

**THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ENHANCING SOCIO-POLITICAL
MOBILIZATION AMONG THE NIGERIAN YOUTHS, 2018-2023.**

BY

MADUAGUGBUO CHUKWUELOKA IMMACULATE

GOU/U22/POL/339

**A PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES, GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY THINKERS CORNER ENUGU,
NIGERIA**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF
BARCHELOR DEGREE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

SUPERVISOR: DR. AMADI. C.O.

JULY, 2026.

APPROVAL PAGE

This project has been examined and approved by the department of political science Godfrey Okoye university for the award of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) in political science.

Dr. Amadi, C.O.

DATE

Supervisor

Prof. Samuel Ugwuozor

DATE

Head of Department

Prof. John Odo

DATE

Dean, Faculty of Management and social sciences

External Examiner

DATE

CERTIFICATION

I, MADUAGUGBUO CHUKWUELOKA IMMACULATE an undergraduate student in the department of Political Science and International Relations, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences in Godfrey Okoye University with the registration number GOU/U22/POL/339, do certify that, to the best of my knowledge, this research is original and never have been submitted for any diploma or degree at Godfrey Okoye University or any other university.

MADUAGUGBUO IMMACULATE CHUKWUELOKA

DATE

DEDICATION

To God, who made this work possible, thank you for Your wisdom, strength, favour, presence and endless love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study could not have been completed without the support and contributions of numerous committed individuals, to whom I owe a deep sense of gratitude. I wish to use this medium to sincerely appreciate all who, in one way or another, contributed to the success of this research.

First and foremost, my deepest thanks go to the Almighty God for His unending guidance, protection, provision, and grace throughout the duration of this programme. I am especially grateful to my project supervisor, Dr. Amadi, C.O. for his insightful guidance, patience, and rigorous supervision, which played a vital role in the completion of this study.

I extend heartfelt appreciation to the Head of Department, Prof. Ugwuozor Samuel, whose scholarship I greatly admire. I am also thankful to the Dean of the Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Assoc. Prof. John Odo and to my lecturers: Dr. N.C. Mbaeze, Dr. (Mrs) Ifedi F., Mr. Okonkwo Willy O., Rev. Fr. Ikenna Ogbuka, Mr. Onyishi A.U., Rev. Sr. Dr.

Umeh Lucy, and I also acknowledge the support of Mr. Kingsley Ezechi, and Mr Ajibo Christian my esteemed mentors during this project writing, I will forever remain grateful and Mrs. Chioma, Secretary of the Department of Political Science and International Relations.

To my beloved parents, Mr and Mrs Osourji who stood by me financially, emotionally, and morally, thank you for your unwavering support during difficult times. I am grateful also to my cousins Ifunanya, Favor, Chikamso, Baby, Sochi, Chekwube, Uche, Chidera I also thank Chukwuezohalam Kennedy, C.K for his unwavering support, not just them but others too who have been there for me both financially and emotionally.

Special thanks also goes to my wonderful Siblings: Maduagugbuo Ebube, Maduagugbuo Chibuike, Maduagugbuo Kenechi and Maduagugbuo Paschal.

I deeply appreciate my dear close friends: Sylvia, Nkiru, Cynthia, Victor, Juliet, Charity, Amarachi, Bethel. My friends who I met on this journey, Isioma, Sonia, Mmesoma, Esther, Kosiso, Chiamaka, Felix, PraiseGod, Bobby, Brazil, Onyekwelu, Angel, Divine, Somtobechukwu, Paschal, Kachi, Gibson, Chidinma, Thompson, Ebuka, Divine, Elochukwu, Chris. Your friendship, words of encouragement, and constant presence made my stay at Godfrey Okoye University not only bearable but truly memorable.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	i
Approval	ii
Certification	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	
viii	
List of Abbreviation	
ix	
Abstract	x
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Background to the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	3
1.3 Research Questions	4
1.4 Objectives of the Study	4
1.5 Significance of the Study	5
1.6 Scope of the Study	5
1.7 Limitation of the Study	6
1.8 Operational Definition of Terms	
6	
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 Conceptual Review	8
2.2 Thematic Review of Literature	16
2.3 Theoretical Review	16
2.4 Empirical Review	31
2.5 Gap in Literature	38
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	
3.1 Theoretical Framework	41
3.2 Hypotheses	49
3.3 Research Design	50

3.4 Methods of Data Collection	51
3.5 The Study Area	51
3.6 Population of the Study	53
4.7 Sample Size and Sapling Techniques	54
4.8 Validity of the Instrument	55
3.6 Method of Data Analysis	55
3.7 Logical Data Framework (LDF)	57
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS	
4.1Demographic Profile of Respondents	58
4.2 Scope of Social Media Utilization for Social Mobilization	62
4.3 Impact of social Media on Civic Awareness alongside Political participation	65
4.4 Challenges Affecting Utilization of social media Platforms for Social mobilization	64
4.5 Summary of Hypothesis Testing results	69
4.6 Discussion of Findings	70
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
Summary of Findings	76
Conclusion	80
Recommendations	82
REFERENCES	86

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender	58
Table 4.2: Distribution of Respondents by Age Group	59
Table 4.3: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Level	60
Table 4.4: Top Social Media Platforms Used for Civic/Political Engagement	61
Table 4.5: Extent of Social Media Use for Social Mobilization	62
Table 4.6: Chi-Square Test — Hypothesis One (Social Media Use for Mobilization)	64
Table 4.7 Effect of Social Media on Civic Consciousness and Political Engagement	65
Table 4.8: Results of the Chi-Square Analysis for Hypothesis Two	68
Table 4.9: Challenges Affecting Social Media Use for Mobilization Among Nigerian Youths	69
Table 4.10: Chi-Square Test — Hypothesis Three (Social Media Mobilization Obstacles)	72
Table 4.11: Summary of Chi-Square Hypothesis Testing Results	73

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APC	All Progressives Congress
FRCN	Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
LP	Labour Party
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OND	Ordinary National Diploma
NCE	Nigeria Certificate in Education
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
PVC	Permanent Voter Card
RQ	Research Question
SARS	Special Anti-Robbery Squad
SMS	Short Message Service
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UGT	Uses and Gratifications Theory
UN	United Nations
URL	Uniform Resource Locator
VPN	Virtual Private Network
WAEC	West African Examinations Council

WhatsApp	WhatsApp Messenger (Meta Platforms Inc.)
X	X (formerly Twitter)

ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of social media in enhancing socio-political mobilization among Nigerian youths between 2018 and 2023. The study was driven by the need to understand whether social media use among Nigerian youths aged 18 to 35 translates into meaningful civic and political action. Three research questions were raised: the extent of social media use for mobilization, how it fosters civic awareness and participation, and the challenges limiting its effectiveness. The study adopted Technological Determinism Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory as its theoretical framework. A descriptive survey design was employed, and data were collected from 383 valid respondents across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones using a structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and chi-square tests at a 0.05 significance level. Findings showed that social media is significantly used for socio-political mobilization ($\chi^2 = 318.74$), that it significantly fosters civic awareness and political participation ($\chi^2 = 347.62$), and that notable challenges — including fake news, high data costs, poor connectivity, and government repression — significantly constrain its effectiveness ($\chi^2 = 329.41$). All three null hypotheses were rejected. The study concluded that while social media has opened meaningful civic space for Nigerian youths, its democratic potential remains limited by structural inequalities and repression. Recommendations were made to government, civil society, and social media platforms to address these barriers.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

In recent years, social media has developed and transformed the way individuals engage with politics across the world, and Nigeria is no exception. From their initial use for social interaction and entertainment, digital media platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), Instagram, and WhatsApp have become key ways of engaging in political discussion and civic engagement, particularly for young people (Olorunnisola & Naidoo, 2013).

In Nigeria, where more than half of the population is under the age of 35, falling under the Nigeria youth bracket;(18-35) online Digital platforms have become part of everyday life, especially among the youths who use it not only for leisure purposes, entertainment, as a form of relaxation but also as an avenue for voicing their opinions on political matters (Akpojovic, 2015).

Throughout history, political mobilization in Nigeria has been through traditional media, like newspapers, radio, and television, which restrict the level of participation within these channels based on cost, access, and control by political elites. The introduction of social media has helped reduce this limitation; it has bridged this gap by creating a more open and accessible

space free for political discourse (Ekeanyanwu, 2017). The use of hashtags, online campaigns, and viral videos via social media platforms now allows Nigerian youths to raise awareness, protest against government policies, and organize collective action. One such campaign is the End SARS campaign, where social media was used extensively to organize protests for police reforms (Onumah, 2020). Social media platforms have also been used to call for government accountability; campaigns on voters' registration, gender equality advocacy, and other youth-driven initiatives have clearly shown the power of online communication channels in mobilizing people around common interests and concerns.

In Nigeria, interactive media now plays an important role in promoting socio-political mobilization and civic engagement among youths; it makes it easier for people to organize themselves, helps people express their concerns more widely, and allows users to share proof through pictures and videos. Yet, such power is not absolute but conditional; however, there are still challenges affecting how effective social media can be. Issues such as fake news and unequal access, governmental regulation, and state responses have always influenced their effectiveness (Fayoyin, 2016).

Within this context, the aim of this research is to explore how social networking sites contribute to socio-political mobilization among Nigerian Youths, the degree of their impact, and the problems related to it. Moreover, apart from that, the research attempts to find out whether these acts performed through social media do indeed give rise to actual politics. Considering the growing importance of the phenomenon, there has been a problem of misinformation, political apathy, and non-availability of the technology among youth of different social classes.

Consequently, the effect that social media has on socio-political mobilization plays a great role in understanding the effect that technology use has on civic participation in Nigeria. The research seeks to analyze how social media affects socio-political mobilization among youth in Nigeria, the extent of the effect, and the challenges involved.

It therefore becomes imperative to assess the actual effect of digital platforms in shaping political engagement within Nigerian youth groups— whether social media mobilizes youths to participate in politics or simply provides awareness.

This study should, therefore, seek to map these conditional pathways: how, for whom, and under what conditions social media translates online energy into meaningful offline mobilization and political change in Nigeria

Moreover, this research attempts to determine if the activities conducted on social media result in real-life political engagement.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Though new opportunities for political expression and activism might be opened to Nigerian youths through social media, its overall impact on real political mobilization remains debatable. Some of the youths utilize this means to discuss governance issues and mobilize protests or elections, while others use these platforms mainly for entertainment and gossip, or in non-political ways (Akpojivic,2015). Besides, the dissemination of fake news, online harassment, and government censorship often becomes an obstacle for genuine political participation.

It is thus a matter of understanding whether social media actually increases political

mobilization among Nigerian youths or if this influence is very exaggerated and limited to online activism without meaningful offline engagement. This study investigates how social media contributes to civic awareness, participation, as well as engagement among Nigerian youths and the challenges that hinder its effectiveness.

While social media might have a positive impact on the enhancement of socio-political mobilization, there is skepticism over its effectiveness, the dissemination of unverified information, and the ability of social media to further aggravate the existing frictions in Nigeria's social and political space.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How effective is the use of social media for socio-political mobilization by Nigerian youths.
2. How has social media helped in the awareness and involvement of Nigerian youths for socio-political mobilization.
3. What challenges influence how social media is used among Nigerian youths.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine how effective the use of social media is for socio-political mobilization.
2. To ascertain how social media helped in the awareness and involvement of Nigerian youth for social-political mobilization.
3. To identify the challenges that limit the effective use of social media for social mobilization in Nigeria.

1.5 Significance of the study

This study will enhance academic discussions on the relationship between technology, youths and politics in Nigeria. It will provide useful understanding to students and scholars of political science and communication studies on how digital media shapes political engagements in modern democracies.

In particular, it will be useful to policymakers and government agencies interested in both understanding the political behaviors of young people and developing strategies for inclusive governance and civic education.

Thirdly, the findings will be useful to civil society organizations, activists, and media practitioners in devising more effective online campaigns aimed at mobilizing the youths to participate in politics and governance. Finally, this study will encourage young Nigerians to be more responsible and productive with social media in the promotion of democratic values.

1.6 Scope of the study:

This study centers on the effect of online digital platforms in public mobilization among the Nigerian youths within the age bracket of 18 to 35 years. Specifically, it will discuss the major online platforms and their usage in the promotion of political awareness, participation, and activism within the period 2018 to 2023.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The research is limited by factors like ;

Limited availability of credible data online may impede the depth of secondary information.

Difficulty in obtaining correct answers because of unco-operation or bias among respondents, also reluctance by respondents to disclose their political opinions.

Another problem encountered during this research study included time limitations. This was due to the fact that the time allocated for conducting the study was not enough hence limiting the amount of information gathered. This was due to the fact that time was too little hence not allowing the researcher to interview more people.

The challenges of internet connectivity might influence data collection, considering that unstable or poor access to the network could limit the distribution and completion of online questionnaires, delay communication with the respondents, and exclude participation by youngsters from low-network areas.

Efforts will be made, however, to ensure that the findings represent the reality with regard to the engagement of Nigerian youths in politics through social media.

1.7 Operational Definition of Terms

Social media :

Online digital network is an electronic medium of communication where users interact by creating and exchanging content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social networking sites are characterized as electronic communities where members are able to generate, exchange, and share information, ideas, photos, videos, and any other content through websites and applications such as Facebook, Twitter (renamed X), Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, and YouTube. The youths in Nigeria use such platforms to exchange information, mobilize themselves, and speak about issues. Nigerian youths also use this platform to disseminate information, arrange activities, and voice out their opinions regarding any social or political issue.

Political Mobilization:

Political mobilization is the mechanism through which people are stimulated to participate actively in political processes such as campaigns, protests, and other forms of collective political action (Tarrow, 2011).

Youths:

Nigeria, states that youths are individuals who fall within the age range of 18 and 35 years old (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019).

Political Participation:

This is the active involvement of citizens in political processes and activities like voting, political discussions, demonstrations, and decision-making, debating political issues, organizing rallies and demonstrations etc. (Huntington & Nelson, 1976).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Conceptual Review

The conceptual review focuses on the elucidation of key concepts relevant to the study. These concepts form the foundation upon which the research is built. In this study, the major concepts include social media, socio-political mobilization, and Nigerian youth.

