a important challenge as the researcher had to balance data collection with analysis with academic coursework

and other responsibilities within a short semester period. This limitation was addressed by developing a detailed research schedule that gave specific periods for each research activity, ensuring planned progress and completion on time of all phases. Money limits affected the study as the researcher had limited funding for transport to different places within The LGA, printing of questionnaires and hiring of research assistants for data collection. This challenge was addressed by adopting a stratified sampling approach that reduced the geographical spread of data collection points while keeping representative sample and by seeking support from family members for basic research expenses. The lack of full data on social media use patterns with influencer reach with focus within The LGA limited the by the researcher ability to show exact sampling frames and check certain assumptions about the setting. This was addressed by conducting early field visits to gather informal data with by relying on national statistics which were placed in setting through pilot testing and expert consultations. Limitations built-in in the survey method included possible response bias where respondents might overstate their political participation levels due to social desirability concerns and the self-reported nature of data. This could not be in a independent way checked. These method limits were reduced by ensuring anonymity of responses, using clear with fair question wording and conducting reliability tests on the research tool to ensure consistency of responses across similar items.

1.8 Operational Definitions of Terms

Enugu South Local Government Area (LGA):

In this study, Enugu South Local Government Area refers to the geographical area in Enugu State where the research was conducted and from which the respondents were selected.

Social Media Influencers:

In this study, social media influencers refer to selected individuals on platforms such as Facebook,

Instagram, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube and WhatsApp whose political or civic-related content has the potential to influence the political awareness and participation of youths in Enugu South Local Government Area.

Influence:

In this study, influence refers to the extent to which social media influencers affect the political awareness, opinions, attitudes and participation of youths in Enugu South Local Government Area.

Political

Participation:

In this study, political participation refers to the involvement of youths in political activities such as voter registration, voting, political discussions, attending political rallies, online political engagement and other civic activities.

Social

Media:

In this study, social media refers to internet-based platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), WhatsApp and YouTube through which youths access political information and interact with social media influencers.

Youths:

In this study, youths refer to males and females between the ages of **18 and 35 years** residing in Enugu South Local Government Area who use social media and constitute the respondents for this study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Review of Concepts

2.1.1 Social Media Influencers

Influencers are people who use online platforms to build large followings with shape audience views and actions. According to Asogwa, Ugwuanyi with Iyeke-Ofoedu (2022), they are described as steady content creators who gain influence through authentic self-presentation, strategic involvement and relatable communication. Their influence stems from digital visibility and seen honesty rather than institutional power, which distinguishes them from usual celebrities (Okon & Eke, 2021). High follower counts, strong involvement and professional content creation that sustains attention over time are their main features. In a political study such as this, in spite of this, the main concern is not every online personality., those influencers whose repeated content touches on elections, governance, civic duties, public responsibility, voter registration, leadership debates and youth mobilisation. This distinction is necessary because a lifestyle, entertainment influencer may attract visibility, while a political social media influencer links with clear purpose digital visibility to civic and political behaviour among followers.

Influencers differ by audience size, specialisation and platform. A classification by Ogbonna with Okon (2020) sorts them as mega (over 1 million followers), macro (100,000-1 million), micro (10,000-100,000) and nano (under 10,000). While mega-influencers reach main audiences, stronger behaviour effects are often achieved by micro with nano-influencers because of seen intimacy and trust (Ezeah, Asogwa & Edogor, 2016). Different niches are dominated by typological groups such as lifestyle, entertainment, political and educational influencers. Communication styles with audience reach are shaped by platform differences: Instagram for

visuals, Twitter/X for commentary, TikTok for short videos and YouTube for long content (Nnanyelugo & Nwafor, 2018).

The impact by influencers works through trust, parasocial bonding and planned communication. Trust arises from expertise, trust value and transparency in distinguishing sponsors from organic content (Adibe & Odoemelam, 2021). Feeling link is fostered by one-sided online relationships, which increases receptivity to messages (Chibuwe & Ureke, 2016). Useful content strategies, as noted by Ojebuyi (2020), include storytelling, steady posting, interactive involvement and trend alignment. Also, social proof, where visible involvement with testimonials attract new followers, creates follow-the-crowd effects that expand reach and reinforce seen legitimacy (Udomisor & Sunaga, 2020). As a group, these ways explain how influencers shape opinions, encourage participation and mobilise communities through digital connection. Within this study, these ways are applied with focus to selected political influencers because the research looks at how in political terms relevant influencer content affects youth participation in the LGA.

2.1.2 Selected Political Social Media Influencers

Selected political influencers refer to known online persons whose contents are with force connected with politics, governance, elections, civic responsibility, public policy and democratic responsibility. Unlike general influencers who may focus on lifestyle, fashion, comedy, sports,, entertainment, political influencers use their platforms to explain political issues, comment on performance of leaders, mobilise followers for civic action and direct attention to matters of public concern. In this study, the phrase selected political influencers is used in a general way to cover those influencers whose political, civic messages are visible to local youths across platforms such as Twitter/X, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and WhatsApp. Their relevance lies in the fact that youths often encounter political issues through short posts, opinion threads, live videos,

memes, reposted clips,, campaign messages shared by these digital actors rather than through formal political meetings or usual news channels.

The choice of political influencers may be understood through their content focus, audience reach, trust, consistency and involvement level. Content focus means that the influencer in a regular way discusses election matters, governance problems, youth rights, public responsibility, voter registration, political candidates, campaign promises, or public policy debates. Audience reach refers not only to the number of followers, also to the level of interaction shown through comments, shares, likes, reposts, mentions and group discussions. Followers trust an influencer when they see the person as informed and sincere in public debate. They value a voice that feels close to them while it speaks with courage about public issues. Political influence becomes stronger when followers receive the same kind of message across time. This pattern carries more weight during voter registration periods or election campaigns. It matters during public protests or national debate. These points make selected political influencers a clearer group for this study than general influencers.

Selected political influencers can be placed in groups based on their public communication. Some act as civic activists who encourage youths to obtain Permanent Voter Cards or vote. They can ask youths to attend public meetings challenge bad governance or support issue-based advocacy. Some serve as political commentators who explain government actions campaign promises court judgments electoral processes or party actions in language that young audiences can understand. Other voices include journalist-influencers public affairs analysts party-aligned campaigners celebrity activists or community-based digital voices. These actors join entertainment visibility with political messaging. Their styles and motives differ. Yet they carry opinion leadership roles because they filter political information and frame issues. They show followers

what public matters deserve attention. This explains why the review of literature must move beyond general influencer visibility toward the political relevance of selected influencers.

The influence of selected political influencers on youth participation works through agenda setting, framing, social proof, feeling appeal and mobilisation cues. They set the agenda when they decide which political issues should receive attention. they frame issues when they explain a problem as injustice, failure, progress, corruption, marginalisation, or youth empowerment. They create social proof when large numbers of followers appear to agree with, share a political message, thereby making other youths feel that participation is popular or necessary. They also give mobilisation cues by telling followers to register, vote, attend rallies, join online conversations, sign petitions, donate, volunteer, report electoral misconduct, or share campaign information. These processes can encourage political awareness, online discussion, voter interest and campaign involvement among youths. At the same time, the influence may be limited by false information, party bias, money motives, poor internet access, entertainment distractions and weak change of online enthusiasm into offline participation.,, this study looks at selected political influencers as digital opinion leaders whose messages may either strengthen or weaken youth participation in the LGA.

