

Social Media and Political Literacy of Voters in Rural Neighbourhoods in Ethiope East Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria

***¹Vincent Eseoghene Efebeh**

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2001-5026>

² Felix Orishede

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-4596-507X>

³ Francis Ayegbunam Ikenga

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7002-6930>

^{1,3}Department of Political Science, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

²Department of Business Administration, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

***Correspondence Author email: vinefebeh15@gmail.com**

Abstract

Background: Social media has evolved into a vital and useful instrument for political literacy and communication, particularly during election seasons. Despite social media's global influence in fostering political literacy and engagement, scholars have focused less on first-time and eligible voters in Nigeria's local neighbourhoods.

Objective: The study examined the effect of social media on the political literacy of first-time and eligible voters living in rural communities in the Ethiope East local government area of Delta State, Nigeria.

Methodology: The study employed a cross-sectional research design and gathered data from 275 respondents living in landlocked regions in the Ethiope East local government area of Delta State. The respondents were sampled using a simple random sampling technique. The data were analysed using t-test, correlation, and linear regression analysis.

Result: Social media positively and statistically significantly impact the political literacy of first-time and eligible voters living in rural neighbourhoods in the Ethiope East regional government area of Delta State, Nigeria. This is because of increased political literacy and engagement. Thus, social media is becoming an increasingly powerful tool for political electioneering and social engineering.

Conclusion: Social media significantly influences the political literacy of first-time and eligible voters living in rural neighbourhoods in Nigeria.

Unique Contribution: The study has contributed to a better understanding of the significant influence of social media on the political literacy of first-time and eligible voters living in rural communities in Nigeria.

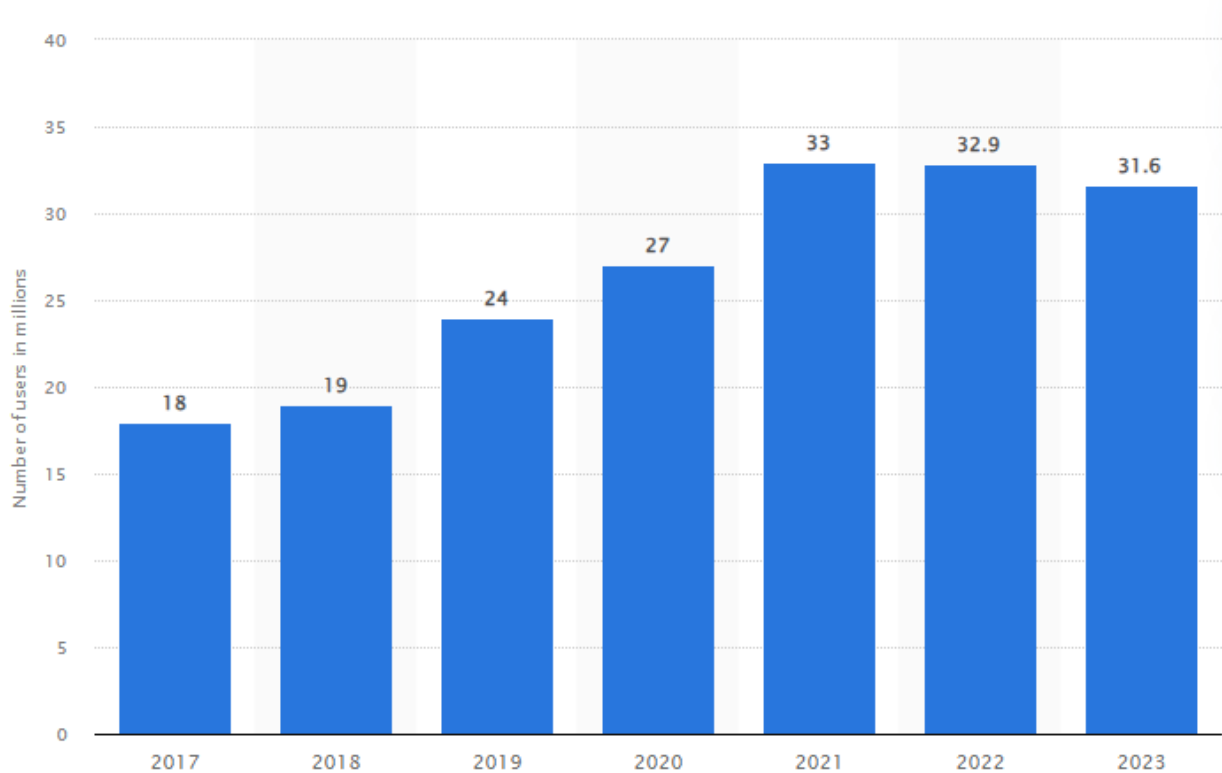
Key Recommendation: Social media organisations should establish fact-checking desks in order to handle the flood of false information that will arise in the run-up to the general elections in 2027.