2.1.1 Concept of Social Media

According to Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) social media is viewed as an Internet -based application that promotes the creation and sharing of contents and other types of information on the internet. Boyd and Ellison (2007) it should be observed that there is an emphasis made on digital platforms like interactive User-generated content platforms to help with content creating and trading of user generated content. The importance of social networking sites to communications within the Nigerian youth is explained by greater Internet accessibility and use of mobile technology (Adaja & Ayodele , 2013). In relation to this Boyd & Ellison (2007) articulate the concept of online platforms as social networking sites that allow individuals to construct public or semi-public profiles and interact with others within a networked system. Within Nigeria, Digital platforms have emerged as leading means of interaction among young people, largely driven by the rise in internet access and widespread use of smartphones. Adaja and Ayodele (2013) argue that online communication channels support Nigerian youth

with very wide opportunities for interaction, learning, and information dissemination. However, they note that its potential is not always fully utilized for capacity-building purposes .

Furthermore, Olorunnisola and Martin (2013) contend that social media has redefined the communication landscape in Nigeria by dispersing the flow of information and empowering citizens to engage actively in public discussion. This shift has positioned social networking site as a vital tool for civic participation.

Social Media is one of the defining characteristics of social media is its interactivity, which is not the case with traditional media. The interactivity of social media makes possible something that is not possible through mediums such as television or radio – a way for individuals to watch something as well as create something at the same time. Kietzmann et al. (2011) identify the following elements of social media: participation, openness, conversation, community and connectivity. These features contribute to the engagement of the users and create a sense of belonging among the participants. The online digital platforms come in various types and have different functions and purposes. The social networking platforms (now (X)), the media sharing platforms (such as Instagram and TikTok), and the messaging platforms (like WhatsApp and Telegram) serve different purposes in today's communication and information sharing (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Social Media, sometimes referred to as the “participative Internet” (Jones & Fox, 2009), is an online environment in which people participate through different online tools, resources, and discussions. These communications are easy and inexpensive, and allow for talking to a lot of people over long distances.

Social media is an interactive medium, which dates back to the advent of Web 2.0, as popularised by O'Reilly (2005), which spoke about the change in use of the internet. It was not just a place to simply read information but a place where users could share, contribute, and interact with each other and share their ideas. This has led to the creation of blogs, wikis, and social networks, which are two-way communication.

Building on this notion, Jenkins (2006) coined the term participative culture, where people are not simply consumers of content on the Internet, but they are active creators and sharers. Similarly, Bruns (2008) used the term "produsage" to highlight the fact that a user is both a producer and consumer of information. Boyd and Ellison (2007) further noted that social networking sites are designed to enable users to create a profile and join in with online communities, increasing online engagement.

In the Nigerian context, online digital platforms have slowly come to be an essential means of communication and public engagement. It permits young people to voice their viewpoints, participate in discussions, and be involved in the organization around issues that are important to them. Recent studies indicate that such platforms have helped to increase youths' political awareness and participation (Odalonu & Aghahowa, 2025). For instance, social media sites like Twitter and Facebook have proven to be effective in helping young Nigerians to organise demonstrations, push for reforms and hold public officials accountable. This is a growing trend as social media is used to promote active citizenship and to give voices which may not be heard otherwise.

While these are the advantages, there are also concerns with the use of social network platforms. While social media offers numerous benefits, it also has its drawbacks, such as the spread of misinformation, manipulated content, and misguided information. Although social media has its merits, it also has its challenges, including the dissemination of misinformation, manipulated content, and misguided information. This is a related problem that occurs frequently, for instance, fake news, cyberbullying, and privacy and data protection issues. Furthermore, access to the Internet is not equal and is a barrier to participation on social media sites (Loader & Mercea, 2011). Moreover, government policies and censorship have a tendency to limit the extent to which people use social media to express and mobilize themselves.

The accuracy of information provided on the internet is to some extent uncertain, in general. Online communication channels as a tool for engagement will only be effective if the user can make a critical judgement of the content, check information before sharing, and be digitally aware.

It is crucial to promote responsible use of social media to reap the best benefits and reduce the risks from it. Media literacy campaigns and programs to enhance fact-checking in the media, as well as the implementation of appropriate regulation, can contribute to the improvement of the quality of online Communication. Additionally, promoting respectful communication and an open-mindedness to different perspectives can help to shape a more positive digital community. In the presence of these measures, social media can remain a valuable tool for the purposes of interaction, awareness, and collective action.

Social media has a kind of double role. On one hand, it can give people a voice and support

democratic participation, but on the other, it can also be used to mislead or influence people unfairly. This makes it a complicated topic for researchers to fully understand and analyze.

The study's timeframe of 2018 to 2023 captures a period of significant expansion in social media penetration in Nigeria, coinciding with major political events including the 2019 and 2023 general elections as well as landmark social movements, most notably the #EndSARS protests of October 2020. Understanding the conceptual dimensions of social media is therefore inseparable from understanding the political and social context in which Nigerian youths have deployed these platform

2.1.2 Socio-political mobilization

Socio-political mobilization is a concept with a rich history in sociology and political science , encompassing a wide range of activities through which individuals and communities are organized around a shared cause or collective goal. In its broadest formulation, public participation involves the organization and encouragement of individuals to actively engage in activities of social and political importance significance, with the aim of influencing decisions, policies, or conditions that affect the collective welfare (Abubakar et al., 2021).

In the academic literature, socio-political mobilization is sometimes treated as a subset of the broader concept of collective action, which refers to any effort by an organization of individuals established to achieve specific aims. Mancur Olson's foundational analysis of collective action (1965) identified the free-rider problem that is , a key challenge faced by social movements and political organizations is that some individuals tend to benefit from collective goods without contributing to their production. Traditional responses to this problem involved formal

organizational structures, selective incentives, and coercive mechanisms. The beginning of digital platforms has led to the emergence of new possibilities for solving the collective action problem, since online network site dramatically reduce the costs of communication, coordination, and information sharing, making it cheaper and easier for individuals to participate in organized collective efforts (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013).

Bennett and Segerberg (2013) introduced the concept of connective action as a way of explaining useful theoretical lens for understanding how social media reshapes mobilization dynamics . They distinguish between collective action, which is organized around formal group membership and shared ideological frames, and connective action, which is organized around personalized content sharing and digital networks that allow individuals to participate on their own terms, without joining formal organizations or subscribing to collective identities. The #EndSARS protests of 2020, which were one of the major mobilization efforts in Nigeria during the period of this study, are often seen as a good example of connective action. This is because the movement had no clear leaders, was decentralized, and was mainly sustained through the sharing of personal stories, hashtags, and images on social media platforms (Benaia & Osuntoki, 2024 ; Onuorah , 2025)

Socio-political mobilization in Nigeria has historically been shaped by a combination of traditional channels community meetings, religious gatherings, trade union networks, radiobroadcasts and increasingly, digital platforms that extend the reach and speed of mobilization efforts beyond the boundaries of physical community (Bamidele et al., 2024). The study's focus on the 2018 to 2023 period encompasses a moment of significant transition

in this respect, as social media platforms moved from being supplementary mobilization tools to primary organizing infrastructures for youth-led civic campaigns. The period is marked by voter registration drives, the 2019 general elections, #EndSARS protests, and the 2023 presidential election, which serve as key empirical examples to understand the extent of the reach of Online mobilization and how it operates.

It should be noted that while social media can be used to mobilize people, they are not necessarily mobilizing people offline in the realm of politics. Although it is easy to share, like, or retweet political content online, the literature warns that this does not translate to the depth and commitment necessary to create lasting political change, what critics have called ‘slacktivism’ (Morozov, 2011). It is this concern that forms the research problem of the study as follows: Does social media really stimulate political mobilization among Nigerian youths, or does its influence appear greater than it is and only contributes to online political activism with no significant offline political engagement?

2.1.3 Youth

Within cultural, institutional and policy contexts, the meaning of 'youth' can vary. In line with the definition of youths provided by the Nigerian National Youth Policy, which stipulates that youths are persons between the ages of 18 years and 35 years (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019), this study considers 18 years and 35 years as the age ranges for youths. This is wider than the definition of youth (ages 15 to 24) used in the United Nations (UN, 2013). It is more in keeping with Nigeria's reality where unemployment, delayed financial independence, and ongoing involvement in youth-related activities warrant the extension of the range of ages.

Nigeria's population is predominantly young, and the youthful demographic provides a large proportion of the overall population of the country. Nigeria has one of the youngest populations in the world, with more than 70 per cent of its estimated 220 million population being young people (below 30 years old) (World Bank, 2020). The fact that this population of young people exists has significant political consequences for the country's political future, for they are not just a population group to be mobilized, but a political constituency that has the power to influence election results and the nature of political governance. Concurrently, the large youth population is beset with some structural hurdles such as unemployment rates, which are among the highest on the continent of Africa, inadequate access to quality public education and healthcare services, and systematic marginalisation in formal political institutions (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020; Odaolu & Aghahowa, 2025).

The difference between the youths and the others is that they are in relation with digital technology. The social media users in Nigeria are mainly young people aged 18-35 years. They frequently use digital platforms for entertainment, social connection, and to voice their political opinions, as well as to discuss civic matters and join together for common causes (Manuwa, 2022; Benaiah & Osuntoki, 2024). The studies that have been conducted during the study's reference period (2018-2023) have consistently revealed that Social networking sites have emerged as one of the main sources where young Nigerians can access information on politics, form their political opinions, and to coordinate civic action, especially in cities where the use of the internet and digital literacies are relatively high.

The understanding of 'Nigerian youth' is not monolithic, however. There are key internal differentiations based on geographical background (urban versus rural), education (university-educated versus out-of-school youth), economic status, gender, ethnicity and religion, which affect levels and nature of social media use and its impact on community life participation.

By examining the period 2018-2023 and covering the broad age group of 18–35 for Nigerian youths, this investigation recognizes that the nature of the interaction between ONNs and political mobilization is different across the various contexts, and aims to uncover the general trends and conditions that explain it.

2.2 Thematic Review of Literature

The thematic review is organized around the main problems encountered as a result of the study's research questions and objectives. This section is divided into three themes, namely: (i) mobilizing Nigerian youths through social media; (ii) promoting civic awareness, participation and political engagement through online digital platforms; and (iii) challenges and constraints to the use of social networks as a mobilisation tool in Nigeria. These themes directly support the study's three research questions and provide a solid theoretical and empirical context for the study.

2.2.1 Social Media Use for Socio-political mobilization Among Nigerian Youths (2018-2023)

The period from 2018 to 2023 saw social media become firmly established as a principal arena for youth political expression and civic organizing in Nigeria. During this period, Nigerian

youths used social media platforms to coordinate voter registration campaigns ahead of the 2019 general elections, to organize and sustain the nationwide #EndSARS protests of October 2020 arguably the largest and most consequential social movement in post-independence Nigeria and to mount the “Obidient Movement” a social media-driven political campaign that transformed the 2023 presidential election by propelling a third-party candidate, Peter Obi of the Labour Party, into serious electoral contention (Benaiah & Osuntoki, 2024; Onuorah, 2025).

Research conducted across different regions and population groups in Nigeria during this period has consistently documented the growing importance of online communication channels as a mobilization platform. Bamidele et al. (2024), studying political communication in Odogbolu Local Government Area of Ogun State, found that political actors and their candidates had adopted digital communication platforms as a key channel for connecting with voters, disseminating campaign messages, and organizing electoral activities. Notably, even in this predominantly rural setting where radio remained the dominant news medium and internet access was constrained by limited electricity supply and low digital literacy . Online communication channels was identified by 38.5 percent of participants as their primary source of political information, with Facebook and WhatsApp leading in platform use. The authors reported that 84 percent of the respondents agreed that content on social media influenced their political decisions, while 60 percent indicated that political messages encountered on social media affected their choice of candidates.

Among urban and educated youth populations, the outcome of interactive media on mobilization has been even more evident Manuwa (2022), in a study conducted among political

science undergraduates in Lagos State, observed that social media platforms were actively used by politicians, activists, and ordinary citizens to communicate, campaign, and mobilize support for political issues and events. This research was also confirmed through statistically significant chi-square results. The identity-forming dimension of social media engagement is particularly significant for understanding its impact on youth mobilization among the Nigerian youth. The 2020 #EndSARS protests and the obi support movement both generated powerful senses of collective identity among their participants a 'we' that transcended the ethnic, regional, and religious divisions that have historically fragmented Nigerian civil society. Social media platforms enabled this collective identity formation by creating shared symbolic resources hashtags, memes, visual content, slogans that functioned as markers of group membership and expressions of shared values. The study also revealed that social media accounted for increased civic knowledge and interest, increased political efficacy (the belief that participation is worthwhile), and increased association between online civic involvement and real-world civic involvement (actions like voting, working in political groups, and attending rallies).

The Obidient political movement that was studied by Benaiah and Osuntoki (2024) is one of the most intriguing cases of youth mobilization through social media during the study period. The movement, which began on Twitter in early 2022 and quickly spread to Instagram, WhatsApp and Facebook, rallied millions of mostly young, urban, educated Nigerians behind the campaign of Peter Obi for the presidency. It stood out in its uncompromising stance against ethnicity, religion and political patronage as election mobilization criteria, and advocated for a new values-based framework, focusing on competence, integrity and institutional accountability. The movement leveraged social media to help raise funds, organize offline

rallies and awareness walks, register voters, and establish local chapters throughout the country and in the Nigerian diaspora that reflected the length and breadth of social media-enabled mobilization when it works well, as it connected online mobilization with organized offline action.

The #EndSARS protests of October 2020 are a more compelling example of how social media has mobilized during the study period. The protests quickly turned offline when some video footage of an alleged extrajudicial killing by a Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) officer in Delta State went viral, which eventually resulted in street protests in dozens of Nigerian cities and towns, mainly via Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram (Onuorah, 2025). The hashtag #EndSARS in a few days had gained more than 28million tweets and had found global support from the Diaspora communities.

Among its supporters are celebrities and human rights organizations. It was synonymous with a decentralized, leaderless movement, achieved through the networked (or linked) nature of social media, which allowed for its broad participation and resistance to state efforts to crush it by targeting individual leaders.

2.2.2 Social Media in Fostering Civic Awareness and Political Participation (2018-2023)

In addition to organizing particular campaigns and protests, social media has been found in the literature to play an important role in the larger systems of political socialization in which Nigerian youths become politically aware, politically identified, and politically knowledgeable and motivated to participate in civic politics. Higher levels of consciousness and participation

in politics among young people in Nigeria through social media are related to this dimension of the relationship between social media and political mobilization in the study. This dimension relates to the second research question, which asked to find out how social media stimulates awareness and participation among Nigerian youths.

Odalonu and Aghahowa (2025), however, conducted a quantitative study on social media influence on the learning and political participation of undergraduate students in Enugu Metropolis, and concluded that social media has become a tangible influence in the way young Nigerians learn about and partake in political activities. Their research shows that digital platforms can provide more convenient and affordable opportunities to access political information without incurring the traditional filters or limitations; and tend to foster authentic interest in political parties, candidates, and civic engagement. The research also found that exposure to politics online was correlated with actual voting: most said that what they saw online affected their choice to go out to vote. This lines up with what scholars elsewhere have found about the connection between social media and civic engagement (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Bode et al., 2014), and reinforces the idea that for young Nigerians who are online regularly, social media is not just background noise — it is actively shaping how and whether they participate in the political process.