2.1.3 Influence

Influence refers to the ability of people, messages to change others thoughts, feelings, or actions through communication processes. According to Ekwueme, Folarin with Egbunike (2017), it differs from persuasion, which targets views,, force, manipulation, which in a re way on force or deceit. As Adibe with Odoemelam (2021) explain, influence is relationship-based, involving an starter, a open audience, a message, with a communication channel, with may occur aware through careful reasoning, unaware through social signs and norms. It includes thinking, feeling, with

behaviour parts with works within wider social structures shaped by power, culture and organisations (Nwankwo, Hamman & Chukwu, 2019). Influence appears as direct, producing immediate behaviour change,, indirect, shaping over time views and beliefs that endure over time (Okoro & Santas, 2017; Aziza & Saka, 2018). It may also be personal, arising from interpersonal interaction,, carried through media, sent through mass media and social media, where online platforms blur distinctions by allowing pseudo-personal relationships (Dunu & Uzochukwu, 2015). Its success, as noted by Nweke (2019), depends on factors such as source trust, expertise, trust value and likability. Additional factors include message quality, clarity, feeling appeal, with novelty (Ifeanyichukwu, 2018) with openness of audience, existing views, knowledge and setting (Ezeah, Asogwa & Edogor, 2016). Repeated, in a time way exposure through trusted sources enhances influence, with special focus during decision periods when audiences are most open to change (Apuke & Apollos, 2017).

2.1.4 Political Participation

Political participation refers to the different actions through which people take part with political systems, state their views and shape governance results. It has been defined as actions done by choice meant to shape leadership choices, policy choices, or the whole political setting (Dunu & Uzochukwu, 2015). Early democratic theory emphasised formal acts such as voting, campaigning and party membership as the main expressions of citizen involvement,, modern scholars such as Okoro with Santas (2017) have expanded this view to include protests, boycotts, petitions and with special focus digital activism conducted through social media. This shift reflects growth in technology with changes between age groups that have transformed political communication and expanded civic participation into online spaces. By ensuring responsibility,

representation, with legitimacy, while fostering inclusion and peaceful conflict resolution, political participation stays vital to democracy (Nwankwo, Hamman & Chukwu, 2019).

Political participation exists in three major forms, conventional, unconventional and digital. Conventional forms include voting, campaigning, with political party membership, which occur within formal legal with institutional systems, as noted by Aziza and Saka (2018). Unusual participation includes protests, boycotts, civil disobedience and petitions that challenge set systems, often arising when usual channels fail to represent public interests (Ekwueme, Folarin & Egbunike, 2017). Digital participation represents the most recent form, comprising online civic action, social media involvement and online mobilisation that expand political involvement beyond location limits. It is noted that digital participation lowers entry barriers, enhances mass mobilisation but remains contested over whether it translates into real offline political action (Apuke & Apollos, 2017).

Several individual, contextual and technological factors shape people involvement levels. Personal features such as age, education, with political interest find awareness, motivation to participate, with youths showing higher online activity but lower conventional involvement (Ezeah, Asogwa & Edogor, 2016). Setting factors include political culture, institutional openness, with media environments that influence how people perceive responsiveness and trust in governance (Adibe & Odoemelam, 2021). Technology influences such as internet access, digital literacy and social media platform features now play central roles in allowing participation. According to Ojebuyi (2020), social media promotes side-to-side communication with peer mobilisation, allowing people to bypass usual gatekeepers and organise group action in a independent way. These linked factors as a group find participation patterns, explaining how

structural changes, technology and individual motivation converge to shape modern democratic involvement.

2.1.5 Youths

Youth is a change stage between childhood with adulthood defined by body based, mind based, with social changes that differ across cultures and time. Nwankwo, Hamman with Chukwu (2019) describe youth through population as those aged 15-35 according to African Union and Nigerian policy frameworks, while the United Nations uses 15-24, emphasising education-to-work transitions. by body, it involves continuing body with brain development affecting judgment with emotion, while in society terms it marks identity search, independence and gradual assumption of adult duties (Ojebode, Onekutu & Adegbola, 2015). Modern views view youths not as social problems, as useful contributors whose creativity and ability to adapt can drive progress (Ekwueme, Folarin & Egbunike, 2017). Nweke (2019) notes their diversity in education, class, with experience, warning against main claims in understanding their roles and needs.

Youths are distinguished by identity seeking, innovation, with skill with digital tools, which shape how they interact with media, politics and society. Their openness to experimentation encourages creativity, also risk-taking, while influence from peers with social media strengthens group norms and activism (Ezeah, Asogwa & Edogor, 2016; Ojebuyi, 2020). In political terms, youths favour expressive with digital participation over conventional voting, revealing a preference for quick response and self-control (Adibe & Odoemelam, 2021). In Nigeria, they form about 60% of the population, showing a possible population benefit constrained by unemployment exceeding 40%, weak education systems and being pushed aside in politics (Nwankwo, Hamman & Chukwu, 2019). Despite these barriers, movements such as EndSARS show Nigerian by youths

group ability for responsibility with reform, using platforms like Twitter, Instagram, with TikTok as spaces for civic expression and political mobilisation (Ekwueme, Folarin & Egbunike, 2017).

2.1.6 Social Media

Social media allows users to create, share, with exchange content while supporting interaction and community over distances. Ezeah, Asogwa with Edogor (2016) describe it as technology driven by content made by users, interaction and networking, features that move control of information from media organisations to people. Ojebuyi (2020) explains that social media opens communication to more people by removing gatekeepers, personalising information through computer sorting systems and accelerating feedback through live interaction. Main features include user profiles, sharing of content, commenting tools and networking functions that sustain virtual communities. Udomisor with Sunaga (2020) add that social media works within an attention economy where content competes for visibility, spreads at speed through fast spread and promotes participation through involvement-led culture. Ogbonna with Okon (2020) note its political importance, showing that it allows people to bypass usual media, communicate direct with leaders, with mobilise group action, though also exposing users to false information and division.

Social platforms differ in structure and purpose. Facebook with Twitter/X focus on networking with public debate. Instagram, TikTok, with YouTube prioritise visual with video content appealing to younger users. while WhatsApp with Telegram support private and group messaging (Adibe & Odoemelum, 2021). Facebook helps general interaction with community building, Twitter/X thrives on real-time political comments, with Instagram with TikTok encourage creative self-expression and influencer-driven communication. YouTube provides long

educational with entertainment content, while private messaging platforms like WhatsApp and Telegram balance privacy with the risk of false information.

In Nigeria, platform use has expanded at speed due to use of smartphones and data access at lower cost. Internet spread rose from 30% in 2012 to over 70% by 2020 (Ezeah, Asogwa & Edogor, 2016), though divides remain across geography, income and education. Youths aged 18-35 dominate online spaces, forming about 75% of users (Udomisor & Sunaga, 2020). Facebook remains the most used platform, Twitter/X leads in political dialogue and TikTok shows the fastest growth. Nigerian youths spend an average of 3-5 hours each day on social media (Ojebuyi, 2020), in the main through mobile devices, with entertainment as the top content type, sharp increases in political involvement during elections or movements such as EndSARS (Adibe & Odoemelum, 2021). These patterns show social of medias growing influence on youth participation, shaping how they access, judge and act upon political information.