Keywords: political literacy, social media, political participation, uses and gratifications theory, rural community

Introduction

In Nigeria today, technology and information are developing at a rapid pace, affecting nearly every facet of life, including political and social affairs. Social media fundamentally influences the Nigerian people's socio-political existence. This is due to the various ways that social media has changed political communication among Nigerians. As a result, social media as a tool for engagement and communication needs to be optimised and tailored to their requirements. Social media have grown into a more widespread and established trend on a global scale. Its presence is becoming more and more integral to human communication. The number of people using social media across Nigeria is rising annually, coinciding with the platform's explosive growth. According to As of January 2023, Nigeria had 31.6 million active social media users as shown in figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Total Number of active Social Media users in Nigeria from 2017 to 2023 (in millions)



Source: Sasu (2023)

Nigerians in rural communities have recently kept an eye on real-time election developments throughout the nation. They have utilised relevant organisations on social media to take action, such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), foreign organisations, news channels and security agencies. The most recent general elections in 2023 are a prime example. On social media platforms, INEC, pertinent organisations, and security agencies were promptly answering questions from regular people. This has put social media in the grasp of citizens as a crucial tool for ensuring the credibility of the national election process.

In broad terms, the media serves four primary purposes: social control, education, entertainment, and informational purposes. There are other requirements for the media, such as completeness, facts, and freedom. Social control is the process by which human behaviour is governed by societal norms, laws, and structures. It is an essential component of social order because societies cannot function without people control; education is a means of receiving or imparting organised knowledge, particularly in an educational institution; entertainment is the process of giving or receiving amusement or happiness; and the term "informational purposes" refers to the use of information solely for that purpose. However, pressure from multiple political parties forces some media owners to overlook these requirements. But when it involves elections, media outlets are limited to getting away with exploiting public figures to promote their parties, agendas, and political philosophies. In the end, the media evolved into a tool for political communication that shapes public perception, political landscapes, and social influence in all societies. Even when the news that is broadcast is accurate, the public can still be directly impacted by society's increased reliance on the press. It demonstrates how much of an impact the media has on the daily lives of individuals (Ayeni, 2019). However, ensuring that the truth is in the general public realm is the responsibility of media outlets and voter turnout and electoral management organisations. In order to respond quickly to false information that impacts them or their party, political parties, as well as candidates, should take the initiative to collaborate with media establishments. Fake news thrives in an information-poor environment. A strong information-delivery group, frequent modifications, and a prompt reaction will significantly slow the spread of false information. When fake news fails to go viral, it has less of an effect and by sharing or resharing only legitimate data, regardless of whether it aligns with or contradicts their political opinions or predispositions, Nigerians, particularly those who are engaged on social media, can help slow down the propagation of fake news (Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020). In Nigeria, social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram, YouTube, Flickr, and Imo are frequently utilised (Okoro & Nwafor, 2013).

The advancement of mass media, particularly social media and new media, has a direct or indirect impact on rural residents' political engagement today. As first-time voters and residents of rural areas, the younger generation is considered to have low political literacy (Madueke et al., 2017). Voters who are new to the process or who reside in rural areas frequently need to think ahead before acting solely on the advice of the majority. They are unaware of the importance of elections, helpless against the coercion and opinions, oblivious to the implications of their conversations, and unable to fend off dealing with attacks from politicians. Lack of political socialisation and exposure to political luminaries as role models are the primary causes of low political literacy in Nigeria (Okoro & Nwafor, 2013). Some politicians are adept at spreading crafty and misleading disinformation by taking advantage of new voters and residents of rural areas with low political literacy. More frequently compared to other voters or seasoned voters in urban areas, politicians target newly registered voters and residents of rural communities with political content in the form of pictures or videos (Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020). This demonstrates that in Nigeria, campaigns frequently prioritise reaching eligible voters who live in rural communities and first-time voters during general elections. The notion "first time voter" generally refers to teenagers who have become of voting age and are therefore having their first chance to cast a ballot.