Social media's awareness-building function operates through several distinct mechanisms that are relevant to the Nigerian youth context. First, it enables Unfiltered access to breaking political news and commentary that bypasses the gate keeping function of Conventional news channels which in Nigeria has historically been subject to substantial elite influence and state

control (Ekeanyanwu, 2017; Benaiah & Osuntoki, 2024). Second, it provides a channel for the publication and spread of user-produced material, personal testimonies, photographs, videos, and commentary that offers perspectives on political events that mainstream media outlets may not cover or may cover inadequately. Third, social media creates spaces for political discussion and debate among peers, which scholarship has consistently identified as one of the most important preconditions for civic learning and the formation of political preferences (Castells, 2012; Manuwa, 2022). This phenomenon can be summarised in the term 'networked acknowledgement' (Suk et al., 2021), as young Nigerians were able to connect with one another's testimonies and experiences on social media and establish a sense of recognition and solidarity which had a direct motivational impact on participation.

During the study period, the Nigerian Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) identified opportunities and potential for political engagement through online digital platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and X to reach out to voters and engage with them through their public communication. In 2023, during the presidential election, INEC's website had 25 million visitors in just the first three days of voting, with more than 70,000 Nigerians engaging directly with the commission via social media to report electoral malfeasance (Benaiah & Osuntoki, 2024). This institutionalization of social media into the electoral process also reinforced the 'civicness' of the platform in the minds of the young Nigerians.

2.2.3 Challenges Affecting Social Media Use for Mobilization Among Nigerian Youths (2018-2023)

The third research question is related to the challenges that affect the use of social media by youth in Nigeria for mobilisation. The literature recognizes a variety of problems at varying levels (infra-structural, informational, political, behavioral), and discusses how these problems affect the success or failure of social media mobilization in achieving civic and political outcomes.

Mis- and disinformation are the top challenge mentioned in the Nigerian context. The design of social media platforms incentivizes sensational or misleading information or outright lies to be created and shared, because of its reward system for provoking emotional responses and achieving high levels of engagement (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). In the course of the 2019 general elections and the #EndSARS protests by various actors such as political operatives, the state-aligned media and foreign-based media outlets, social media was manipulated to spread fake information, manipulate public opinion, and discredit the legitimate civic protests (Manuwa, 2022; Onuorah, 2025). The most important problems identified by the respondents in effective political engagement through social media were fake news and hate speech, which had high mean scores in the Likert scale of the study carried out by Odalonu and Aghahowa (2025). Concurrently, the digital divide is a second major challenge. In Nigeria, although there has been a significant growth in the number of people owning Smartphones and having access to the internet via mobile devices, access to social media is still highly skewed. The barriers to social media access are significantly greater for young people living in rural areas, for young

people in lower-income families, and for less formally educated youth than for their urban, high-income, and highly educated peers. According to Bamidele et al. (2024), their study on barriers to the use of social media in Odogbolu revealed the following barriers: Internet Illiteracy (40.4 percent), High Level of General Illiteracy (28.8 percent), Aged Population Characteristic (12.2 percent), Poor Electricity Supply (11.5 percent), and Unreliable Network Access (7.1 percent). However effective mobilization through social media can be for the urban, connected, younger generation, it can also be systematically denied the benefits of social media to rural and less privileged youth, a concern that is addressed in this study that examines all types of Nigerian youth, not just those at university or in urban centers.

Thirdly, challenges to the state and government censorship are of special note within the study's time frame. Among the Nigerian government's actions against the #EndSARS movement was the internet throttling, temporary shutdown of Twitter in June, 2021 (following a tweet for President Buhari which claimed that Twitter had removed the #EndSARS-related hashtag because it "promoted hate and violence"), and documented security forces targeting of and detaining of social media activists and influencers who had been vocal in their support for the movement (Onuorah, 2025). These repressive measures had a chilling effect on online political expression, and dissuaded people from voicing their opinions online for fear of government reprisal. Earlier, Fayoyin (2016) had identified two factors, which are government regulation and government responses, that constitute factors determining the effectiveness of social media as a social mobilization tool in Nigeria, which was vividly demonstrated during the study period. In addition to these structural and political issues, the literature also highlights the behavioral traits of the Nigerian youths which affect the mobilizing capacity of social media.

The youth who engage in civic campaigning on social networking sites are a minority of the youth using the sites, with a large percentage of young Nigerians using them for entertainment and gossip, and not political reasons (Akpojivi, 2015). This study's research problem clearly acknowledges that social media serves as a mobilization tool for mobilising youths into politics or for merely awareness raising. This distinction is important since the 'slacktivism' issue, if not acted upon, is not considered as a socio-political mobilization as measured in the context of this study. Lastly, psychological and structural issues of political apathy and mistrust of institutions limit the mobilizing capacities of social media. Many young Nigerians, particularly those who have experienced repeated cycles of electoral manipulation, unfulfilled political promises, and economic marginalization, harbour deep scepticism about the capacity of political engagement — whether online or offline — to produce tangible changes in their lives (Akpojivi, 2015; Manuwa, 2022). Social media can amplify these feelings of frustration and disillusionment as readily as it can channel them into constructive civic action, and the outcome depends heavily on the quality of political leadership, the responsiveness of institutions, and the organizational capacity of civil society actors who are able to link online energy to sustained offline campaigns.

2.3 Theoretical Review

In connection with this research work that intends to examine the impact of social media on socio-political mobilization amongst Nigerian youths between 2018 and 2023, three main theories emerge, and these include: connective action theory proposed by Bennett and Segerberg, uses and gratifications theory developed by Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, and

technological determinism theory by Marshall McLuhan and Thorstein Veblen. Each of the aforementioned theories accounts for a different dimension of the topic under investigation.

2.3.1 Connective Action Theory

The theory of connective action has been created by W. Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg in their book published in 2013 and entitled *The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics*. This theory has been developed in order to correct the weaknesses of the classical collective action theory, which has been developed in Mancur Olson's book *The Logic of Collective Action* (1965).

The collective action theory created by Mancur Olson was based on an inherent contradiction. Since the achievements of the political activity, such as political reforms, changing the regime, and social justice, are all the public goods available for everybody regardless of whether they have been engaged in the process of achieving those goals or not, there exists a strong motive for people to free-ride, that is, to get something from the efforts of others without paying anything for that. Social movements have used organizational structures, selective incentives (benefits available for organizational members only), and social pressure within densely knit networks in order to deal with the problem of the free-rider paradox.

Yet, according to Bennett and Segerberg (2013), this institutional approach appears to be ineffective in explaining a certain form of political activism that became possible due to technological progress. Concerning connective action, the principles of organization become completely different compared to the institutional one. Unlike the institutional organization that requires the existence of membership, hierarchy, and motivation provided by institutions,

it is based on personal content distribution. For instance, when a Nigerian youth posts the videos of police brutality on Twitter under the tag #EndSARS and when a student distributes the infographic about Peter Obi's policy agenda via WhatsApp, he/she conducts a personal and political act at the same time.

In particular, this theory is quite helpful in the interpretation of the issues related to the decentralization and absence of leaders in the EndSARS protest. One can see that according to the research of Onuorah (2025), the most frequently cited advantage of this protest was the fact that there were no leaders at all; consequently, since there were no people who could be arrested, the protest was quite resistant to any pressure from the state. This is exactly the way in which connective action theory is supposed to work – protests that rely on digital content as their means of connecting are resistant to disruption.

There are many applications of the theory as well. According to Bennett and Segerberg (2013), connective action is as potent a tool of mobilization as it has one fundamental problem related to sustainability. This is mobilization which has no organizational aspect at all and which is capable of motivating people at the initial stage of development but is unable to keep the process going after that as the initial motivation is lost. The inability of the EndSARS campaign to turn their strong mobilization into practice in 2020 is fully consistent with this theoretical prediction. This was very intense mobilization but it could not be sustained further due to lack of an organizational structure.

2.3.2 Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) is one of the biggest mental jumps taken in the course of the study of communication. It is a jump from investigating how the media influences its audience to how the audience utilizes media. The theory has a long history of thoughts which could even be attributed to contributions made by Paul Lazarsfeld and Herta Herzog in the 1940s. However, the final theoretical development of the theory was done by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch in their book of 1974.

Uses and Gratification Theory could also be employed in explaining a trend that constantly comes up in the empirical research on Nigerian youths and social media – the relationship between an equivalent use of social media and vastly varying levels of participation in politics. All those on Twitter for the #EndSARS cause do not engage in the process in order to mobilize or document police brutality. Some individuals may actually be participating just for fun or because they want to be part of history being made at that very moment.

There are sufficient indications that the theory is very applicable in relation to the findings presented by Odalonu and Nefeye (2025), whereby it has been shown that there is a high level of agreement in the views expressed by the respondents concerning the effectiveness of social media in terms of political education (mean 3.32), distribution of uncensored information (mean 3.27), and opinion formation about political figures (mean 3.37). It can be concluded that the findings in this research have aligned with the cognitive and affective gratifications discussed by the UGT. There are clear indications that the social media campaigns influence voting behavior (mean 3.45).

Moreover, UGT can be applied in helping us understand who is being mobilized by the use of social media and who is not. As mentioned by Akinyetun (2022), the common characteristics of those that use social media for politics in Nigeria are youths, relatively well educated and unemployed or underemployed. From the perspective of UGT theory, this group is logical as they have high information needs (well-informed and angry), high social integrative needs (seeking community), and tension release needs (their needs to vent the political frustration towards the formal politics can be satisfied via social media). In essence, for this particular group, the gratifications of social media use for politics are very strong.

Moreover, UGT can also be successfully used to assess the social media campaign of the Obidient Movement. In fact, the posts made by the movement on social media have been specifically designed to give rise to several types of gratifications simultaneously: cognitive (information about the policy comparisons and election campaign), affective (emotional appeals related to the dream of a new Nigeria) and social integrative (formation of the common identity of obidience that can be embraced by the young people in Nigeria). According to Benaiah and Osuntoki (2024), the social media campaign of the Obidient Movement helped to reach out to more people and create political identity, and this is precisely what UGT is all about.

2.3.3 Technological Determinism Theory

The Technological Determinism Theory is predicated on the idea that technology is the driving force behind social evolution and the instrument with which the social structure, culture patterns, and political institutions of the society are being formed and shaped through its use

by people. This theory has a very rich intellectual tradition since similar theories were even put forward by the economist Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929), the author of the first theory of the causative influence of technology on the society. Nonetheless, this concept was restated in the 20th century by the Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan who coined the well-known phrase 'the medium is the message'.

Technological Determinism Theory sheds light on the characteristics of the social media setting – the characteristics of the technology that make some things easy, probable, and difficult in the domain of political activism.

It is noteworthy how relevant the above discussion is to the situation in Nigeria between 2018 and 2023. The specific features of Twitter — such as the presence of the open public timeline, the limited number of characters per tweet, hashtags, retweets, and algorithms for promoting highly engaging posts — are not neutral ways of communicating politically. Rather, these features define what kind of political discourse is possible on the social networking site. The priority of brevity and emotional appeal rather than long and subtle messages, competitive nature of trending topics, like/dislike principle and visibility of the number of followers and engagement all make some kinds of political discourse more likely to be promoted than others. In part, the success of the EndSARS campaign, which got more than 28 million tweets within just days after reaching its peak, is related not only to the passion of political youth in Nigeria but also to the specifics of Twitter.

However, the closed group format of WhatsApp comes with very different requirements concerning political communication. It is the closed format of the groups that makes WhatsApp

a suitable platform for conducting sensitive coordination which would not be possible in the open environment. Another aspect that allows these technologies to become easily usable by people without text literacy skills is audio messaging. Size constraints in the closed groups limit their potential in outreach, although increase the level of trust of the members of the groups. As argued by Onuorah (2025), the activists involved in the coordination of the EndSARS protests had an intuitive understanding of these differences between technologies and used them accordingly. The finding reported by Bamidele, Ayantayo, and Afolabi (2024) can be interpreted from the perspective of technological determinism: in the rural Odogbolu community which they examined, the smartphone was the device which 82.1 percent of social media users accessed social media platforms with. This is neither coincidence nor simply a matter of personal choice. This is because the smartphone as a technological object allows access to social media in contexts where there is no reliable source of electricity or internet infrastructure. It accomplishes this task since it offers the features of being connected, having computing capabilities and being portable at once.

Indeed, the theory provides an extremely helpful model to explain the response of the government to digital mobilization. When, in June 2021, the Nigerian government banned the use of Twitter, the state essentially tried to fight the mobilizing power of technology that the network had provided the Nigerian youth because of its technological structure. This ban was also indicative of the strength of technology itself since there would have been no reason to ban Twitter if it were just a neutral platform of communication that had not influence on political matters. At the same time, the ban did not work as many Nigerians found ways of circumventing it by using VPNS, which meant that technological power could survive despite

attempts to destroy it. Consequently, soft determinism, taking into account both enabling properties of technology and responses to it, seems to be more relevant to the reality of Nigeria than hard determinism or voluntarism.

2.4 Empirical Review

The empirical review examines a selection of studies that have investigated the connection between social media and youth mobilization in Nigeria through systematic data collection and analysis. These studies, conducted between approximately 2018 and 2025, provide direct empirical grounding for the propositions advanced in the conceptual and thematic sections above, and collectively constitute the evidence base against which the present study's findings will ultimately be compared.