2.1.7 Exposure

Exposure means the state of meeting media content through any channel, how far people come into contact with specific messages or information flows. It occurs when people pay attention to content from usual or digital media, including social platforms (Okoro & Santas, 2017). The concept of selective exposure explains that audiences do not encounter content in a random way, seek information matches their interests and beliefs, often reinforced by computer-based selection. Aziza with Saka (2018) find three measurable parts: how often, or how often people encounter specific content. how long, the time spent per exposure. with level of attention, the level of attention and mental involvement. Exposure is a necessary needed condition for media influence since people cannot be affected by messages they never access, although meaning given with rejection still depend on personal reasons and mental patterns (Dunu & Uzochukwu, 2015).

Media exposure takes different forms. Active exposure involves deliberate searching for information such as following political influencers, while passive exposure happens in a incidental way during ordinary platform use (Ezeah, Asogwa & Edogor, 2016). Intentional exposure is planned, goal based, whereas by chance exposure arises through computer sorting systems or social sharing (Ifeanyichukwu, 2018). Exposure can also be direct, when audiences take part with an by the influencer original post, or carried through media, when content is filtered through others (Ojebode, Onekutu & Adegbola, 2015). These distinctions find the amount with quality of political information received, influence whether exposure leads to knowledge, attitude, or behaviour change.

Exposure produces layered effects on the audience, thinking, attitudinal and behaviour. It raises awareness by introducing new political issues with actors (Nwagbara & Otu, 2015), shapes evaluation of participation as useful or futile (Ngonso, 2019). Persuasive effects occur when trusted influencers, strong content lead to belief, attitude change, while behaviour effects appear when exposure prompts political actions such as voting or campaigning. Adibe with Odoemelum (2021) note that exposure impacts depend on mediating factors like attention, comprehension and keeping information. Among youths, exposure to influencers can inspire imitation, reinforce norms through social proof and improve political confidence. Understanding exposure patterns so clarifies why some youths respond with activity to influencer content while others remain disengaged even with similar access levels.

2.2 Review of Related Studies

Dunu and Uzochukwu (2015) conducted a study titled Social Media: An Useful tool for Social Mobilisation in Nigeria to look at how social platforms help group action among Nigerian people. The research, based on Social Mobilisation Theory, used a survey design involving 400

active social media users selected through convenience sampling from major Nigerian cities. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and chi-square tests. Findings showed that social media improved much mobilisation, with 78% by respondents reporting participation in online campaigns that resulted in offline actions. Facebook and Twitter appeared as the most effective organising platforms. The study concluded that social media offers available, low-cost channels for mobilising people around social with political issues, recommending that civil society groups use these tools for advocacy and that the government recognise online mobilisation as a vital democratic force. in a Additional way, the study recommended that civil society organisations develop focused training programmes for influencers to improve their ability for responsible civic support work and that government agencies invest in digital infrastructure to reduce access gaps that limit success of mobilisation in areas with poor services. This study matches the present research by exploring social of medias role in civic involvement, differs in scope and focus, as it looked at general mobilisation across Nigeria rather than influencer-driven youth participation in the LGA. in a Additional way, while Dunu with Uzochukwu used convenience sampling, this study applies stratified random sampling and stresses influencers as main links of political involvement.

Okoro with Santas (2017) conducted a study titled *An Assessment of the Use of Social Media for Political communication in the 2015 Nigerian Presidential Election* with the aim of checking how political actors used social media during campaigns and judging the success of these strategies in influencing voters. The study focused on social media users who followed political content during the 2015 election across Nigeria and was based on the Two-Step Flow Theory. Using a survey design, the researchers sampled 384 registered voters through purposive sampling with analysed data using how often tables, percentages and chi-square tests. Findings showed that

67% by respondents received political information via social media, in the main Twitter with Facebook and that these platforms much influenced voting choices, with special focus among younger voters. The study concluded that social media transformed political communication by supporting direct interaction between politicians with voters and supporting quick information flow. It recommended that political parties adopt professional digital campaign strategies and that election bodies monitor online communication for ethical compliance. This study matches the present research in exploring social of medias political role, using survey method but differs in focus, as it analysed politicians use of platforms rather than influencer-driven youth participation. Unlike Okoro and Santas purposive national sample during a one election, this study uses stratified random sampling of local youths to investigate continuous influencer impact on political involvement beyond specific election periods.

Ngonso (2019) carried out a study titled Social Media and Political Participation Among Young Adults in Cameroon to examine how platform use shapes youth role in politics. The objectives covered the relationship between social media use with political participation. They covered forms of political activity shaped by social media use. They covered factors between social media use with political participation. Uses with Gratifications Theory with Participatory Culture Theory formed the research base. A mixed method design combined surveys with focus group discussions. The study covered young adults aged 18-35 in three urban areas. It used a multistage sampling technique to select 450 respondents. Number data were studied through correlation and regression. Word data were studied through themes. Findings showed a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.68$) between level of attention to platform use with political participation. Online discussions with activism were the most common forms. Offline participation such as voting stayed lower by comparison. The study concluded that social media raises political awareness with online

involvement. It does not at every time lead to usual political involvement. It recommended better media literacy programs with institutional support to connect online civic action with formal political participation. This study connects with the current research because both examine youth with the influence of social media on political participation. It differs through Cameroon setting with multistage sampling design. It has wider focus on general platform use rather than effects from influencers within The LGA.

Aziza with Saka (2018) carried out a study titled Social Media with Political Participation in Nigeria: A Study of the 2015 Presidential Election. The study judged platform use during the election with its influence on voter behaviour. It examined challenges tied to online political involvement. Media Dependency Theory gave the work its base. The study focused on registered voters in Lagos State who used social media during the campaign period. It adopted a descriptive survey design. A sample of 500 respondents was drawn through quota sampling to represent age with education levels. Data were studied through frequency counts with percentages with cross tabulations. Findings showed that 72% of respondents accessed political information through social media. They showed that 58% joined online political discussions. Social media exposure had a strong link with voter turnout. This link had more weight among first-time voters. The study concluded that social media opened access to political information. At the same time it spread false information that could distort voter perceptions. Recommendations covered fact checking systems with digital literacy programmes. They included ethical guidelines for political communication online. This study matches the current research because both examine social media influence on political involvement in Nigeria through a survey design. It differs in scope with focus. Aziza with Saka concentrated on one election within Lagos State through quota sampling. This study applies

stratified random sampling in the LGA to examine lasting effects through influencers on youth participation beyond single electoral events.

Aziza with Saka (2018) carried out research titled *Social Media with Political Participation in Nigeria: A Study of the 2015 Presidential Election*. The research assessed platform use during the election with its effect on voter behaviour. It considered problems linked to online political involvement. Media Dependency Theory served as the study base. The population involved registered voters in Lagos State who used social media during the campaign period. The study used a descriptive survey design. A sample of 500 respondents was selected through quota sampling for spread across age with education levels. Data were analysed through frequency counts with percentages with cross tabulations. Results showed that 72% of respondents got political information through social media. They showed that 58% took part in online discussions. Social media exposure had a clear connection with voter turnout. The connection was stronger among first-time voters. The study concluded that social media widened access to political information. It carried false information that could change voter perceptions in a wrong way. The recommendations included fact checking systems with digital literacy programmes. They included ethical guidelines for political communication online. This study fits the current research because both examine social media influence on political involvement in Nigeria through survey design. It differs in scope with focus. Aziza with Saka studied one election within Lagos State through quota sampling. This study uses stratified random sampling in the LGA to analyse lasting effects through influencers on youth participation beyond isolated electoral events.