On the other hand, informed voters are able to justify their choice of candidates or parties independently, voice their own views on social media, launch petitions and demonstrate against electoral misconduct. One initiative to improve young people's and eligible voters' political literacy in rural communities is political literacy. Deddy et al. (2023) define political literacy as applying a set of knowledge, abilities, and attitudes about politics and political issues and persuading others as well as oneself to decide what is best. Voters in rural areas who are eligible to vote, first-time voters, and have sufficient political literacy can also become informed voters. Therefore, raising the political literacy of prospective voters in Nigeria, particularly in rural communities, is crucial and urgent. This research aimed to ascertain how social media usage influences eligible and first-time voters' political literacy in rural communities in Nigeria, focusing close attention on rural neighbourhoods in the Ethiope East local government area of Delta State.

Literature Review

Political Literacy

Political literacy is the ability to apply a range of political knowledge, skills, and attitudes to problems ranging from minor issues such as following trends in politics to convince others as well as oneself to make political decisions. New voters can participate in political activities related to various aspects, including the idea of the state, power, decision-making, and general policy, with the aid of political literacy. Deddy et al. (2023) define political literacy as the knowledge and abilities that enable citizens to engage in government as well as the execution of the state's affairs. Political literacy is separated into two categories in the conduct of elections: procedural and substantive. Understanding the significance and sense of urgency of engagement in politics is all that constitutes substantive literacy, whereas comprehension of the methods and processes involved in putting political participation into practice is what constitutes procedural literacy. In order to help citizens understand politics, political engagement, and related issues and make informed decisions about political circumstances, political literacy also aims to interpret information or points of view about governance and common issues in politics (Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020).

According to Okoro and Nwafor (2013), political participation is the practice of citizens taking part in the decisions, happenings, or events that affect the choice of political delegates and/or their actions. It refers to the various platforms citizens use to express their political views, defend their civil liberties, and influence elections (Yamamoto et al., 2015). Political participation therefore is a form of citizenship and an essential component of a democratic system; it is the action done by a citizen to affect the course of an issue that is political. Another way to define political participation is as a collection of actions taken by citizens to influence elected officials or the policies that have been established by the executive authority. Participation in politics allows citizens to choose their representatives in government, who then use their power to enact policies that benefit the citizens who ultimately stand to gain from the social programmes they implement. Citizens must debate political, economic, and social concerns that serve as standards for selecting the foreseeable future of leaders if they are to be regarded as politically active (Ohme, 2019). To build a wealthy country might also require assessing the credentials of the current administration and advocating for fixes to societal issues.

Social Media

Social media, as defined by Igbinedion and Ajisebiyawo (2023), is a digital medium that enables users to do three things: (1) list other users with whom they are connected; (2) explore both their own list of links and those of others in the neighbourhood and (3) establish a semi-public or public profile inside a system; The interactive aspect of social media sites and their function in facilitating user connections, communication, and information sharing within networks are emphasised in this rationale. Baym (2015) offered a thorough analysis of social media, characterising it as a collection of social web-connected sites where users interact with one another and generate and share information. This definition emphasises how connected various electronic mediums are to one another as well as the "social web" in its larger context (Baym, 2015). The aforementioned definitions show the manner in which social media is ever-evolving and cover a broad spectrum of activities, including involvement, content sharing, and networking; as the online environment develops, academics continue to hone their social media knowledge, resulting in fresh viewpoints and findings. According to Bello and Kolawole-Ismail (2017), social media is an assortment of online resources that facilitate user-generated content creation and dissemination. These tools expand upon Web 2.0's conceptual and scientific foundations. It includes web- and mobile-based technologies that promote cooperative interaction among individuals, communities, and groups. Social media platforms include websites like Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, and their interactive characteristics. The reason these devices are called media is that they are tools that can be utilised for information preservation and dissemination. But compared to conventional outlets like radio and television, the majority of social media tools let users engage by giving them the choice to "comment" on the website and "re-tweet" on Twitter's shares.