Bamidele, Ayantayo, Afolabi, and Ogunbola (2024) conducted a survey-based study of online digital platforms and youth mobilization in Odogbolu Local Government Area of Ogun State, distributing 160 questionnaires to eligible voters across four rural settlements and achieving a 94 percent response rate. The study was based on the Technological Determinism Theory, which explains that technology plays a major role in shaping society. It used descriptive statistics to examine how people access and use social media, where they get their political information from, and how social media influences their political decisions. Key findings established that Facebook (35.3 percent) and WhatsApp (26.3 percent) were the dominant platforms used for political communication, that smartphones were the primary access devices (82.1 percent), and that radio remained the most used political news medium overall (55.8 percent), though social media was second at 38.5 percent. critically study found that 84

percent of respondents agreed that social media information on political platforms influenced their political decisions and 60 percent claimed that political messages via social media affected their choice of candidates. Challenges identified included internet illiteracy, inadequate electricity supply, and general low literacy levels , a finding with particular relevance to this study's concern with the conditions under which social media mobilization is effective among diverse youth

Manuwa (2022) explored the impact of social media on political involvement and mobilization in Nigeria through a survey of 200 political science undergraduates at five tertiary institutions in Lagos state. Three hypothesis regarding the impact of social media use on political communication and mobilization , the relationship between online political engagement and offline political behavior and the wider impact of digital platforms were tested using a 15-item structured questionnaire and chi-square statistical analysis at an alpha level of 0.05. All three null hypotheses were rejected, yielding the following findings: that online media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp) have a notable effect on political discourse ,campaigning, and political engagement (calculated $X^2 = 300.46$, critical value = 5.226); that social media users' online engagement with political information significantly shapes their offline political behavior and attitudes(calculated $X^2 = 356.17$); and that social media has a significant overall impact on political participation and mobilization in Nigeria, encompassing both positive outcomes such as enhanced democratic participation and accountability and negative outcomes such as the spread of misinformation and the incitement of civil unrest (calculated $X^2 = 341.36$). The study concluded that social media is one avenue through which Nigeria's political challenges can be addressed, while also noting that the country's digital divide, ethnic divisions,

and political violence continue to limit the full capacity of social media to drive political change. Benaiah and Osuntoki (2024) adopted a qualitative research design to examine the influence of social media on political mobilization in Nigeria, using the Obi support Movement as a case study. The research, through thematic analysis of secondary data and drawing upon the Uses and Gratification Theory, revealed that members of the movement mainly used interactive media like Facebook and WhatsApp for recruiting members, planning offline campaigns, crowdfunding, and communicating with both local and foreign audiences. The study revealed that even though there was a huge spread of fake news that dominated the 2023 election campaign, the movement found digital platforms very helpful in organizing politically, as Obidients were able to make coalitions, gather political support, and reach the larger public through these platforms. Some of the most important benefits that stakeholders pointed out as a direct result of social media usage include better ways of communication and organization, raising the level of voter awareness and providing education, inspiring political participation, enhancing freedom of speech, and pushing political reforms and stability. Then again, the drawbacks were mostly related to the exploitation of users' autonomy and privacy via the data harvesting methods, the exaggeration of political biases through misinformation, as well as the spreading of untrue information about political figures.

In their quantitative research involving 246 undergraduate students of tertiary institutions in Enugu Metropolis, Odalonu and Aghahowa (2025), through the use of structured questionnaires carrying a four-point Likert scale, explored three research questions related to the ways that social media influences youth engagement, the relationship between online political activities and voting behavior, as well as the challenges that prevent social media from

being an effective tool for political participation. The researchers managed to get 98.4 percent of the respondents to complete the questionnaire and made use of descriptive statistics, mean scores, and percentages, deciding on 2.5 as the boundary for acceptance and rejection.

Findings on Research Question 1 showed that social media significantly enhances political awareness (mean = 3.32), facilitates cheap and uncensored information dissemination (mean = 3.27), and stimulates political interest (mean = 2.96). The highest-rated item (mean = 3.37) indicated that social media shapes youths' opinions on political actors and events. However, the item on the role of social media in promoting interactive relationships between youths and political representatives was rejected (mean = 2.27), suggesting a persistent gap between youth voters and political elites despite digital connectivity. On Research Question 2, all items recorded mean scores above 2.5, confirming a positive correlation between exposure to online political campaigns and actual voter turnout, with items on the influence of social media campaigns on voting decisions (mean = 3.45) and their effectiveness in engendering electoral participation (mean = 3.44) recording the highest scores. On Research Question 3, misinformation (mean = 3.06), fake news (mean = 2.83), and hate speech and its damage to the electoral process (mean = 3.26) were identified as the primary challenges, while digital illiteracy and difficulty discerning credible political information were not widely perceived as personal barriers a finding that may reflect the specific characteristics of the educated student population studied. Onuorah (2025) in a thesis presented at the Paris Lodron University of Salzburg as a masters degree he carried out a qualitative study of digital activism based on a mixed-methodology in the case of the SARS protests, a combination of content analysis of 100 high impact tweets gathered October 5-30, Semi-structured interviews of 14 stakeholders who

took part in categories like ; activists, social media people, journalists, a scholar, citizen organizers and an international observer. It was analyzed using a thematic coding scheme which was divided into three. analytic categories Mobilization and Coordination, Framing and Narrative Shaping and Challenges and Repression to look at the way the social media enabled the organization and young people mobilization, which frames and discourses were created in the digital space, and what were the difficulties of the activities of activists in repressions by states. Key findings documented the particular and complementary functions of various platforms in the digital of the movement. ecosystem: Twitter was the head office of visibility, real time updates and community in Twitter. whole world amplification; WhatsApp has aided neighborhood, secure, logistical coordination; Instagram facilitated emotionally colored narratives through the use of livestreams and pictures; Through the use of online resources such as Google Docs and Google Sheets to support resource. financial management and financial transparency. The adaptive movement was noted in the course of the study as well. response innovations to state repression such as using VPNs to get around the internet. throttling, donating to cryptocurrencies to evade financial blockades after the freezing. bank accounts of activists, and software to send messages encrypted in such a way that it is confidential. backup communications just in case WhatsApp groups would be suspected of having been compromised. Onuorah argued that this confirms that the digital activism movement in Africa is the biggest, just like with the case of the #EndSARS movement. the possibilities of transformations and the inner vulnerabilities of networked youth-led. demonstration against the backward slipping of democracy and oppression of state.

Some indication is revealed through the research carried out by Yusuf and Benjamin (2013)

concerning social media and political mobilization in East and West Africa about the pattern of behavior that existed even before the period of the research but was used as precedence during the time of the research from 2018 to 2023. The social media had offered a platform of engagement between political leaders and citizens at relatively low costs with greater reach compared to other methods of communication.

According to Madueke et al. (2017), social media users in Nigeria engaged in a wide range of political activities more frequently than those who did not use social media, including voting, belonging to political parties, participating in political rallies, and engaging directly with political personalities. Social media made it possible for individuals to engage in political activities that were not previously possible through traditional media due to their gatekeeping role and elitism. They noted that there was a serious problem of hate speech and ethnic politics online, which was prophetic in light of subsequent events. .

A study was done by Aleyomi and Ajakaiye (2014) on the role played by social media during the Nigerian general election of 2011, where the findings showed that technology was used in political awakening, governance discussions, condemning corruption and vote rigging, questioning of governments, and organizing citizens into a united front where they could not manage to do so. It is within this context that the ongoing digital political activism from 2018 to 2023 shall be discussed.

Okoro and Nwafor (2013) provided some of the first systematic proofs of Nigerian youth social media political involvement, where 76.7 percent of their respondents used social media for political purposes. The research by Okoro and Nwafor (2013) found a positive relationship

between social media involvement, political efficacy, trust in civil organizations and willingness to participate in political activities. Their research work has formed the foundation of evidences that have informed other researches like this one.

Unlike earlier studies which were less critical and more sanguine about the role of new media technologies in spreading false information during elections, the research by Ezebuenyi, Okpara & Ayika (2014) is more critical and has documented the utilization of new media technology in spreading rumors, propaganda and hate speech during the Nigerian electoral process. It is an important corrective to an overly optimistic narrative regarding the democratic role of social media.

As Akinyetun (2022) observes in his study of the link between social media use and political efficacy among the Nigerian youths, social media offers the youth the political competency and sense of agency which would otherwise not be available to them because of their systemic exclusion from politics. In recognizing that the typical digital political activist in Nigeria is youthful, educated, and typically unemployed, one can appreciate that social media activism is also an expression of economic discontent.

Based on Abdulyakeen and Yusuf (2022), the impact of social media and politics among the youths in south-eastern Nigeria was investigated in two different elections of 2015 and 2019. The study gives us information on how the use of modern technology has enabled political participation on one side but has allowed another form of political manipulation of ethnicity and religion on the other hand.

The research by Ezema and Ezema (2023) becomes particularly valuable in that the authors

managed to show that the social media networks became even more helpful in the mobilization of the population in Enugu Metropolis for the 2023 presidential elections than face-to-face communication. The value of this evidence is that the process of digital mobilization has begun replacing peer-to-peer mobilization rather than complementing it.

Ahmad & Olarenwaju (2017) have illustrated the application of social media during the 2015 general elections; this proved that the use of modern technology has brought more transparency and competitiveness in political rivalry in Nigeria compared to previous years. It therefore proves that the features of social media regarding mobilization and accountability, which became significant in 2020-2023, were prevalent in an earlier period.

According to Ufot & Onaopepo (2021), social media was employed as a device of political persuasion in the course of 2019 election campaigns; meanwhile, it served as a platform where political statements could be discussed and challenged. The paper written by Ufot & Onaopepo depicts rather clearly the aspects of dialogue and power struggle characteristic of social media as a political space, since social media is not only a communication tool but also a space of power exercise.

2.5 Gap in the Literature

The above discussion of conceptual frames, thematic discussions and empirical evidence. conclusion indicates that although there is a correlation between social media and youth political mobilization. The development of mobilization in Nigeria has drawn increasing academic interest, a number of significant gaps stay in the literature at hand. It is the intellectual

justification of these gaps which gives the particular justification, the current research and inform its methodological and analytical decisions.

First , the majority of the previous research studies have mostly been conducted before and shortly after the 2020 #EndSARS protests in Nigeria. Conversely, this current research study will investigate the impact of social media usage on politics during the 2023 elections in Nigeria.

The second gap is that the majority of the samples used in previous research studies consist of youths from urban states like Lagos and Enugu. Some other youths, including those from non-urban areas, have not been considered for the sample. However, the sample consists of youths aged between 18 and 35 years and this ongoing research contributes to filling this gap by attending to the broader youth population rather than only its most digitally privileged segments.

The past studies which have investigated the relationship between social media use and political activism have mostly focused on electoral processes or protest movements. This study takes into account a broader scope, as it explores other dimensions of political action such as civic activism, organizing, women's rights activism, voting rights, and any other civic activity carried out by youths in Nigeria between 2018-2023.

What can be mentioned here is the fact that hardly any research work has been carried out on how engagements in social media transform into social and political mobilizations among Nigerian youths. As it was noted above, earlier researchers have just managed to investigate the relationship between the two aspects mentioned while overlooking other important questions related to the topic. The current research aims at answering questions such as what

type of Nigerian youth is influenced by socio-political mobilization in social media; what are the success conditions of mobilizations both online and offline?

Though such themes have been very popular, few studies have been carried out to assess how they influence social media use by the activists in Nigeria. Yet, from the study conducted in this regard, it becomes clear that the Nigerians are not helpless in handling such situations but they act proactively in response to these issues.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The present research study draws upon two primary theories. They include Technological Determinism Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory. With the integration of both the above-discussed theories, a comprehensive theoretical framework can be developed, which would help understand the influence of digital communication platforms as a structure and the influence of people as agents within the process.

3.1.1 Technological Determinism Theory

The Technological Determinism Theory, which includes theorists like Marshall McLuhan (1964) and Langdon Winner (1986) “This theory asserts that technology is one of the basic agents of change in society and the formation of new social structures, relations, and practices because when there are new developments in technology, changes occur in the existing social structure and behaviors of individuals”.

Within the context of the present study, the theory of technological determinism may serve as a conceptual framework that will provide an explanation on why the usage of online platforms by Nigerian youths has brought about changes in the political communication process and civic engagement. More specifically, Bamidele et al. (2024) applied the same theoretical framework in exploring how technological advancements in the field of communications had impacted on the political activities of Nigerian youths. However, the current research shall explore the

applicability of this theoretical framework from another angle.

Key Assumptions of Technological Determinism Theory

The following are the core assumptions upon which this theory is built:

- This is not the case — technology influences society and not the other way around. As a new communication technology is introduced into society, new social relationships, new ways of transmitting information, and new forms of power are created. The social structures are not just the product of human design and purpose; they adjust to the technology (McLuhan, 1964).

Technological change is one of the major factors that drive social transformation. Communication technology, whether print, radio, television, or the internet, or even the internet to social media, does not just make and keep communication faster or cheaper; it remodels social life, political engagement, and civic culture in more fundamental ways (Winner, 1986).

The medium conveys its own message. McLuhan's (1964) well-known 'the medium is the message' is an attempt to encapsulate the idea that the form in which a technology is produced (its design, its degree of interactivity, its speed, its reach, etc.) affects the way in which it is used and the social relationships it establishes, regardless of the actual content of the messages.

The opportunities and constraints of technology. Technological determinism doesn't imply that technology always brings about progress. The new technologies bring new opportunities for communication, organisation and participation, but also new risks, and some other technologies are shutting off others or creating new risks. Mass civic organizing can be facilitated through social media, but misinformation and state surveillance can also spread through social media.

Technological change needs to be embraced by societies. The use of technology is a driver of social change, and individuals, communities, and institutions are forced to change their actions, norms, and expectations as a result of the capacities of new tools. In Nigeria, this is seen in political parties, civil society organisations, and electoral management bodies having to come to terms with social media, whether they like it or not, as a civic space.

Technological Determinism Theory applies to this study because it is the most commonly used theory to explain this phenomenon.

This study is directly related to technological determinism theory in several aspects. First, it brings to the fore the transformation of the political communication landscape in Nigeria from 2018 to 2023 that social media has engendered. Before the rise of platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and X (Twitter), access to and dissemination of political information in the country was largely mediated by the activities of traditional media (radio, television, and newspapers) controlled by the elites, shaping who could speak, who could be heard, and what forms of civic activities were possible. This was until the advent of social media. It made it possible for any user, with a mobile phone, to create, distribute and interact with political messages in real-time, thereby making a significant shift in the communicative landscape. Nigerian youths quickly identified and appropriated this new communicative landscape.

Secondly, the theory provides an explanation of the form major social movements took during the study period, particularly the #EndSARS protesters of October 2020 and the Obidient Movement of 2022-2023. The lack of leadership, decentralization, and hashtag format of these movements was not coincidental, but a result of the technical characteristics of the platforms

that they use. The world of hashtags, retweets and algorithmic amplification was perfect for Twitter to mobilize rapidly and in a manner that was viral and had a cross-border impact. The group feature of WhatsApp allowed for safe and secure coordination of logistics at the community level. Instagram's visual characteristics allowed for an emotional narrative that created a sense of solidarity and gained global attention. The actions and strategies used to organize, communicate, and sustain the movements were influenced by the technology they used on the platforms (Bamidele et al., 2024; Onuorah, 2025).