Apuke with Apollos (2017) carried out a study titled *Public Perception of the Role of Facebook use in Political Campaigns in Nigeria*. The study examined how Nigerians viewed Facebook influence on political campaigns. It studied trust in political information on the platform

with its role in shaping voting behaviour. Uses with Gratifications Theory with Social Influence Theory guided the study. The study focused on active Facebook users aged 18 or above in Adamawa with Taraba States through a survey design. The Taro Yamane formula selected 384 respondents through planned random sampling. Data were studied through frequencies with percentages with means with t-tests. Findings showed 64% viewed Facebook as influential in political campaigns. The findings showed that 71% raised concerns about information trust. Exposure to political content on Facebook raised political interest with force. It had a weaker relationship with real voting behaviour. The study concluded that Facebook is a strong political communication tool with wide reach. Its persuasive impact was limited because of trust issues. It recommended transparency in online political communication with active fact-checking. It recommended digital literacy development to promote informed participation. This study relates to the current research through its focus on the political role of social media in Nigeria. It shares theory-based foundations with the survey method. It differs by place with concept. Apuke with Apollos studied Facebook users in North-Eastern Nigeria through planned random sampling. This study focuses on The LGA through stratified random sampling. It investigates influencer-carried political participation rather than general Facebook use effects.¹

Ezeah, Asogwa with Edogor (2016) conducted a study titled Platform use Among Students of Universities in South-East Nigeria to find the extent of platform use, find the most in a frequent way used platforms, look at purposes for social media involvement and check how use patterns relate to academic actions. Based on Uses with Gratifications Theory and the Technology Acceptance Model, the study adopted a descriptive survey design covering undergraduate students in five federal universities across South-Eastern Nigeria. Using a multistage sampling method, 500 students were selected through cluster with simple random techniques, with data were analysed

using frequencies, percentages, means and correlation analysis. Findings showed that 89% by respondents used social media each day for an average of 4.5 hours, with Facebook and WhatsApp as dominant platforms. Most students used social media for social interaction (78%) and entertainment (65%), while only 32% used it for academic purposes. Excessive use was in a negative way correlated with academic performance. The study concluded that although social media offers communication and networking opportunities, its use among students remains in the main non-academic. It recommended policies promoting balanced platform use, incorporation of educational content and student training on academic applications. This study shares geographical and method similarities with the current research, being conducted in South-Eastern Nigeria using a survey design. In spite of this, it differs in scope and focus: Ezeah et al. looked at general social media habits among university students, whereas this study investigates influencer-driven youth participation in the LGA using stratified random sampling within a localised political setting.

Ifeanyichukwu (2018) conducted a study titled *Social Media Use with Political Participation Among Nigerian Youths* to explore how platform use influences political involvement and how population based factors moderate this relationship. The study aimed to find the link between social media use how often with political participation, find the most influential platforms and check population based differences. Grounded in Thinking Involvement Theory and Social Capital Theory, it used a correlational survey design targeting Nigerian youths aged 18-35 across all six geopolitical zones. A multistage sampling approach combining stratified with convenience techniques was used to select 600 respondents, with data analysed through Pearson correlation, multiple regression and ANOVA. Findings showed a important positive relationship ($r = 0.56$) between platform use with political participation, with Twitter and Facebook users showing higher involvement than Instagram users. Urban youths participated more with activity

than rural ones, with education much moderated the relationship between use and participation. The study concluded that while social media enhances political participation among Nigerian youths, involvement levels differ across demographics and platforms. It recommended digital literacy programmes for less-educated with rural youths, platform-tailored mobilisation strategies and measures to close the urban-rural digital divide. This study matches the current research by looking at social of medias influence on youth participation using similar age demographics and survey methods. In spite of this, it differs by adopting a nationwide focus and multistage sampling, whereas this study uses stratified random sampling in the LGA to investigate influencer-carried through media participation within a localised setting.

Ojebode, Onekutu with Adegbola (2015) conducted a study titled Correlation Between Social Media with Youth participation in Ekiti State to find the relationship between social media exposure with political participation, find the political actions most influenced and look at barriers limiting mobilisation. Based on Social Learning Theory and the Civic Voluntarism Model, the study focused on youths aged 18-35 in Ado-Ekiti metropolis during the 2014 gubernatorial election. Using an explanatory survey design, a sample of 370 respondents was selected through stratified random sampling, with data were analysed using correlation coefficients, chi-square tests and logistic regression. Findings showed a important positive relationship ($r = 0.61$) between social media exposure with political participation, with voting and campaign attendance being the most affected actions. In spite of this, 68% cited poor internet connectivity and 54% identified online security concerns as barriers. The study concluded that social media in a positive way influenced youth participation, infrastructural and security challenges hindered its full possible. It recommended improved internet infrastructure, digital rights protection and youth education on online safety. This study in a close way matches the present research in method, sampling

technique and localised focus. Yet differs in scope by looking at general exposure during a one election rather than continuous influencer-carried through media participation in the LGA.

Chibuwe with Ureke (2016) looked at Social Media Political Participation with Trust in Government: A Case of Zimbabwe Youths to analyse the link between social media political involvement with trust in organisations and find mediating factors. Guided by Political Trust Theory with E-Participation Theory, the study focused on urban youths aged 18-30 in Harare and Bulawayo who engaged in online political discussions. It adopted a cross-sectional survey design with a purposive sample of 400 in political terms active users, analysed through descriptive statistics, correlation and structural equation modelling. Results showed a negative relationship ($r = -0.52$) between online participation and trust in government, as frequent political criticism on social media was linked to reduced trust in organisations. The study concluded that while social media amplified youth political voices, it in a simultaneous way eroded confidence in government through exposure to opposition stories. Recommendations included fostering open digital communication by authorities, showing official channels for responsibility and promoting balanced information systems to curb division. This study relates to the current research through its examination of social of medias role in youth participation within an African setting, differs by place and in a conceptual way. Unlike Chibuwe with of Urekes purposive sampling with focus on government trust, this study employs stratified random sampling in the LGA to analyse influencer-driven political participation and its effects on involvement levels rather than institutional perceptions.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

2.3.1 Two-Step Flow Theory of Communication

The Two-Step Flow Theory was put forward by Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson and Hazel Gaudet in 1944 through their study of the 1940 U.S. presidential election with later improved by Elihu Katz with Lazarsfeld (1955) in *Personal Influence*, the theory challenges the direct effects model by proposing that media messages move in two stages, from media to opinion leaders and then from these leaders to less active audiences through interpersonal communication.

Its main principles recognise audiences as active choosers of information and stress that influence between people often outweighs direct media exposure. Opinion leaders, present across all social strata, possess greater media access, social connectivity, with trust, allowing them to interpret and relay information that followers trust. The theory assumes that people in a real way on trusted intermediaries who filter with contextualise media content,, that personal communication or one-sided online relationships exert stronger power to persuade than impersonal mass messages.

Current adaptations extend the theory to social media, where influencers serve as digital opinion leaders guiding followers perceptions through interactive online involvement. Uses based on evidence remain strong: Okoro with Santas (2017) used the theory to explain political communication in of Nigeria 2015 elections. Dunu with Uzochukwu (2015) applied it to social mobilisation. and Ngonso (2019) used it to look at youth participation in Cameroon.