Social media consumption can have benefits as well as drawbacks, depending on the objectives and motives of the user. But occasionally, users become the victims of uncontrollably bad online experiences, like harassment, fraud, mockery, security breaches, disinformation and mimicry. The young people can utilise social media for beneficial reasons like learning, having fun, electoral politics, generating ideas, and spiritual issues, despite some studies finding that youngsters can use it for many negative purposes like being exposed to pornography, harassment and intimidation. Social media serves many purposes, one of which is democratising information and knowledge and empowering individuals to be creators and consumers of content. There are several ways to use social media; it can be detrimental or the widespread availability of social media platforms has the potential to democratise society by providing citizens with avenues to interact and take part in elections. Social media provides interaction in a format that is easily adapted to the lifestyles of individuals and makes it easier for citizens to keep track of and impact governmental decisions. The increasing prevalence of social media has spurred academics to investigate the functions of social media in democratic communities and daily life, particularly in terms of the media's role in promoting political literacy and participation (Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020). Social media carries a risk of being used for nefarious political purposes, despite its clear benefits for enhancing communication and its obvious importance in the realm of politics. This is partly because there is insufficient supervision and an insurmountable influx. Many times, the huge volume of information divulged on social media is unreal, loosely regulated, and untrustworthy.

Social Media and Political Literacy

Social media refers to online content that facilitates interaction among people through the use of online technologies, transforming a discussion into a viewpoint exchange. Social media has evolved into a vital and useful instrument for political literacy and communication, particularly during election seasons. It can serve as a conduit between the mass and remote media and elected officials and their constituents. As a result, politicians can interact with supporters and participants on social media, particularly to create or mould public sentiment through the mobilisation of large numbers of political assistance. Social networking sites have also raised the public's political engagement in elections, political relationships, and structures of political dialogue. This frequently occurs in the electoral campaigns of well-known candidates running for office in local primary elections and incumbents running for office in parliamentary and presidential elections (Deddy et al., 2023).

Social media are frequently used by authorities to involve citizens and civil society organisations in the process of making decisions with particular challenges facing democratic societies today (Ayeni, 2019). However, by facilitating communication between citizens and their representatives, social media can also increase political literacy and engagement (Davies, 2014). Social media is becoming an increasingly powerful tool for political electioneering and social engineering. The technology is affordable, interactive, and participatory. Because of this, it is currently the most popular medium for political participation and communication (Okoro & Nwafor, 2013). Ohme (2019) and Deddy et al. (2023) contend that social media improved first-time and eligible voters' political literacy and engagement. They also suggest that first-time voters fall into three categories. First, there are logical voters or those who select a party after doing extensive research and analysis. Second, voters who remain ardent and unyielding are known as emotionally critical voters. Third, those who cast their first ballots do so because they have recently reached voting age.

Adding voices to issues posted on social media platforms allows citizens to take an active role and fully engage in discussions about politics, one of the many advantages of using social media sources for political literacy and participation. The platforms also provide voters with a more convenient means of evaluating candidates for office and encouraging transparency in government, thereby furthering the principles of democratic participation, which views the media as forums for debate that greatly facilitate the actualization of political engagement (Davies, 2014). Social media also present a number of opportunities for new forms of government and innovation by providing an online forum for citizens to voice their opinions. This allows for the establishment of concepts regarding the needs of the public, including possible responses to government decision-making processes. Elected officials can also freely interact with the electorate informally thanks to social media sites, which allow them to reach large audiences and gauge the political climate before even starting a campaign. This relationship makes political leaders appear more approachable and engaged with their constituents by allowing them to establish a rapport with the general public, attractive to common sense, convey their sense of lightheartedness, and demonstrate their ease of access (Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020).

Yet, the benefits of social networking sites have led politicians worldwide to embrace the medium for electioneering, vote-seeking, maintaining public contact channels and motivating voters to

participate actively in the electoral process (Ekwueme & Folarin, 2017 Unwuchola et al., 2017). Many countries' elections have demonstrated this. For example, the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project report by Smith (2009) discovered that social media sites were crucial in the 2008 United States elections because several individuals used them to learn about the nominees and campaigns. During election periods, people could post their views and feedback on these platforms, allowing them to participate more actively in politics and receive news and campaign data via these sources (Alquraan et al., 2017). Nigerian politicians adopted and took advantage of social media sites for nationwide election advertisements of 2011, 2015, 2019, and 2023 after realising these advantages. In actuality, the Nigerian general elections of 2011 served as the first real test of how well parties, hopefuls, and organisations of civil society used social media. The outcome of the elections was antique because social media had never before made political involvement and interaction easier. Since then, the internet has been used in Nigeria's election procedures.