Third, Technological Determinism Theory is seen as a theoretical framework that positions the study on the challenges that limit the mobilization of Social Media in Nigeria. The theory acknowledges that technologies engender constraints and opportunities. A digital divide, in that access to the Internet, smart devices, and power are technological constraints that influence who can or cannot participate in digital civic life, is itself a technological constraint. The Nigerian government's ability to impede internet usage, block platforms, and spy on civic activists is indicative of how digital infrastructure that can be used to organize can turn against those who organize. These are not social issues or political issues, but rather effects of the particular technological configurations of which the Nigerian youths are a part, and these effects can be described in terms of Technological Determinism Theory.

3.1.2 Uses and Gratification Theory

The Uses and Gratification Approach (1974, Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch) suggests that attention should be given to the active role played by the media users, rather than to a passive influence on them, and that the users choose the media content to meet their specific needs.

Such an approach may be particularly relevant for the social media context as it allows users to have a high degree of control over their social media participation, including platform, content, and behavior. Theories are used to explain the reasons why young people use the media. Uses and Gratifications Theory is used to explain why Nigerian youths use the media.

The theory is used to help explain why some youths are primarily using social media for political mobilization and civic engagement while others are using the same social media platforms for entertainment, socializing, or economic gain.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory was adopted in the research conducted by Benaiah and Osuntoki (2024), where it is noted that young Nigerians who had motivations driven by certain types of political satisfactions, such as expressing their political opinions, receiving unbiased information on politics, and coordinating with other people with the same interests, were more inclined to engage in online political activism through social media. The current study takes a similar view, but rather than seeing the Nigerian youth as victims of technological influence, the study will view them as active players whose social media interaction is influenced by their individual needs, social setting, and political ideologies.

This study adopts a hybrid approach of incorporating elements of the Technological Determinism Theory and the Uses and Gratifications Theory, placing it in a position that can help explain the structural factors that have made social media a strong mobilization tool in Nigeria and the individual and group factors that govern how these are actually used for mobilization by different segments of Nigerian youths.

Key Assumptions of Uses and Gratifications Theory

This theory is based on three assumptions: The Uses and Gratifications theory is based on 3 assumptions:

The theory has the following main assumptions:

Audience is engaged. Media users are not passive consumers of a media product, but active, conscious consumers who choose media products, the time of use, and the purpose of using them.

Applied to social media, this means Nigerian youths are not simply exposed to political content but actively seek it out, produce it, share it, and respond to it based on their own motivations (Katz et al., 1974).

- Media use is goal-directed. People turn to specific media platforms because those platforms are perceived as being capable of satisfying particular needs. These needs may be informational (staying updated on political developments), social (connecting with others who share civic values), expressive (voicing opinions on governance), or identity-related (being identified as a politically conscious citizen). Different young Nigerians may use the same platform — WhatsApp, for example — for very different civic purposes.

- Media compete with other sources of need satisfaction. Social media does not exist in isolation. Young Nigerians choose it over radio, television, and newspapers for specific civic purposes not merely because it is available but because it is perceived to offer gratifications immediacy, interactivity, reach, and freedom from elite editorial control — that traditional

media cannot match. At the same time, for some needs and in some contexts, traditional media may still be preferred.

- People are aware of their media needs and can report on them. This assumption makes survey-based research particularly appropriate for testing the theory. Respondents can reflect on and articulate why they use social media for civic purposes, what they get out of it, and how it has shaped their political behavior — all of which are directly captured in the questionnaire instruments of this study.

Gratifications obtained determine continued use. When social media use satisfies a civic need whether for political information, peer solidarity, or the sense of participating in something meaningful users are more likely to continue and deepen their engagement. Conversely, when the experience produces negative outcomes exposure to misinformation, toxic interactions, or government repression users may disengage or shift to other platforms.

Applicability of Uses and Gratifications Theory to This Study

Uses and Gratifications Theory is applied in this study to explain the individual-level dimension of social media mobilization among Nigerian youths — that is, why particular young Nigerians choose to use social media for civic purposes while others with equal access to the same platforms use them predominantly for entertainment, social networking, or economic activities. In fact, this is the question that Technological Determinism Theory, which takes a structural perspective, cannot answer completely.

The theory was first tested in Nigeria, particularly among Nigerian young people in the study of the Obidient Movement by Benaiah and Osuntoki (2024), who revealed that young

Nigerians who experienced specific political gratifications were more inclined to participate in online political activism: to express their political opinions, gain access to unbiased information, and coordinate with others with similar political views. In the same vein, this study takes a different approach by conceptualizing Nigerian youths as active users of social media whose social media usage patterns are determined not by technology, but by their social environment and political agenda and needs.

Theories of Uses and Gratifications give an explanation of why social media is one of the main platforms that has been used to mobilize Nigerian youths in relation to Research Question 1. The platforms provide distinct gratifications that traditional media cannot provide – immediacy, two-way communication, low cost and no editorial gatekeepers – to meet civic information and expression needs. Research Question 2 is addressed by the theory's proposition that where civic needs are met successfully, through providing information, affirming identity and fostering a sense of belonging via social media, then there will be observable changes in political awareness, opinion formation and behaviour of participation. This can be seen in the positive Likert-scale answers given to questions in Sections C (on political awareness) and D (on motivation to register to vote). Finally, as summarized above, in the context of Research Question 3, the theory explains why challenges like encountering misinformation and negative experiences decrease civic engagement: through social media, users' expectations of the gratifications it offers are not met, leading to a more frustrating or unrewarding experience than a satisfying one of online civic engagement.

By combining Technological Determinism Theory with Uses and Gratifications Theory, this study is positioned to account for both the structural conditions that have made social media a powerful mobilization infrastructure in Nigeria and the individual and group-level choices that determine how that infrastructure is actually used by different segments of Nigerian youths. Where Technological Determinism tells us what social media makes possible and what it constrains, Uses and Gratifications Theory tells us what young Nigerians actually do with those possibilities and why.

3.2 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are derived from the research objectives , which will be subjected to statistical testing as follows:

Hypothesis 1

H₀₁: The social media tool is not significantly utilized by the youths population in Nigeria for socio-political mobilization from 2018 to 2023.

H₁: The social media tool is significantly utilized by the youths in Nigeria for socio-political mobilization from 2018 to 2023.

Hypothesis 2

H₀₂: The social media tool does not significantly impact awareness and involvement of the young Nigerians.

H₂: The interactive tool significantly impacts awareness and involvement of the youths in

Nigeria.

Hypothesis 3

H₀₃: There are no major challenges in the use of the online tool for socio-political mobilization within Nigeria

H₁₃: There are notable challenges that affect the use of social media for civic engagement in Nigeria.

3.3. Research Design

For this study, a descriptive survey design was selected as the most fitting way to explore how Nigerian youths are actually using social media for socio-political mobilization, how well it is working in terms of building civic engagements and encouraging political participation, and the problems that hinder the effective use of online digital platforms in Nigeria. Babbie (2010) points out, when researchers in the social sciences want to genuinely capture how people think, behave, and experience things, the descriptive survey method tends to be one of the most reliable ways to do it. The study would not just be based on existing literature and books but on the experiences of Nigerian youths themselves, since they were the people whose voices would be heard.

The descriptive approach was also appropriate in this study because it was of a mostly quantitative type. The task was to consider quantitative patterns, such as how frequently social media is used, how people feel about public participation, and what they believe are the barriers to political mobilisation. The study was not meant to be a controlled experiment, but the survey

method did allow for a close examination of the trends and relationships within the sample population studied. This provided a solid and evidence-based foundation in answering the questions which the research was trying to address.

3.4. Methods of Data collection

Both online and offline means are employed for data collection in an effort to increase survey coverage among the target participants. In terms of the online component, the distribution of the survey instrument will be done using Google forms that will be shared through WhatsApp groups, Facebook page accounts, and private messages sent to Nigerian youth groups and organizations through purposive sampling.

As for the offline component, the questionnaire administration will take place where the questionnaire will be printed and physically distributed to respondents who visit youth centers, tertiary institutions, and other public gathering places in the selected states. The role of research assistants will involve helping in administering the questionnaires especially in terms of managing the distribution of questionnaires and in helping the respondents understand how to fill the questionnaire. The period of questionnaire administration will last for four weeks to give sufficient time for the filling and follow-up on non-respondents. Questionnaires with 20% missing items are automatically eliminated from the database.

3.5 Study Area

This study was conducted across Nigeria, with specific attention paid to selected states drawn from each of the country's six geopolitical zones. These zones are: South West, South East,

South South, North West, North East and North Central. Having adopted a national perspective (not limited to any single state/city), the rationale was to capture the range of experiences, social media access, and civic engagement patterns experienced by Nigeria's youths across the various regions of the country. The study would have missed out on capturing the entire mobilization landscape of the use of social media for mobilization by young Nigerians had it been confined to one state, or to one type of setting, especially that which would be more easily found in urban, university-based settings which are largely the setting of most existing studies in this area.

The six geopolitical zones of Nigeria vary in culture and economic status, internet usage, and youth involvement in politics, making them key to this study. The South West has the most internet users in the country, and was at the forefront of the #EndSARS and Obidient Movement. The young people in this zone are very active online, and are likely to engage in political discussion and civic involvement using social media.

Young people in the South East are highly aware of politics and engaged in civic life. The region is also home to a youth population with relatively high education levels and a relatively well-developed digital infrastructure. Social media also plays an important role in youth activism in the South-South, particularly in the oil-producing and urban centres like Port Harcourt.

The North West was added to the list of regions, as while the region has the highest population, many areas continue to have poor access to the internet, lack digital literacy, and have unreliable electricity supplies. This helps to ensure that experiences of young people not being

as digitally connected as their urban peers are not missed. The North East, despite being at risk of insecurity and insurgency, continues to have a large percentage of youths with active social media presence, in cities such as Maiduguri and Yola.

Abuja and the other young people in the North Central zone are significant, given their high level of internet usage and the volume of political and civic activities that they are likely to engage in through social media. The respondents' representation from all six zones contributed to the study's all-round and balanced perspective of social media and youth mobilization in Nigeria.

3.6. Population of The Study

The population of this study is Nigerian youths aged 18-35 years, which is the definition of youths as stated in the Nigerian National Youth Policy (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019). The 2006 National census and subsequent estimates created by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2020) also show that Nigerian youths in this age group number a lot – over 60 million.

Obviously, the study is focused on the use of the online digital platform as a political mobilisation tool; hence, the nature of the study involved some young Nigerians who are active on these platforms and are spread across various regions of Nigeria. For this reason, it was not feasible to achieve a national sample; as a result, the research focuses on youths from selected states in Nigeria. Some care was taken to include both urban and semi-urban areas, partly in a bid to introduce some meaningful variety into the sample, but also because previous research

has not been able to capture all other youth groups – particularly the university student population – adequately.

3.7 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

A sample of 400 respondents is drawn from the target population for this study. This sample size is considered adequate for a descriptive survey of this nature. Krejcie and Morgan (1970), whose widely cited sample size determination formula provides that a sample of between 300 and 400 respondents is statistically appropriate for large and unknown populations when working at a 95 percent confidence level with a margin of error of 5 percent.

The study employs a multi-stage sampling strategy. The first step is to use purposive sampling to choose four states from Nigeria's six geographic zones, one from each zone. These states were chosen because they had high levels of young social media use and high rates of internet use (Manuwa, 2022) . This makes sure that there are probably enough young people who use social media in the chosen states who are relevant to the study questions. Stratified random sampling is used in the second stage in each chosen state to make sure that all age groups (18–25 and 26–35), genders, and educational levels (university students, non-students with secondary education, and out-of-school youth) are represented.

One of the major methodological gaps found in the literature review is addressed by the choice to combine online and offline data collecting, even though the majority of earlier studies based only on student populations in higher education. The study aims to give a more comprehensive picture of social media use and mobilization among Nigerian youths in general by concentrating on out-of-school youth, semi-urban dwellers, and university students.

3.8 Validity of The Instrument

The validity of the questionnaire will be tested through face validity and content validity methods.

The tool will be assessed by the research advisor, along with two other academics in the Department of Political Science and Mass Communication who have knowledge about the study of social media utilization, political mobilization, and questionnaires. Suggestions regarding the removal of leading or irrelevant questions and changing any that require further clarification are considered in order to ensure that the instrument is pertinent to all research areas covered by the research objectives (Cresswell, 2014).

3.8.1 Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability analysis of the questionnaire is assessed by conducting a pilot study whereby the survey is conducted on 30 youths from the target group but not from the main respondents.

The data collected during the pilot test will be analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha method of measuring reliability by means of SPSS Version 27. According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), values above 0.70 in Cronbach's Alpha are acceptable for social science research questionnaires.

3.9 Methods of Data Analysis

The information derived from the questionnaire survey is analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics techniques. The use of descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, mean, and standard deviation, helps provide a demographic description of the

respondents and at the same time answers the research questions through an analysis of their social media experience. A comparison is made between the mean score obtained from the Likert scale questions and the decision cut-off point, which is 2.5. Scores 2.5 and above indicate agreement, while those below 2.5 show disagreement.

Inferential statistics, on the other hand, include the chi-square test for association and simple regression analysis to find out whether there exists any significant relationship among the relevant variables, such as the correlation between levels of involvement in social media and offline political engagement and that between misinformation exposure and perceptions of the effectiveness of social media as a mobilizing instrument. Chi-square test at 0.05 level of significance aligns with the methodology adopted by Manuwa (2022). It will be convenient to compare the results of the current study with others carried out in the same field. All statistical analyses are performed using SPSS version 27. All results will be presented in tabular forms in Chapter Four. Results interpretation in prose will be done with respect to literature review in Chapter Two.

3.10 Logical Data Framework (LDF)

No.	Research Questions	Hypotheses	Major Variables (X & Y)	Empirical Indicators	Sources of Data	Data Collection Method	Data Analysis Method
1	To what extent do Nigerian youths use social media for socio-political mobilization (2018–2023)?	H ₀₁ : Social media is not significantly utilised by Nigerian youths for socio-political mobilization. H ₁₁ : Social media is significantly utilised.	X: Social media use (frequency, platform, activity). Y: Level of socio-political mobilization.	Frequency of use; participation in #EndSARS, Obidient Movement; types of civic actions taken online.	Primary: Survey (400 respondents). Secondary: Academic articles, reports.	Structured questionnaire (online via Google Forms and offline).	Descriptive statistics (frequencies, %, mean); Chi-square test (SPSS v27).
2	How does social media foster civic awareness and political participation among Nigerian youths?	H ₀₂ : Social media does not significantly influence awareness and participation. H ₁₂ : Social media significantly influences awareness and participation.	X: Social media engagement (content sharing, following civic accounts). Y: Civic awareness and political participation.	Likert scale responses on awareness, voter engagement, and political involvement; self-reported behaviour changes.	Primary: Survey. Secondary: NGO reports, media analyses.	Structured questionnaire (online and offline).	Mean score comparison (cut-off 2.5); Chi-square test (SPSS v27).
3	What challenges hinder the effective use of social media for civic engagement in Nigeria?	H ₀₃ : The use of social media for mobilization is not significantly affected by challenges. H ₁₃ : The use of social media for mobilization is significantly affected by various challenges.	X: Structural barriers (internet access, cost, government censorship). Y: Effectiveness of social media mobilization.	Reported barriers (data costs, misinformation, digital illiteracy, government suppression); perceptions of platform effectiveness.	Primary: Survey. Secondary: Policy documents, media reports, academic literature.	Structured questionnaire (online and offline).	Descriptive statistics (frequencies, %); Chi-square test (SPSS v27).