This study applies the theory to explain how selected political influencers act as modern opinion leaders who interpret political information, contextualise issues for followers and transmit such messages through trusted online relationships. The framework predicts that influencer trust, political content quality, consistency, audience involvement and relationship strength find youth participation levels more than only access to social platforms. It guides analysis by identifying exposure to selected political influencer content as the key linking variable linking social media communication to youth political behaviour in the LGA.

2.4 Summary of Literature

The reviewed literature shows that social media has reshaped political communication with youth participation across Africa, serving as a major platform for political information, mobilisation and civic action. Research by Dunu with Uzochukwu (2015), Okoro with Santas (2017), with Aziza with Saka (2018) shows strong positive links between social media exposure with youth political involvement, though differing by platform, setting and demography. In a Conceptual way, this review clarified influencers in a general way and then narrowed attention to selected political influencers as the specific actors relevant to the present topic. These selected influencers are important because they produce, interpret, frame, with circulate political, civic content that can affect how youths understand elections, governance, public responsibility, voter registration, online civic action, campaign involvement and other forms of political participation.

In an Empirical way, studies such as Ngonso (2019), Ifeanyichukwu (2018), with Ezeah, Asogwa with Edogor (2016) find limits including digital inequality, false information and weak translation of online civic action into offline participation. Most works employ survey designs with purposive, stratified sampling, in a rare way treat selected political influencers as distinct actors or check multiple participation forms. Research remains concentrated in urban and national settings, leaving local government areas like The LGA underexplored despite their importance for grassroots democracy. Scholars recommend improved infrastructure, digital literacy, ethical content regulation and institutional reforms, though these measures remain not judged enough.

This study fills gaps found by focusing on The LGA, using stratified random sampling to ensure representative coverage, checking several participation parts beyond voting and looking at challenges limiting influencer impact. It thus adds local evidence and deeper understanding of selected political influencers as mediators of youth political involvement in Nigeria. The revised

literature review, matches the study topic by showing that the research is not concerned with influencers in a loose or general entertainment sense., with in political terms relevant influencers whose messages may shape youth awareness, interest, discussion, mobilisation and participation in democratic processes.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the method framework that guided the study of the influence by influencers on local youth participation. It details the research design, population, sampling procedures, data collection instruments, validity with reliability checks, with data analysis techniques that were used to meet the study objectives and answer the research questions by plan.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a survey research design to investigate the influence by influencers on the local youth participation. A research design provides an organised plan that aligns all study components to answer the research problem by plan (Sileyew, 2019). It shows the framework for collecting, measuring, with analysing data, thereby improving reliability and validity while reducing bias.

The survey design involves planned data collection from a sample using structured questionnaires to describe with analyse by respondents views, knowledge and actions toward specific issues (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). This design was suitable because it allowed standard data collection from a large youth population in the LGA about their exposure to influencers, participation in political actions, seen influence levels and experienced challenges, supporting quantitative analysis of relationships between variables.

3.2 Population of Study

The population of this study comprised all youths aged 18-35 living in the LGA who were active social media users and eligible for political actions. To show a clear and in political terms relevant population baseline, the study utilised the official voter register from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC, 2023) for the LGA. Based on this register, there were 80,737 registered voters within this age group, making up the social media-active youths in the area. This group was distributed across the ten wards of Enugu South, Uwani, Ogui New Layout, Maryland, Trans-Ekulu, Obiagu, Achara Layout, Coal Camp, Akwuke, Amorji Nike, with Ugwuaji, with wards of higher residential and business density expected to have greater concentrations.

3.3 Sample Size

The sample size for this study was determined using the Taro Yamane formula, which is suitable for calculating representative samples from limited groups where the exact population size is known. The Taro Yamane formula is expressed as:

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size (62,975 social media-using local youths)

e = margin of error (0.05 for 95% confidence level)

Substituting the values into the formula:

$$n = 62975 / (1 + 62975(0.05)^2)$$

$$n = 62975 / (1 + 62975(0.0025))$$

$$n = 62975 / (1 + 157.4375)$$

$n = 62975 / 158.4375$

$n = 397.44$

Rounding up to ensure enough representation:

$n = 398$ respondents

This sample size of 398 respondents was justified because it provided a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error.

3.4 Sampling Technique

This study used a multistage sampling technique to select respondents from the reachable population of social media-using local youths. This method was with special focus suitable for large groups distributed across separate geographical groups, as it enhanced practicality and cost saving while keeping statistical representative nature through steps of random choice. The sampling proceeded in three defined stages. First, all ten political wards of the LGA served as the main sampling units to ensure complete geographical coverage. Second, one community was in a random way selected from within each ward using a simple random technique. In the third stage, eligible youths as people were selected from these communities using the purposive sampling technique. The choice for the use of purposive sampling technique in the choice of eligible youths as people was to ensure that only youths who were exposed to social media and resided in high areas with high network activity were selected. As such, respondents with the ability to respond to the items in the questionnaire were given the questionnaire.

The total sample was gave by share across the ten communities, with about 40 respondents drawn from each. This ensured the sample reflected the distribution of the youth population across

the of the LGA administrative structure. The distribution by respondents across the wards and selected communities is presented in

Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Distribution of Sample Across Wards and Communities in the LGA

S/N	Ward	Selected Community	No. of Respondents
1	Uwani	Uwani	40
2	Ogui New Layout	Ogui New Layout	40
3	Maryland	Maryland	40
4	Trans-Ekulu	Trans-Ekulu	40
5	Obiagu	Obiagu	40
6	Achara Layout	Achara Layout	40
7	Coal Camp	Coal Camp	40
8	Akwuke	Akwuke	40
9	Amorji Nike	Amorji Nike	38
10	Ugwuaji	Ugwuaji	40
		Total	398

Within each selected community, trained personnel checked eligibility criteria - age (18-35), residency and active platform use - before administering the survey.

3.5 Instruments for Data Collection

The main tool for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire developed to obtain number data on social media influencer exposure, political participation actions, seen influence levels and challenges affecting influencer impact among local youths. A questionnaire was adopted because it allowed planned collection of standardised information from large samples in a efficient way, helped numerical coding for statistical analysis and reduced interviewer bias by presenting same questions in a same format (Wimmer & Dominick, 2018).

The tool was structured in two sections: Section A gathered population based data such as age, gender, education, occupation, with ward of residence to describe the sample and analyse population based differences. At the same time Section B addressed the four research objectives through subsections measuring (i) extent of social media influencer exposure, how often, how long, platforms, with number by influencers followed. (ii) types of political participation influenced, voting, campaigning, discussions, rallies, with online civic action. (iii) level of influencer impact, seen influence on awareness, interest, efficacy, with participation. with (iv) challenges affecting influence, technological, content-related, behaviour and structural barriers.

A 4-point Likert scale was used for all attitudinal with how often based questions, with options such as with force Agree, Agree, Disagree, with with force Disagree, Very Often, Often, in a Rare way and Never, excluding a middle neutral point to reduce middle choice bias (Asika, 2016). The questionnaire consisted in a entire way of closed questions to help quantitative coding with analysis and was written in English, as the target population of educated, in a digital way active youths could comprehend the language. A pilot test involving 10% of the sample (40 respondents) drawn from similar groups outside Enugu South checked clarity, length, relevance and comprehension of items. Feedback from the pilot guided refinements in wording, sequencing, with answer options to improve validity, reliability and overall usability before full administration.