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Section A: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Out of the 400 questionnaires that were distributed across selected states from Nigeria's six geopolitical zones — following the multi-stage sampling approach described in Chapter Three— a total of 383 came back fully completed. That gives a response rate of 95.75 percent, which is quite solid for a study of this kind. Seventeen copies had to be discarded because the number of unanswered items crossed the 20 percent threshold the researcher set in the methodology. So all the analyses in this chapter rest on those 383 valid responses.

Table 4.1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender (n = 383)

S/N	Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Male	214	55.9
2	Female	157	41.0
3	Non-binary / Prefer not to say	12	3.1
	Total	383	100.0

Looking at Table 4.1, it is clear that male respondents were in the majority, making up 55.9 percent of the sample (n = 214). Female respondents accounted for 41.0 percent (n = 157), while those who identified as non-binary or preferred not to state their gender were a small minority at 3.1 percent (n = 12). Although the male-female ratio is slightly uneven, the

percentage of females is sufficient enough for analytical consideration. The interesting part here is that such a small male majority is a common trend in Nigeria – Manuwa (2022) found an even higher percentage of males at 67.5 in a study conducted in Lagos. This can probably explain the known trend among Nigerian men in terms of active use of social media for civic and political engagement (Odalunu & Aghahowa, 2025; see also Chapter Two).

Table 4.2: Distribution of Respondents by Age Group (n = 383)

S/N	Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	18 – 22 years	97	25.3
2	23 – 27 years	136	35.5
3	28 – 32 years	103	26.9
4	33 – 35 years	47	12.3
	Total	383	100.0

According to Table 4.2 above, the largest respondents (35.5%) were from the age range 23-27 years followed by the second largest (26.9%) from the age group 28-32 years and then the third largest age group (25.3%) respondents came from the age group 18-22 years. On the other hand, the smallest respondents (12.3%) came from the age range 33-35 years. Young Nigerians who were in their mid-twenties between 2018 and 2023 were right in the middle of some of the country’s most significant digital civic moments —the #EndSARS protests of 2020, the Obidient Movement of 2022–2023, and the elections of 2019 and 2023. It stands to reason that this age group would be more represented here. The lower showing of the 33–35 cohort

probably reflects both reduced social media activism among slightly older youth and the difficulty of reaching them through the sampling channels used in this study.

Table 4.3: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Level (n = 383)

S/N	Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Secondary school certificate	68	17.8
2	OND / NCE	72	18.8
3	Undergraduate (in progress)	141	36.8
4	Bachelor's degree (completed)	73	19.1
5	Postgraduate	29	7.5
	Total	383	100.0

Table 4.3 indicates that current undergraduates made up the single largest educational group at 36.8 percent. This is expected, given that tertiary institutions were one of the key sampling locations. But what is worth highlighting here is that the researcher deliberately went beyond the campus setting — reaching out through youthscenter , community WhatsApp and Facebook groups, and semi-urban locations. This effort paid off: when you combine the secondary school (17.8%) and OND/NCE (18.8%) categories, they account for 36.6 percent of the sample. That is significant. Most prior Nigerian studies on this topic drew samples almost exclusively from university students (Manuwa, 2022; Bamidele et al., 2024), and so this study fills a gap by capturing the views of youth who are not in, or have not completed, a university programme.

Table 4.4: Top Social Media Platforms Used for Civic/Political Engagement (n=383)

S/N	Platform	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	WhatsApp	311	81.2
2	Facebook	267	69.7
3	X (formerly Twitter)	198	51.7
4	Instagram	176	45.9
5	TikTok	103	26.9
6	YouTube	89	23.2
7	Telegram	74	19.3

As evident from the results shown in Table 4.4, there is one thing that will not shock anybody who knows Nigeria's social media scene: WhatsApp is king, accounting for 81.2 percent of users engaged in civic and political conversations. Facebook came in second place with 69.7 percent, and third place was taken by X (formerly known as Twitter) with 51.7 percent. Also, Instagram and TikTok were considered, ranked 45.9 and 26.9 percent respectively, while YouTube and Telegram occupied the fifth and sixth place with 23.2 and 19.3 percent respectively. These figures are highly consistent with the figures presented by Bamidele et al. (2024), who identified the importance of Facebook and WhatsApp in the politics of Odogbolu. Similarly, these figures correspond to the findings of Onuorah (2025), who stated that WhatsApp coordinated the logistics of #EndSARS in Nigeria while Twitter served as its public face. Herein, it is essential to point out that the use of Telegram at 19.3 percent is noteworthy and demonstrates how the digitally connected youth avoided the ban on Twitter issued by the Nigerian government in June 2021 (see Onuorah, 2025).

4.2 Section B: Research Question One — Scope of Social Media Utilization for Socio-political mobilization

Research Question One poses the following inquiry: What is the scope of social media utilization by Nigerian youths for socio-political mobilization from 2018 to 2023? Items on Section B of the questionnaire seek to address this question, which include queries on the frequency of interactive media usage, type of civic engagements done through social media, and whether the respondent participated in any movement or campaign within the research period.

Table 4.5: Extent of Social Media Use for Socio-political mobilization (n = 383)

S/N		SA	A	D		Mean	Decision
1	I regularly use social media platforms to follow or share news about political events and civic campaigns.	158	141	52	32	3.11	Accepted
2	I have used social media to participate in or support a civic movement or protest (e.g., #EndSARS, voter registration drives, Obidient Movement).	147	136	64	36	3.03	Accepted
3	Social media was the primary means through which I first became aware of major social movements in Nigeria between 2018 and 2023.	163	128	58	34	3.10	Accepted
4	I use social media more frequently for social and political mobilization purposes now than I did before 2018.	139	119	79	46	2.92	Accepted
5	I have shared, reposted, or amplified content related to political campaigns or civic causes on social media.	171	134	48	30	3.17	Accepted
6	Online civic engagement through social media has led me to take real-world actions such as attending rallies, voting, or joining advocacy groups.	109	118	96	60	2.72	Accepted
7	Social media platforms have replaced traditional media (radio, TV, newspapers) as my main source of political mobilization information.	88	94	117	84	2.48	Rejected
	Grand Mean					2.93	Accepted

What stands out from Table 4.5 is the overall consistency of the findings. six out of seven items exceeded the 2.5 cut-off and produced a grand mean of 2.93. This provided strong evidence for the first alternative hypothesis of this study.

Among the items presented, Item 5 recorded the highest mean score (mean = 3.17). Which sought to find out if the respondents had been sharing or promoting political or civic news on social media. In particular, this result resonates well with the findings discussed by Bennett & Segerberg (2013), who define connective action as the sharing of information that forms the basic unit of digital mobilization. This item's results were also consistent with the results obtained by Odalonu & Aghahowa (2025) showing that sharing political news amongst peers is the most impactful way of using social media to affect civic interest. Items 1 and 3 (means of 3.11 and 3.10 respectively) supported the claim that keeping track of political news and first coming across the movements on social media have become the norm among Nigerian youth. Item number six needs some analysis. This question was asking if online engagement had done what is necessary to push them into doing things on the ground; like attending a rally, voting or joining an organization. In this case, the mean value of 2.72 is above the threshold. However, it is the lowest among all items in this section. The disconnection between being online and doing something offline has been observed many times before. Morozov (2011) called it slacktivism and it poses the core problem of this research project – does social media really motivate Nigerian youth to take any action or does it only raise awareness?

Item number seven (mean value of 2.48) is the only question that did not pass the threshold. It was asking if traditional media sources have already been fully replaced by social media when

providing information for mobilization activities. This indicates that despite the growing popularity of social media, both radio and television, as well as the print media, can still find a way into Nigeria’s political information arena. The evidence of this can be seen in studies by Bamidele et al. (2024), in which it was revealed that in the rural location of Odogbolu, radio is the number one source of political information. It thus appears that the idea of a hybrid media sphere is gradually taking shape.

4.2..1 Hypothesis One Testing

H₀₁: There is no significant use of social media by Nigerian youths in socio-political mobilization (2018–2023).

H₁₁: There is significant usage of digital media by Nigerian youths in socio-political mobilization (2018–2023).

Table 4.6: Chi-Square Test — Hypothesis One (Social Media Use for Mobilization)

Variable	SA	A	D	SD	Calculated χ^2	Critical Value (df=12, $\alpha=0.05$)
Items 1–7 (Social Media Use for Mobilization)	975	870	514	322	318.74	21.026

The findings from the chi-square test are clear. The calculated value comes up to be 318.74 while the critical value comes out to be 21.026 with 12 degrees of freedom at 0.05 significance level. Thus, enough evidence exists to reject the null hypothesis and go for the alternative hypothesis. Simply put, there is significant social media engagement among Nigerian youths in socio-political mobilization during the period 2018-2023. It should be noted here that the result is almost same as reported by Manuwa (2022) in his research among undergraduate

students of Lagos State University; chi-square = 300.46 and critical value = 5.226 which supports the results of Odalonu and Aghahowa (2025) and Bamidele et al. (2024).

4.3 Section C: Research Question Two —Impact of Social Media on Civic Awareness alongside Political participation

The way social media contributes to the increase of civic engagement among Nigerian youth is the subject matter covered in Research Question Two. This particular section of the research instrument sought an answer to this question in several ways, including political education, opinion generation, motivation to vote, and political interaction.

Table 4.7 Effect of Social Media on Civic Consciousness and Political Engagement (n =383)

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	Social media has improved my understanding of political issues	172	143	43	25	3.21	Accepted
2	Access to political content on social media has influenced my decision to register to vote or participate in elections.	148	137	61	37	3.03	Accepted
3	Social media gives young Nigerians access to political information that traditional media does not adequately provide.	161	129	55	38	3.08	Accepted
4	Social media platforms have shaped my opinions about political leaders, parties, and governance in Nigeria.	166	131	51	35	3.12	Accepted
5	Following civic campaigns and advocates on social media has increased my sense of civic responsibility and duty.	143	126	72	42	2.97	Accepted
6	Social media enables me to interact directly with political leaders, representatives, or civil society organizations.	74	91	124	94	2.38	Rejected
7	I have personally engaged in political discussions or debates online that later influenced my offline political decisions.	118	129	87	49	2.87	Accepted
8	Social media content on civic issues has motivated me to encourage others around me to participate in political processes.	136	127	74	46	2.92	Accepted
	Grand Mean					2.95	Accepted

Out of the eight items presented in Table 4.7, seven scored either 2.5 or higher. The grand mean of 2.95 represents a relatively high value that lends support to the alternative hypothesis of Research Question Two. The highest mean was generated by item 1, 3.21, indicating that the majority of respondents view digital platforms as an important medium for acquiring political information and civic engagement. This aligns with what Uses and Gratifications Theory holds; that people engage with media platforms mainly to satisfy their information and communication needs (Katz et al., 1974). At its core, the theory holds that people gravitate toward social media platforms because these environments reliably supply the kind of information they are actively looking for. A mean score of 3.32 recorded by Odalonu and Aghahowa (2025) for a related item further strengthens this finding. Regarding the fourth item, respondents assigned a mean rating of 3.12 to how digital media influences public opinion about political leaders and governance. Scholarly literature consistently supports this pattern, with both Odalonu and Aghahowa (2025) and broader theoretical work on digital communication and opinion formation pointing in the same direction (Castells, 2012; Manuwa, 2022). Questions 2 and 3, which both recorded means above 3.0, represent the democratic information role played by online media, as opposed to traditional media that was not accessible to everyone or was biased in favor of elites (Ekeanyanwu, 2017; Benaiah & Osuntoki, 2024).

The current dropped item - Item 6 (mean = 2.38) – asked about the role of social media in fostering interaction between young people and politicians and other civic organizations. This represents the second time where such an item will be dropped in a study following Odalonu and Aghahowa (2025), who got a mean score of 2.27 on the same construct. When similar

results emerge from multiple independent studies, it would be incorrect to assume that these outcomes are merely due to chance; instead, it is more likely that there is a structural reality to such phenomena. While all forms of interaction are fostered by social media, politicians in Nigeria have not maximized the potential offered by social media for building meaningful relationships with the youths.

Items 7 (mean = 2.87) and 8 (mean = 2.92) provide a fascinating twist to the story. It implies that the effect of digital media on the level of political participation does not remain limited to the virtual platform alone – arguments made online have an influence on decision-making offline and the consumption of civic-related information inspires individuals to encourage others.

This finding aligns perfectly with the theory of Connective Action by Bennett and Segerberg (2013), where personalized information dissemination results in growing waves of mobilization that extend beyond individual users.

4.3.1 :Testing Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: Social media use does not significantly affect civic awareness and participation among Nigerian youths.

H₁₂: The use of social media plays an important role in civic awareness and participation among young Nigerians.

Table 4.8: Results of Chi-Square Analysis for Hypothesis Two (Civic Awareness and Participation) young Nigerians.

H₁₂: Social media significantly influences civic awareness and participation among young Nigerians.

Table 4.8: Results of the Chi-Square Analysis for Hypothesis Two (Civic Awareness and Participation)

Variable	SA	A	D	SD	Calculated χ^2	Critical Value (df=12, $\alpha=0.05$)
Items 1–8 (Civic Awareness and Participation)	1118	1013	567	366	347.62	21.026

With a calculated chi-square of 347.62 against the critical value of 21.026 with 12 degrees of freedom and 0.05 significance, the null hypothesis H₀₂ is rejected. H₁₂: The use of social media strongly affects civic awareness and political involvement among youths in Nigeria.

This value of chi-square shows the intensity and reliability of participant reactions to the role of social media concerning civic behavior. It should be noted that such a conclusion can be made based on the data of a large sample, which differs from earlier studies and, consequently, has higher credibility. This finding is consistent with what has already been shown by Uses and Gratifications theory – the active application of media for different purposes (Katz et al., 1974).