3.6 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Validity of the Tool

Validity refers to the level to which a research tool measures in an accurate way what it is designed to measure, ensuring that questionnaire items in truth reflect the constructs of social media influencer exposure, political participation, influence levels and related challenges rather than unrelated factors (Nwana, 2017). Showing validity was vital because an tool, though reliable, is meaningless if it measures the wrong variables, leading to wrong conclusions.

This study emphasised content validity, which checked whether questionnaire items represented in full all relevant aspects in the study variables as outlined in the idea-based framework and working definitions. To show content validity, the draft questionnaire was reviewed by the by the researcher supervisor with two lecturers from the Department of Mass Communication who are experts in social media research and quantitative method. These experts looked at the tool for clarity, relevance, completeness, logical organisation and alignment with the in the study objectives. They provided written feedback showing unclear items, missing parts,, inappropriate answer options and recommended needed revisions. The researcher then joined the feedback, identified overlapping suggestions, with refined the questionnaire by rewriting unclear items, adding, deleting questions as needed and changing answer formats to improve precision. After incorporating expert recommendations, the revised version was resubmitted to the supervisor for final approval before pilot testing, thereby ensuring that the tool showed strong content validity and with effect captured the key constructs central to this study.

3.7 Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability refers to the degree of consistency and stability in measurement, showing that the questionnaire should yield similar results if repeated under similar conditions with similar respondents, thus reflecting reliable measurement of constructs rather than random variation (Asika, 2016). The study tested internal consistency reliability, which checked whether items designed to measure the same construct correlated with force, showing that they as a group represented a coherent underlying concept.

of Cronbachs Alpha served as the reliability coefficient, with values between 0 and 1, where $\alpha \geq 0.70$ shows acceptable reliability in social science research. Reliability testing was based on data from a pilot test involving 38 respondents with similar characteristics to the target population but living outside The LGA to prevent sample contamination. The pilot questionnaire contained 20 main items scored on a 4-point Likert scale. Item means ranged between 2.6 with 3.5, with total item variance ($\sum Si^2$) = 9.8 and overall variance (S^2) = 28.5.

Applying of Cronbachs Alpha formula

$$\alpha = (k/(k-1)) \times [1 - (\sum Si^2/S^2)],$$

where $k = 20$,

$$\text{yielded } \alpha = (20/19) \times [1 - (9.8/28.5)]$$

$$= 1.053 \times 0.656$$

$$= 0.71.$$

This coefficient exceeded the 0.70 benchmark (Wimmer & Dominick, 2018), confirming acceptable internal consistency reliability.

3.8 Methods of Data Collection

The researcher gave the questionnaire by hand with help from one trained research assistant. This method supported sharing of forms with guidance as well as return of completed copies from respondents in the ten sampled wards of The LGA. Personal administration was used to raise response rates and to explain unclear questions. It also helped to ensure that eligible respondents completed the questionnaires (Wimmer & Dominick 2018). The research assistant was trained in ethical procedures with sampling protocols. The training covered neutrality during contact with respondents and proper administration techniques.

Data collection lasted four weeks. During this period the researcher and assistant visited youth-concentrated areas across the wards. These places included markets schools motor parks religious centers and recreational venues. Questionnaires were given from 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM on weekdays as well as weekends to improve access. Ethical standards were followed by explaining the study purpose voluntary nature expected completion time and right to withdraw without penalty. Verbal informed consent was received before participation. Confidentiality was protected because identifying details were excluded from questionnaires and responses were analysed in combined form.

Sampling procedures were followed as planned to identify eligible youths aged 18-35 living in Enugu South who used social media. After distribution respondents filled the questionnaire on-site while the researcher and assistant stayed ready to explain questions. Completed questionnaires were checked at the collection point for completeness as well as readability. When responses were missing the respondents were asked with polite language to complete them where needed. All instruments were stored in a locked cabinet in researcher custody until data entry and analysis were finished to protect data integrity with security.

3.9 Methods of Data Analysis

Data from questionnaires were analysed with descriptive and inferential statistical methods because these methods matched the study objectives as well as research questions. After fieldwork completed questionnaires were serialised checked for completeness and coded with numbers for statistical processing. Likert scale responses received values from SA = 4 to SD = 1 while negative items used reverse coding. The coded data were entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 for analysis. SPSS version 25 gave tools for data management descriptive summaries and inferential testing (Asika 2016). Data checking used random checks with frequency runs to find entry errors and correct them.

Descriptive statistics such as frequencies percentages and mean scores described the extent of social media influencer exposure. They described the types of political participation influenced seen influence levels and challenges encountered. Mean scores were read through this scale: 3.50-4.00 (very high) 2.50-3.49 (high) 1.50-2.49 (low) and 1.00-1.49 (very low). Frequencies and percentages showed the spread of responses for each variable (Wimmer & Dominick 2018). Inferential analysis was used where necessary to test relationships and check importance at a 95% confidence level ($p < 0.05$). Data were presented in tables bar charts and pie charts to give clarity with visual meaning.

Missing data were handled through listwise deletion to protect integrity. When missing values were above 10% for any variable multiple imputation in SPSS was used and reported with clear detail (Nwana 2017). This analysis process provided evidence on how influencers affect local youth participation. It summarised patterns relationships and challenges in a planned as well as accurate way.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The presentation and analysis of data obtained from the distribution of questionnaires are the main focus of this chapter. In an additional way, a discussion of the data obtained from the responses of the respondents is offered in the final section of the chapter.

4.2 Data Presentation and Analysis

The data presentation and analysis were done in two ways which include the number data.

4.2.1 Analysis of Quantitative Data

The responses gotten from the questionnaire were analysed in this section. The items in the questionnaire were drafted to address the four research questions in the study. In this study, 398 copies of questionnaires were distributed to the different respondents through face-to-face methods. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions which was divided into two segments: Section A and Section B. Section A was made up of items that focused on the population based data of the respondents while Section B answered questions on the psychographic data.

4.2.2 Analysis of Demographic Data

The data analysed here comprised the gender, age group, educational qualification, occupation and ward of residence of the respondents. This was done using items 1 to 5 of the questionnaire.

Table 4.1: Gender by respondents

Option	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	142	36%
Female	251	64%
Total	393	100%

The data in Table 4.1 shows that the most respondents (64%, $n = 251$) were female, while male respondents made up 36% ($n = 142$) of the sample. This gender distribution shows the population based pattern of active social media users in the urban areas of Enugu State, where female youths take part more with activity with digital content platforms, with matches Adibe and Odoemelum (2021) who noted higher female participation in online spaces among Nigerian youths.

Table 4.2: Age Group by respondents

Option	Frequency	Percentage %
18 – 21 years	118	30%
22 – 25 years	188	48%
26 – 30 years	70	18%
31 – 35 years	17	4%
Total	393	100%

Table 4.2 shows that respondents aged 22-25 years made up the largest group (48%, $n = 188$), followed by the 18-21 age group (30%, $n = 118$). Respondents aged 26-30 accounted for 18% ($n = 70$), while those aged 31-35 represented only 4% ($n = 17$). The large number by respondents in the 18-25 age group matches known patterns of peak platform use among Nigerian youths as recorded by Ezeah, Asogwa and Edogor (2016), who found that this age group leads online spaces in urban Nigeria.

Table 4.3: Educational Qualification by respondents

Option	Frequency	Percentage %
SSCE/WAEC	63	16%

Option	Frequency	Percentage %
OND/NCE	94	24%
HND/BSc	197	50%
Postgraduate	39	10%
Total	393	100%

From Table 4.3, the most respondents (50%, $n = 197$) held HND or BSc qualifications, while 24% ($n = 94$) held OND/NCE certificates. Those with SSCE/WAEC qualifications accounted for 16% ($n = 63$) and postgraduate holders made up 10% ($n = 39$). The greater number of HND/BSc holders shows a in a fair way educated respondent pool, which is important because higher educational attainment is linked to greater political awareness and more careful judgement of influencer content (Ifeanyichukwu, 2018).

Table 4.4: Occupational Distribution by respondents

Option	Frequency	Percentage %
Student	177	45%
Civil Servant	59	15%
Self-employed	110	28%
Unemployed	47	12%
Total	393	100%

Table 4.4 shows that students made up the largest occupational group (45%, $n = 177$), followed by the self-used (28%, $n = 110$), civil servants (15%, $n = 59$) and the unemployed (12%, $n = 47$). The dominance of students in the sample is matches The of the LGA urban character with its closeness to higher organisations, where platform use is with special focus strong and each day time online is highest among this group (Ezeah, Asogwa & Edogor, 2016).

Table 4.5: Distribution by respondents by Ward of Residence

Option	Frequency	Percentage %
Uwani	40	10%
Ogui New Layout	40	10%
Maryland	40	10%
Trans-Ekulu	40	10%
Obiagu	40	10%
Achara Layout	40	10%
Coal Camp	40	10%
Akwuke	40	10%
Amorji Nike	37	9%
Ugwuaji	36	9%
Total	393	100%

Table 4.5 shows that respondents were drawn from all ten wards of The LGA, with most wards contributing 40 respondents each (10%). Amorji Nike with Ugwuaji contributed 37 and 36 respondents in a respective way (9% each), reflecting slight variations in questionnaire retrieval. This almost equal spread across all wards confirms the representative nature of the sample and ensures that findings are not pushed toward any single community within the LGA.

4.2.3 Analysis of Psychographic Data

This section focused on analysing the psychographic data which revolved around the exposure of local youths to influencers, their awareness of such influencers, the extent of influence influencers have on their political participation and the challenges faced in using influencers for political participation. The questionnaire was developed using the four-point Likert scale. the

options are SA - with force Agree, A - Agree, D - Disagree and SD - with force Disagree. The data were also analysed using simple tables, percentages and mean analysis.

Benchmark: 2.5

Decision rule: If the calculated mean is equal, greater than the criterion mean (2.5), then the decision is accepted but if the calculated mean is lower than the criterion mean (2.5), the decision is rejected.

Research Question One: To what extent are local youths exposed to influencers?

To answer this question, items number 1 - 6 of Section B of the questionnaire were used.

Table 4.6: Respondents Level of Exposure to Influencers

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
1	I spend more than three hours daily on social media platforms.	104	189	68	32	393	2.9	Accepted
2	I regularly come across political content from social media influencers on my feed.	118	196	55	24	393	3.0	Accepted
3	I follow at least one social media influencer who posts political or civic content.	86	172	91	44	393	2.7	Accepted
4	I encounter social media influencer content about politics while browsing for entertainment.	135	173	53	32	393	3.0	Accepted
5	I have viewed or watched political campaign content shared by a social media influencer.	97	183	74	39	393	2.8	Accepted
6	Political influencer content frequently appears on my Instagram, TikTok, or Twitter/X explore page.	121	168	64	40	393	2.9	Accepted
	Total						2.9	Accepted

Table 4.6 presents the respondents view on the extent of exposure of local youths to influencers. The mean of 2.9 exceeds the benchmark of 2.5, showing a high level of exposure overall.

Research Question Two: To what extent are local youths aware by influencers?

To answer this question, items number 7 - 12 of Section B of the questionnaire were used.

Table 4.7: Respondents Level of Awareness by influencers

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
7	I can identify specific social media influencers who regularly post political or civic content.	109	191	63	30	393	2.9	Accepted
8	I am aware that social media influencers play a role in shaping public opinion on political issues.	147	193	36	17	393	3.1	Accepted
9	I understand the difference between a social media influencer and a traditional politician or journalist.	138	184	49	22	393	3.1	Accepted
10	I am aware that influencers were used to promote voter registration during recent elections in Nigeria.	116	178	67	32	393	2.9	Accepted
11	I am aware of the role social media influencers played during the EndSARS protests of 2020.	153	172	42	26	393	3.1	Accepted
12	I know that social media influencers build their credibility through consistent content creation and audience engagement.	124	196	48	25	393	3.0	Accepted
	Total						3.0	Accepted

The data in Table 4.7 show a high overall level of awareness among respondents, with mean 3.0, above the benchmark of 2.5.

Research Question Three: What is the level of influencer effect on the local youth participation?

To answer this question, items number 13 - 18 of Section B of the questionnaire were used.

Table 4.8: Respondents Seen Level of Influencer Impact on Political Participation

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
13	Social media influencers have motivated me to participate in online political discussions.	128	186	55	24	393	3.0	Accepted
14	Content from social media influencers has encouraged me to register to vote or collect my PVC.	102	174	82	35	393	2.8	Accepted
15	I have shared or reposted political content originally posted by a social media influencer.	117	179	65	32	393	2.9	Accepted
16	Social media influencers have influenced my perception of political candidates or parties.	89	162	94	48	393	2.7	Accepted
17	Watching or following political influencers has increased my interest in political issues.	136	183	48	26	393	3.0	Accepted
18	I have attended a political event, rally, or civic activity after being encouraged by an influencer online.	64	118	131	80	393	2.4	Rejected
	Total						2.8	Accepted

Table 4.8 presents by respondents views on the level of influence influencers have on youth participation. The mean of 2.8 exceeds the benchmark of 2.5, showing a high overall level of influencer impact.

Research Question Four: What are the challenges faced in the use by influencers for local youth participation?

To answer this question, items 19 to 24 of Section B of the questionnaire were used.

Table 4.9: Respondents Assessment of Challenges in Using Influencers for Political Participation

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
19	The high cost of data and internet access limits my ability to follow political influencer content consistently.	143	181	44	25	393	3.1	Accepted
20	Misinformation and fake news shared by influencers make it difficult to trust their political content.	151	176	43	23	393	3.1	Accepted
21	I feel that most social media influencers are more interested in entertainment than in genuine political education.	138	179	52	24	393	3.1	Accepted
22	Poor internet connectivity in some parts of Enugu South LGA limits access to influencer content.	129	177	58	29	393	3.0	Accepted
23	I distrust political influencer content because I feel influencers are paid to promote political agendas.	117	168	72	36	393	2.9	Accepted
24	The volume of non-political content on social media makes it difficult to find relevant political influencer posts.	104	174	81	34	393	2.8	Accepted
	Total						3.0	Accepted

Table 4.9 presents by respondents views on challenges in using influencers for political participation. The mean of 3.0 exceeds the benchmark of 2.5, confirming that respondents with force agree that important challenges exist.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: To what extent are local youths exposed to influencers?