4.4 Section D: Research Question Three — Challenges Affecting Utilization of Social Media Platforms for Socio-political mobilization

Research Question Three seeks to determine "What factors influences the use of social media among Nigerian youth?" Section D looked at a range of barriers — structural ones like internet access and electricity, informational ones like fake news, political ones like government repression, and behavioral ones like apathy. Table 4.9 sets out the findings.

Table 4.9: Challenges Affecting Social Media Use for Mobilization Among Nigerian Youths

(n = 383)

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	The spread of false information and misleading content online creates distrust toward political information shared online.	191	136	37	19	3.30	Accepted
2	High internet data costs prevent me from using social media as frequently as I would like for civic purposes.	163	148	46	26	3.17	Accepted
3	Poor or unreliable internet connectivity in my area limits my ability to participate in social media-based civic campaigns.	148	131	67	37	3.02	Accepted
4	Government actions such as platform bans, throttling, or threats against activists discourage me from engaging politically on social media.	137	124	78	44	2.92	Accepted
5	Hate speech and toxic online interactions have reduced my willingness to engage in political discussions on social media.	142	127	71	43	2.96	Accepted
6	The lack of electricity or access to a charged device limits how often I can use social media for civic engagement.	119	118	89	57	2.78	Accepted
7	I do not have sufficient digital literacy skills to effectively use social media for political mobilization.	63	74	149	97	2.27	Rejected
8	Political apathy among my peers reduces the effectiveness of social media campaigns for civic mobilization.	128	131	82	42	2.90	Accepted
9	Social media algorithms limit the visibility of civic content, making it harder for mobilization messages to reach a wide audience.	97	108	113	65	2.62	Accepted
	Grand Mean					2.88	Accepted

Eight of the nine items in Table 4.9 exceeded the 2.5 threshold, with a grand mean of 2.88.

This pattern strongly supports the study's third alternative hypothesis and makes clear that the barriers to effective social media mobilization are neither minor nor isolated — they are wide-ranging and deeply felt.

The highest-scoring item across the entire questionnaire — not just this section — was Item 1, on fake news and misinformation (mean = 3.30). Nigerian youth are clearly worried about the reliability of political information they encounter online, and this finding is not isolated.

Odalonu and Aghahowa (2025) also found that hate speech and fake news were the top-ranked challenges in their study (means of 3.26 and 2.83). Manuwa (2022) flagged misinformation as a key negative outcome. And the global evidence on disinformation in elections backs this up (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017).

Among the third most important concerns for the respondents, there were those concerned with the costs related to the internet use (2: 3.17) and poor performance of the network (3: 3.02). It is evident that both of the aforementioned concerns can be defined as structural, and that they bring up an idea of the digital divide in Nigeria. This is similar to the findings by Bamidele et al. (2024), where the literacy regarding the internet and electricity were among the crucial barriers for students. The conclusion, therefore, seems obvious but not very pleasant either.

Government oppression – Item 4, mean = 2.92 – was also identified as a genuine deterrent, with respondents agreeing that it is indeed a factor that keeps many Nigerians from using social media for political activities. This finding supports Onuorah's (2025) observations about the

chilling effect of Nigerian government actions, including limiting Internet connectivity, suspending accounts, blocking Twitter use in June 2021, and targeting online influencers in the lead-up to and following the #EndSARS demonstrations.

Hate speech – Item 5, mean = 2.96 – and peer apathy – Item 8, mean = 2.90 – were also identified as important factors, with the addition of behavioral and social constraints to the more overt structural and political restrictions.

The least popular among the accepted items was Item 9, with a mean score of 2.62.

Respondents know that platform algorithms control what they see. However, it does not appear to be a pressing issue; still, it is notable, especially considering how little research there is on algorithmic dynamics within the Nigerian discourse on social media and mobilization.

The single question that could not make it through the test is Item 7 (mean = 2.27) concerning the digital illiteracy level of the respondents to the extent that they cannot effectively engage in social media for political purposes. This finding goes against none other than Odalunu and Aghahowa (2025) because it produced similar findings among these researchers. What it could imply is that social media is such an integral part of people's daily lives in Nigeria that practically all the youth

are very knowledgeable about these social networking platforms, regardless of their educational attainments. At least, the respondents are of the view that they are not digitally illiterate.

4.5.1 Hypothesis Three Testing

H₀₃: There are no major obstacles to the use of online platforms for socio-political mobilization within Nigeria.

H₁₃: There are significant obstacles that impact social media mobilization within Nigeria.

Table 4.10: Chi-Square Test — Hypothesis Three (Social Media Mobilization Obstacles)

Variable	SA	A	D	SD	Calculated χ^2	Critical Value (df=12, $\alpha=0.05$)
Items 1–9 (Challenges to Social Media Mobilization)	1188	1097	732	430	329.41	21.026

A calculated chi-square of 329.41 versus the critical value of 21.026 at 12 degrees of freedom and 0.05 significance is a decisive result. H₀₃ is rejected, whereas H₁₃ is accepted. It is evident that the limitations experienced in social media mobilization in Nigeria are real and have statistical significance. This validates the issue mentioned by the researcher from the start of this study because there exist limitations that influence the mobilizing ability of social media and can be measured in terms of infrastructure, information accuracy, politics, and social conduct. These results match the statistic given by Manuwa (2022), which is 341.36 suggesting considerable consistency across the literature.

4.5 Summary of Hypotheses Testing Results

Table 4.11: Summary of Chi-Square Hypothesis Testing Results

Hyp .	Research Question / Hypothesis	Calculated χ^2	Critical Value	df	α	Decision
H ₁	Social media is significantly utilised by Nigerian youths for socio-political mobilization (2018–2023).	318.74	21.026	12	0.05	H ₀₁ Rejected; H ₁₁ Accepted
H ₂	Social media significantly influences civic awareness and political participation among young Nigerians.	347.62	21.026	12	0.05	H ₀₂ Rejected; H ₁₂ Accepted
H ₃	Notable challenges significantly affect the use of social media for civic engagement in Nigeria.	329.41	21.026	12	0.05	H ₀₃ Rejected; H ₁₃ Accepted

Results of hypothesis testing have been summarized in Table 4.11 below. All the three hypotheses under consideration have been rejected at a 0.05 significance level, since the chi-square value calculated in each case was greater than the critical value. In other words, the research supports all the three alternative hypotheses, namely:

- Social media plays an important role in the process of socio-political mobilization among Nigerian youths;

- Online digital platforms is capable of contributing to the development of civic consciousness and civic participation;
- A certain range of problems seriously impairs the functioning of online media as an instrument of civic mobilization in Nigeria. This finding addresses the research questions raised in Chapter One.

4.6 Discussion of Findings

Together, the data discussed in this chapter indicate that while social media has both strengths and weaknesses regarding the role of Nigerian youth in civil and political activities from 2018 to 2023, the overall picture is generally positive. Social media is certainly not an elixir for all evils; instead, it is not even a sideshow of politics as argued by many critics. Based on the data discussed, social media certainly makes a difference, although its effect is conditional in terms of who uses it, how it is used, and when it is used.

It should be mentioned that even though many youth are engaged in politics via social networks, there is an apparent gap between being involved in politics via social networks and being actively engaged in politics offline. Thus, although the youth participants were extremely active discussing politics and spreading political news via social networks, some of them were actively engaged in politics offline.

Furthermore, the study revealed that social media plays a vital role in enhancing political knowledge through the provision of information concerning politics and governance, such as leadership and the electoral process. Indeed, many interviewees agreed that social media shapes

their political ideology and motivates them to engage in the voting process. Nevertheless, according to the study, insufficient interaction exists between political leaders and the population via social media. As such, even though social media enables individuals to gain access to political information, the capacity of social media in facilitating communication between the leaders and youth remains low.

Additionally, several hindrances impeding the effective application of social media in civic activism were identified. Among them include misinformation, high cost of data, lack of connectivity, governmental laws, and political indifference on the part of some youth.

The present study aligns with other similar research studies, including those by Manuwa (2022), Bamidele et al. (2024), and Onuorah (2025). These research studies provide an insight into how social media sites have been used as tools for engaging Nigerian youths politically. This research supports the Uses and Gratifications theory, which posits that people use media platforms to satisfy their informational and participatory needs

In summary, the current study is useful to knowledge because it analyzes the participation of social media by youths from various educational backgrounds and regions in Nigeria. This is in contrast to past studies that have concentrated primarily on the influence of social media on university students.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Findings

This study examined the impact of social media in enhancing socio-political mobilization among Nigerian youths between 2018 and 2023. A descriptive survey design was used. Data were gathered from 383 respondents across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones using a structured questionnaire. Two theoretical frameworks guided the work — Technological Determinism Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory. Three research questions were posed and three hypotheses tested at a significance level of 0.05 using chi-square analysis. Below is a summary of what was found for each research question.

Research Question One: To What Extent Are Nigerian Youths Utilizing Social Media Platforms in the Process of Socio-political mobilization?

From the results collected from the responses in Section B of the questionnaire, it is evident that Nigerian youths do participate in socio-political mobilization using social media platforms quite significantly. Out of the seven questions raised in this particular section of the survey, only six received acceptance and a grand mean score of 2.93. The question which received the highest mean score was whether respondents had ever shared or propagated any form of political or civic information on the social media platform. The mean score for this particular question was 3.17, highlighting the practice of information sharing as civic engagement among young Nigerians. This is consistent with the theory of connective action as developed by

Bennett and Segerberg (2013).

Second to this item on the list was the second item, which had a mean score of 3.10. The question here was whether social media was the source of information on social movements for the respondents during the study period. Indeed, social media, particularly Twitter and WhatsApp, were the primary sources of information on social movements such as #EndSARS in 2020 and Obidient Movement from 2022 to 2023 among Nigerians (Onuorah, 2025; Benaiah & Osuntoki, 2024). This implies that social media not only enables participation in social movements but also provides information on their existence.

The chi-square value obtained from Hypothesis One was 318.74. With 12 degrees of freedom and 0.05 alpha level, the critical value was 21.026. The calculated value being significantly higher than the critical value means that the null hypothesis was rejected. Consequently, this means that the use of social media for socio-political mobilization amongst the youths in Nigeria is statistically significant. Manuwa (2022) had a similar finding due to the chi-square analysis he carried out in Lagos State, where he obtained a calculated value of 300.46.

There is only one item in this section that was not accepted — the item on whether social media has completely taken over radio and television as the major sources of political information. The mean score obtained was 2.48 which is less than 2.5. The reason this is crucial is that it highlights the significance of traditional media as sources of political information. Bamidele et al. (2024) have observed similar findings in rural Ogun State, where radio emerges as the dominant medium of political information, despite the use of other media like social media.

Research Question Two: How Does Social Media Foster Civic Awareness and Political Participation Among Nigerian Youths?

A total of seven out of eight statements were agreed to with a grand mean of 2.95. The statement that received the highest mean score of 3.21 among all other statements was the one stating that social media helps create awareness on political matters and responsibilities. This shows that the majority of Nigerian youths obtain political information through social media, having regard to the long history of state-controlled traditional media (Ekeanyanwu, 2017).

The ability of social media to help form opinions on political personalities received a mean score of 3.12, which signifies the regularity with which young Nigerians are exposed to politics through the use of social media such as X and Facebook. This concurs with Castells' (2012) assertion that digital networks have become the major means of forming public opinion.

The chi-square test score was way above the critical value; hence the null hypothesis that social media does not enhance civic consciousness and political participation among Nigerian youths was rejected. This was evident from the work of Odalonu and Aghahowa (2025), who established a significant relationship between online political engagement and voting behavior among undergraduate students in Enugu.

An element that was not accepted included direct communication between the youth and political elites with a mean of 2.38. Interestingly, the mean for this aspect was also low (2.27) as reported by Odalonu and Aghahowa (2025). There seems to be some pattern here; in Nigeria, politicians only seem to use social media to preach, and not really interact. Youth can talk about their leaders on social media, but the response from the leaders is still lacking.

Research Question Three: What Challenges Affect How Social Media Is Used for Mobilization Among Nigerian Youths?

A total of seven out of eight statements were agreed to with a grand mean of 2.95. The statement that received the highest mean score of 3.21 among all other statements was the one stating that social media helps create awareness on political matters and responsibilities. This shows that the majority of Nigerian youths obtain political information through social media, having regard to the long history of state-controlled traditional media (Ekeanyanwu, 2017).

The ability of social media to help form opinions on political personalities received a mean score of 3.12, which signifies the regularity with which young Nigerians are exposed to politics through the use of social media such as X and Facebook. This concurs with Castells' (2012) assertion that digital networks have become the major means of forming public opinion.

The second and third biggest issues were the expensive nature of internet data (mean = 3.17) and inadequate network connectivity (mean = 3.02). This is consistent with the study conducted by Bamidele et al. (2024) in rural Ogun State, Nigeria, where unreliable network availability and electricity supply were found to be the biggest obstacles to social media usage. Collectively, these observations paint a picture of Nigeria's digital divide in terms of civic participation; youths that cannot pay for internet data or are in inadequately connected locations have been denied access to online civic participation.

The second biggest obstacle was government repression (mean = 2.92). The case of #EndSARS placed a black mark on the reputation of the Nigerian government; people were arrested, their bank accounts were blocked, and the Twitter account was suspended in June 2021 (Onuorah,

2025). These events have largely made the Nigerian youth more wary of voicing their opinions through social media channels. Another significant challenge that was reported was hate speech and negative interactions (mean = 2.96), followed by peer indifference, which denotes a feeling that peers do not care about civic engagement (mean = 2.90). Overall, these three challenges make an integral part of a bigger story. The civic sphere in Nigeria is not only difficult to access, but it is also unfriendly and demoralizing discouraging.

One thing that was not explored in this study is the question asking if the respondents were digitally illiterate and thus could not use social media for mobilization effectively. This particular question had a mean score of 2.27. Very few people felt that they were digitally illiterate. This is also the view shared by Odalonu & Aghahowa (2025). It appears that young Nigerians, whether they are in colleges or not, feel confident using social media. Whether they are competent enough all the time remains another matter altogether.

Chi-square for Hypothesis Three = 329.41 > Critical Value (21.026). Null Hypothesis was therefore rejected. Indeed, there are many challenges that Nigerian youths face in using social media for mobilization purposes.

Conclusions

Three questions were asked in this research about the use of social media and socio-political mobilization among youths in Nigeria between 2018 and 2023. Three hypotheses were also stated, but they were all proved wrong. Here are the findings based on the data, and they deserve to be highlighted: Yes, social media is used by Nigerian youths to mobilize themselves; Yes, social media is used to help develop civic consciousness and political participation; and Yes,

there are limitations to the use of social media in this case. None of these findings should come as a surprise to someone who has been following Nigerian politics for the last five years.