This question asked how far local youths are exposed to influencers. The findings show that all six items returned mean scores above the benchmark of 2.5, with the mean for this question standing at 2.9, showing a high level of exposure. In a notable way, respondents most with force agreed that they encounter political influencer content while browsing for entertainment ($M = 3.0$) and that such content in a regular way appears on their feeds ($M = 3.0$). This shows that exposure is in the main passive and by chance rather than with activity sought. This finding matches Adibe and Odoemelam (2021), who observed that online platforms now allow youths to access political content outside usual institutional spaces, often as a side result of wider social media involvement. In spite of this, Ojebode, Onekutu with Adegbola (2015) caution that passive exposure differs at base from active political involvement and that high exposure rates do not produce by itself in political terms mobilised youth. The mean of 2.9 means that the respondents agreed to being exposed to influencers.

Research Question Two: To what extent are local youths aware by influencers?

This question asked the extent of awareness of local youths by influencers. Findings show that respondents showed strong recognition by influencers as shapers of public opinion on political issues ($M = 3.1$), possessed awareness of influencer roles during the EndSARS protests ($M = 3.1$) and understood how influencers build their trust through content creation ($M = 3.0$). The item recording the lowest mean was the ability to find specific political influencers ($M = 2.9$), showing that while general awareness is strong, the ability to name specific political content creators is lower by comparison. The mean of 3.0 for this question means that respondents were very aware by influencers. This matches Okon and Eke (2021), who argued that modern social media users in an increasing way recognise influencers as trusted sources distinct from usual political actors.

Nonetheless, Ifeanyichukwu (2018) raises the point that awareness by influencers does not as a necessary result in a imp way important media literacy, as youths may be aware that influencers shape political stories without possessing the analysis tools to judge whether that influence is well supported.

Research Question Three: What is the level of influencer effect on the local youth participation?

This question asked the level of influencer effect on the political participation of local youths. Findings show that influencer impact was strongest for increasing political interest ($M = 3.0$) and motivating online political discussions ($M = 3.0$). Influencers also encouraged with meaning voter registration with PVC collection ($M = 2.8$) and sharing of content ($M = 2.9$). In spite of this, the item on attending political events or rallies after encouragement by an influencer returned a mean of 2.4. This fell below the criterion mean of 2.5, was so rejected. This is the only item rejected under this question. The mean of 2.8 means that respondents agreed that influencers have a important level of influence on their political participation. This online-offline participation gap is matches Ngonso (2019), who found that social media with force increases political awareness and online involvement., does not at all times lead to usual political involvement such as in a ral way attendance or voting. Aziza and Saka (2018) in similar form recorded that social media exposure showed stronger effects on voter interest than on real turnout, showing that influencer impact stops at digital involvement without producing with steadiness offline civic action.

Research Question Four: What are the challenges faced in the use by influencers for local youth participation?

This question asked the challenges faced in using influencers for political participation of local youths. All six items were accepted, with the mean of 3.0 confirming that important challenges exist. False information and fake news appeared as the most important challenge ($M = 3.1$), reflecting deep trust concerns among youth audiences. The perception that influencers prioritise entertainment over political education ($M = 3.1$) with the high cost of data and internet access ($M = 3.1$) were in a equal way clear challenges. Poor connectivity ($M = 3.0$), distrust of money motives by influencers ($M = 2.9$) and the difficulty of finding political content amid entertainment distractions ($M = 2.8$) were also identified. The mean of 3.0 means that the respondents agreed to the challenges being a barrier to using influencers for political participation. These findings are matches Ojebode, Onekutu with Adegbola (2015), who identified infrastructural barriers with trust deficits as main limits on social of medias political mobilisation possible in Nigerian youth settings, with with Aziza and Saka (2018), who recorded how false information distorted political perception during of Nigeria 2015 elections.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

By the use of the following strategies within this chapter, it is possible to conclude in a clear way the research. This is achievable by stating the research summary, conclusion and recommendations in addition to showing more areas for further research.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The research was conducted to find the influence by influencers on local youth participation. The study was driven by four separate objectives and research questions, after this a decision was reached based on the average responses of the participants. The analysis of collected data shows the following findings:

1. Local youths are to a high degree exposed to influencer content, with mean 2.9. Exposure is in the main passive with by chance, occurring in the main through computer-sorted feeds and entertainment browsing. Youths most in a common way encounter political influencer content on Instagram, TikTok and Twitter/X.
2. The level of awareness by influencers among local youths is high, with mean 3.0. Respondents showed strong recognition by influencers as digital opinion leaders and civic actors. Though, the ability to find specific political content creators was lower by comparison.
3. Influencers have a high level of influence on youth participation, with mean 2.8. The strongest effects were observed in online involvement - political discussions, sharing of content and development of political interest. In spite of this, influencer impact on offline participation

such as in a real way attendance fell below the criterion mean ($M = 2.4$), the only item rejected under this question, revealing an important online-offline participation gap.

4. Important challenges limit the use by influencers for political mobilisation, with mean 3.0. False information with fake news appeared as the most important barrier ($M = 3.1$), followed by high data costs ($M = 3.1$) and the perception that influencers prioritise entertainment over real political education ($M = 3.1$).

5.3 Conclusion

From the findings, the study found that local youths are to a high degree exposed to and aware of influencer content, with that influencers shape with meaning online political involvement including political discussions, voter registration encouragement and development of political interest. These findings are matches the Two-Step Flow Theory of Communication, which places influencers as modern digital opinion leaders who stand between political information between media and youth audiences through trusted one-sided online relationships. In spite of this, the study also found that influencer impact does not at all times change into offline political action such as in a real way attendance and usual political actions, with the relevant item being the only one rejected in the study. Also, challenges including false information, data costs and the entertainment orientation by influencers much limit the success of mobilisation of social media influence. It is concluded that while influencers represent an important with growing channel for democratic mobilisation in the LGA, realising their full possible needs deliberate interventions to address the structural, information based and behaviour limits identified in this study.

5.4 Recommendations

Having conducted this research and analysed the field data, the researcher recommends the following:

1. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should show formal partnership programmes with checked influencers in the LGA with other urban local government areas to promote voter registration, civic education and electoral participation, ensuring that content guidelines minimise the spread of false information that appeared as the main challenge in this study.
2. Civil society organisations with youth support groups should design with carry out digital literacy programmes targeting young social media users in the LGA, equipping them with careful judgement skills to distinguish trusted political influencer content from false information and money-motivated political messaging.
3. Political parties with campaign organisations should develop platform-specific influencer involvement strategies that invest in micro and nano-influencers with smaller., more trusting and engaged audiences, with special focus for local political mobilisation at the LGA level where mega-influencer content may lack the community relevance needed for effective involvement.
4. Influencers with shown followings among local youths should embrace greater civic responsibility by making their content wider to include serious political education, voter registration drives and civic awareness campaigns, thereby contributing to democratic development rather than only commercial interests.
5. Government with telecommunication stakeholders should give policy priority that reduce the cost of mobile data with improve internet infrastructure across all wards of The LGA, as

data costs and poor connectivity were identified as important barriers preventing fair access to influencer political content.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

The researcher shows that further studies be conducted on:

1. A longitudinal study tracking the political participation behaviour of local youths over successive election cycles to check whether sustained influencer exposure produces built-up offline participation effects that cross-sectional survey designs cannot capture.
2. A comparative study looking at influencer-driven political participation in both urban with rural local government areas within Enugu State to show how infrastructure disparities and political culture differences change the influencer-participation relationship.
3. A content analysis of the political posts by influencers followed by Nigerian youths, to find the specific content types with characteristics that generate the highest levels of civic involvement and those linked to false information.

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