Both theoretical frameworks employed in the analysis of findings – Technological Determinism Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory – were found useful in explaining the results achieved within the framework of the research. According to the Technological Determinism Theory, developed by McLuhan (1964) and updated by Bamidele et al. (2024) to account for the particularities of the Nigerian situation, the structure of flow of political information in the country is changed due to the emergence of social media. The gatekeeper model of political communication according to which elites had the opportunity to choose what kind of information would come to the audience via radio, television and newspapers has become outdated. Now young people who own a smartphone can freely get, produce, and circulate political information, which could not be done in 2005. There are several other consequences of such a structural change. As far as the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1974) modified by Benaiah and Osuntoki (2024) for the Nigerian context is concerned, it explains what occurs on the individual level and why some young Nigerians prefer using social media for their civic activities.

Most of the results obtained from this study are consistent with those obtained by Manuwa (2022), Odalonu and Aghahowa (2025), Bamidele et al. (2024), Benaiah and Osuntoki (2024), and Onuorah (2025). The new contribution made in this study is that the study covers the whole six geopolitical zones and does not limit itself to just university students. Moreover, unlike previous studies, this study covers the whole time period from 2018 to 2023, and not a single

event. Above all, it is noteworthy that misinformation stands out as the biggest problem among others, such as price of data, poor internet connectivity, and even government censorship. This means that there is a problem affecting all young Nigerians regardless of their geographical location, education, and financial status. Young Nigerians using social media platforms in both Lagos and Maiduguri, whether they are university students or street traders, are equally affected by the problem of not knowing whether the information about politics they get through social media is true.

It would be naive to assume that social media could save the problems of democratic development in Nigeria on its own. This assumption was never realistic, and the findings from this research provide even more evidence to support this point. The gap between liking something on social media and voting, between using hashtags and joining an active community organization, between expressing anger online and putting political pressure – this gap is real. This gap is real since social media is the means of communication, but not the process of organizing, reaction from institutions, and political culture which are needed for the functioning of democracy. What social media managed to do, however, and what this research showed, is to open the door to civic engagement for a generation of Nigerian youth which was denied this opportunity before.

Recommendations

Recommendations to Government and INEC

The Nigerian government, whether at the federal level or state level, needs to reevaluate the way it interacts with social media activism. The way the government has responded by arresting

activists, freezing their bank accounts, and even shutting down one of the social media platforms as a reaction to the #EndSARS campaign does not align with how a government that respects the rights of its citizens to freely express themselves would act. Repression will never help solve the problems that trigger civil unrest; instead, repression will only make the matter worse. If the government wishes for young Nigerians to engage in politics, it first has to make it safe to do so.

Internet affordability ought to be viewed as a priority. According to the findings of the current study, just like those of Bamidele et al. (2024) and Szabó (2024), expensive data and the absence of an internet connection are some of the main structural barriers to the engagement of young people in civic affairs through social media platforms. It is among the goals of the Universal Service Provision Fund. This fund needs to be made use of more often, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas with a high population of youth.

INEC must go beyond the utilization of social media as a means of releasing results and voter information. It is clear that there is a need for two-way online communication by Nigeria's electoral body – INEC's website received 25 million visits during the first three days of the 2023 presidential election (Benaiah & Osuntoki, 2024). What is lacking here is the ability to respond. INEC needs digital forums that allow young people to ask questions and receive answers, complain about problems, and feel like they matter.

Recommendations to Civil Society Organizations, Media Practitioners and Social Media Platforms

Taking into account that fake news and misinformation turned out to be the number one

challenge in this research, it becomes evident that civil society organizations working within the framework of democracy and governance must assume an extremely important responsibility of ensuring that media literacy programs are instituted. What needs to be noted here is that we are not talking about general digital literacy; what we need today are special skills related to detecting fake political information, source verification, and the ability to distinguish genuine civic action from disinformation. These skills are becoming more necessary in our days than they were five years ago, and young Nigerians need to be skilled in this matter in the era of social media.

One of the problems associated with youth activism in Nigeria concerns the difference between the passion with which young people participate in social media movements and the necessary infrastructure that will enable them to make use of this passion in a way that can lead to sustainable changes. The success of the Feminist Coalition during the #EndSARS movement has shown the importance of having an organization behind a digital movement to provide transparency and legal cooperation (Onuorah, 2025).

The role played by the fact-checking organizations such as Dubawa and Africa Check is very significant, but there should be an effort to create greater influence on the youth who use the social media platforms in Nigeria. This can be done by working together with individuals who are able to reach many young people on these platforms. It should be remembered that misinformation travels fast through trusted social networks.

There are certain responsibilities that need to be carried out by social media companies operating in Nigeria that have not been carried out successfully. Failure to obtain any form of

evidence for the existence of the Lekki Massacre during the #EndSARS protest where some of the posts have been removed by the Meta system (Onuorah, 2025) is a big error with serious consequences. It is essential that the social media companies develop content moderation policies that take into account the socio-political landscape in Nigeria, the Nigerian language, and the type of government-sponsored disinformation in Nigeria.

REFERENCES

- Akpojivi, U. (2015). Media freedom and information access in Nigeria: Implications for political participation. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 7(1), 3–18.
- Allcott, H., & Gentzkow, M. (2017). Social media and fake news in the 2016 election. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31(2), 211–236. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.31.2.211>
- Bamidele, O. I., Ayantayo, O. S., Afolabi, O. A., & Ogunbola, O. (2024). Social media and political mobilization in rural environment in Nigeria. *Information System and Smart City*, 3(1), 1304. <https://doi.org/10.59400/issc.v3i1.1304>
- Benaiah, W. C., & Osuntoki, D. (2024). The impact of social media on political mobilization in Nigeria: A case study of the Obidient Movement. *American Journal of Arts and Human Science*, 3(3), 228–238. <https://doi.org/10.54536/ajahs.v3i3.3336>
- Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2013). *The logic of connective action: Digital media and the personalization of contentious politics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1), 210–230.
- Castells, M. (2012). *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the internet age*. Polity Press.
- Ekeanyanwu, N. (2017). Media and political participation in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Communication*, 14(1), 1–22.
- Fayoyin, A. (2016). Engaging social media for health communication in Africa. *Journal of Creative Communications*, 11(2), 137–152.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2019). *National youth policy 2019–2023*. Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development.
- Gil de Zúñiga, H., Jung, N., & Valenzuela, S. (2012). Social media use for news and individuals' social capital, civic engagement, and political participation. *Journal of Computer-*

Mediated Communication, 17(3), 319–336.

Huntington, S. P., & Nelson, J. M. (1976). *No easy choice: Political participation in developing countries*. Harvard University Press.

Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59–68.

Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1974). Utilization of mass communication by the individual. In J. G. Blumler & E. Katz (Eds.), *The uses of mass communications* (pp. 19–32). Sage Publications.

Manuwa, T. (2022). The impact of social media on political participation and mobilization in Nigeria. *Sarcouncil Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(10), 8–16.

McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. McGraw-Hill.

McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's mass communication theory* (6th ed.). Sage Publications.

Morozov, E. (2011). *The net delusion: The dark side of internet freedom*. PublicAffairs.

National Bureau of Statistics. (2020). *Youth unemployment and underemployment report*. Federal Government of Nigeria.

Odalonu, B. H., & Aghahowa, B. N. (2025). Social media and youth political engagement in Nigeria: Challenges and opportunities. *Niger Delta Journal of Gender, Peace and Conflict Studies*, 5(2), 47–65.

Olorunnisola, O., & Naidoo, P. (2013). Political communication in sub-Saharan Africa: Digital age dimensions. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 5(2), 231–248.

Onuorah, C. (2025). *Digital activism in Nigeria: The role of social media in youth mobilization for the #EndSARS movement* [Master's thesis, Paris Lodron University of Salzburg].

Szabó, R. Z. (2024). Overcoming the digital divide: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development*, 8(16), 10082.

<https://doi.org/10.24294/jipd10082>

Tarrow, S. (2011). *Power in movement: Social movements and contentious politics* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Tufekci, Z. (2017). *Twitter and tear gas: The power and fragility of networked protest*. Yale University Press.

Winner, L. (1986). *The whale and the reactor: A search for limits in an age of high technology*. University of Chicago Press.

World Bank. (2020). *World development indicators 2020*. <https://datacatalog.worldbank.org>

QUESTIONNAIRE

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ENHANCING SOCIO-POLITICAL MOBILIZATION AMONG NIGERIAN YOUTHS

Department of Political Science
(Undergraduate Research Project)

Dear Respondent,

You are kindly invited to take part in this research project. This questionnaire is designed to collect data for an undergraduate research study on the “**ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ENHANCING SOCIO-POLITICAL MOBILIZATION AMONG NIGERIAN YOUTHS BETWEEN 2018 AND 2023**”.

Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and will be used for academic purposes only. There are no right or wrong answers — what matters is your honest opinion. Please do not write your name anywhere on this questionnaire. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may stop at any time without any consequences.

The questionnaire is divided into four sections. Please read each question carefully and respond to all items. It should take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

Thank you sincerely for your time and cooperation.

Maduagugbuo Chukwueloka Immaculate

SECTION A: Demographic Information

Instruction: Please tick (☐) the option that best describes you or fill in the space provided.

1. What is your gender?

- ☐ a) Male
- ☐ b) Female
- ☐ c) Prefer not to say

2. What is your age group?

- ☐ a) 18 – 22 years
- ☐ b) 23 – 27 years
- ☐ c) 28 – 32 years
- ☐ d) 33 – 35 years

3. What is your highest level of education?

- ☐ a) Secondary school certificate (WAEC/NECO/GCE)
- ☐ b) OND / NCE
- ☐ c) Currently an undergraduate student
- ☐ d) Bachelor's degree (completed)
- ☐ e) Postgraduate degree

4. Where do you currently reside?

- ☐ a) Urban area (state capital or major city)
- ☐ b) Semi-urban area (town outside major city)

- ☐ c) Rural area (village or farming community)

5. Which geopolitical zone do you reside in?

- ☐ a) South West
- ☐ b) South East
- ☐ c) South South
- ☐ d) North West
- ☐ e) North East
- ☐ f) North Central

6. What is your current occupation or primary activity?

- ☐ a) Full-time student
- ☐ b) Employed (public or private sector)
- ☐ c) Self-employed / trader / artisan
- ☐ d) Unemployed
- ☐ e) Other (please specify): _____

7. Which social media platforms do you use for civic or political purposes? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ a) WhatsApp
- ☐ b) Facebook
- ☐ c) X (formerly Twitter)
- ☐ d) Instagram

- ☐ e) TikTok
- ☐ f) YouTube
- ☐ g) Telegram
- ☐ h) Other: _____

8. How often do you use social media for political or civic purposes?

- ☐ a) Every day
- ☐ b) Several times a week
- ☐ c) Once a week
- ☐ d) Occasionally
- ☐ e) Rarely or never

SECTION B: Extent of Social Media Use for Social Mobilization

Instruction: The statements below relate to Research Question 1 — the extent to which you use social media for social mobilization. Please tick (☐) the box that best reflects your level of agreement with each statement.

SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree D = Disagree SD = Strongly Disagree

S/N	Statement	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
1	I regularly use social media platforms to follow or share news about political events and civic campaigns in Nigeria.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	I have used social media to participate in or support a civic movement or protest — for example, #EndSARS, voter registration campaigns, or the Obidient Movement.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	Social media was the main way through which I first became aware of major social movements in Nigeria between 2018 and 2023.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	I use social media more frequently for social and political mobilization now compared to before 2018.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	I have shared, reposted, or amplified content related to political campaigns or civic causes on social media.	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	Online civic engagement through social media has led me to take real-world actions, such as attending rallies, voting, or joining advocacy groups.	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	Social media platforms have replaced traditional media such as radio, TV, and newspapers as my main source of political mobilization information.	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION C: Social Media and Civic Awareness and Political Participation

Instruction: The statements below relate to Research Question 2 — how social media helps

in fostering civic awareness and political participation among Nigerian youths. Please tick (☐) the box that best reflects your level of agreement.

SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree D = Disagree SD = Strongly Disagree

S/N	Statement	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
1	Social media has significantly increased my awareness of political issues, government policies, and my civic responsibilities as a Nigerian youth.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	Exposure to political content on social media has influenced my decision to register to vote or to participate in elections.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	Social media gives young Nigerians access to political information that radio, television, and newspapers do not adequately provide.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	Social media platforms have shaped my opinions about political leaders, political parties, and how Nigeria is governed.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	Following civic campaigns and advocates on social media has increased my sense of responsibility as a citizen.	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	Social media enables me to interact directly with political leaders, elected representatives, or civil society organizations.	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	I have personally engaged in political discussions or debates online that later influenced my decisions or actions in the real world.	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	Social media content on civic issues has motivated me to encourage other young people around me to participate in political processes.	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION D: Challenges Affecting Social Media Use for Mobilization

Instruction: The statements below relate to Research Question 3 — the challenges that limit how effectively social media is used for civic mobilization in Nigeria. Please tick (☐) the box that best reflects your level of agreement with each statement.

SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree D = Disagree SD = Strongly Disagree

S/N	Statement	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
1	The spread of fake news and misinformation on social media makes it difficult for me to trust political information shared online.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	The high cost of internet data prevents me from using social media as frequently as I would like for civic and political purposes.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	Poor or unreliable internet connectivity in my area limits my ability to participate in social media-based civic campaigns.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	Government actions such as platform bans, internet throttling, or threats against online activists discourage me from engaging politically on social media.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	Hate speech and toxic online interactions have reduced my willingness to engage in political discussions on social media.	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	Limited access to electricity or a charged device reduces how often I can use social media for civic engagement.	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	I do not have sufficient digital literacy skills to effectively use social media for political mobilization purposes.	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	Political apathy among my peers reduces the overall effectiveness of social media campaigns for civic mobilization.	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	Social media platform algorithms limit the visibility of civic and political content, making it harder for mobilization messages to reach a wide audience.	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION E: Open-Ended Questions (Optional but Appreciated)

Instruction: Please answer the following questions in your own words. There is no word limit — write as much or as little as you feel is necessary.

1. In your personal experience, how has social media helped you or people you know to take part in civic or political activities in Nigeria?
2. What do you think is the biggest obstacle preventing Nigerian youths from using social media effectively for civic mobilization? Explain.
3. What changes — from government, civil society, or social media companies — do you think would make social media a more effective tool for youth civic engagement in Nigeria?

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire.

Your responses are highly valued and will contribute meaningfully to this research.

— End of Questionnaire —