Most users of social media are now socio-political, socio-cultural and socio-economic commentators; everyone has a voice and an avenue to voice their opinions, regardless of whether they are not knowledgeable enough about the topic. Opeibi (2019) asserts that social media have opened up new channels for promoting civic engagement and political participation in developed and developing democracies since the year 2000. This new digital political discourse format is creating new avenues for sprinting exchanges among people and their representatives in nearly all liberal communities worldwide. According to Akinyetun et al. (2021), they are particularly helpful in reducing contact delay and fostering improved means for interactions among citizens and political leaders. The crowdsourcing method employed by several social media users, who are often members of local communities with partisan interests as well as biases, has led to the widely held belief that social media can be heavily abused during election season. Similar to how they are frequently used to spread misinformation, abuse users, and incite violence, social media's potential to advance freedom and electoral unity has also become a contentious topic of discussion (Alodat et al., 2023).

Theoretical Framework

This study employed Katz et al.'(1974) uses and gratifications theory. The uses and gratifications theory was initially developed to provide a counterbalance to the prevalent effects models of communication. The theory shifts the focus from how media output influences audiences to how audiences actively select and understand media information according to their social and psychological requirements. The theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding why people use social media to consume information. According to the theory, people deliberately select and use media to satisfy particular needs and find happiness due to these interactions. We can learn more about the intricate connections that individuals maintain with their peers, their motivations, and the technological tools they use by looking at how the theory applies to social media. This theory holds that people use media to satisfy a range of needs, including needs for tension relief and cognitive, affective, social, as well as private integration. It also includes other theoretical frameworks related to cognitive instrumental and social influence processes. Subjective rules, image, and voluntariness are parameters in social influence processes; value, superiority results, and demonstrability are components in cognitive instrumental processes. The degree to

which users accept these explanations is greatly important for their political literacy and political participation (Alodat et al., 2023).

The theory has its drawbacks, even though it offers insightful explanations for why people use social media. Critics contend that the theory ignores the influence of media creators on content and fails to account for subconscious motives adequately. Furthermore, the theory of a rational choice process, which may not always hold true when dealing with impulsive or routine conduct. But by knowing what really drives and satisfies, researchers and content producers can adjust their approaches to better suit the changing needs of social network consumers. The theory will probably continue to be useful for comprehending the intricate connection between individuals, the media, and the continuously growing electronic scenery as technology advances (Li & Chen, 2018). Additionally, individual needs for tension are satisfied when they use social networks for entertainment and diversion, which is another element of the theory. An accessible stream of images is provided by social media sites like Instagram, offering a brief respite from the stresses of everyday life. Due to the compact structure of social media content, it is a readily available means of entertainment and diversion. This explains why many voters, especially teenagers and first-time voters, found solace in depending on social networking sites to gain knowledge in the lead-up to the presidential election of 2023, as well as how it strongly affected their selection of candidates (Igbinedion & Ajisebiyawo, 2023).

The theory, which is used in this study, clarifies why users choose to accept or reject innovative knowledge systems. Additionally, it provides a compelling defence of popularity among users and the place of social media tools in the discourse around political literacy. It is actually one of the oldest, most significant, well-known, and widely applied theories in technology-related fields since it provides a solid foundation for establishing confidence among clients and promoting political literacy.

Research Hypothesis

To fulfil the study's goal, three distinct null hypotheses were examined:

H₁: There is a significant difference between male and female opinions on the frequently utilised social media in rural neighborhoods.

H₂: There is a significant relationship between social media use and political literacy of first-time and eligible voters.

Research Methods

This study employed a cross-sectional research design and the population of study was 362,753 registered voters in Ethiope East local government area in Delta State as at January 2023 (INEC, 2023). The rural communities in Ethiope East local government area include Samagidi, Abraka, Oria, Ikinigho, Umegehe, Ekerejeta, Eku, Ekirigbo, Orhokpo, Okuighele, Ejenesa, Mosogar, Erho, Adjikpotor and Uргуoka. Using Taro Yemeni's (1971) formula, a sample of 400 participants was sampled. Purposeful sampling was used in this investigation. Thus, the purposive sampling method will be employed in order to specifically select respondents from the Ethiope East local government area of Delta State.

The researchers carefully created a questionnaire with 20 items arranged along a 5-point Likert type scale, ranking responses from (1) strongly disagree (SD) to (5) strongly agree (SA). This questionnaire served as the research tool for the study. The validity of the research tool was verified through face validation by two experts from Department of Political Science, Delta State University Abraka. The final version of the instrument was developed and updated based on the input and views of the experts. Sixteen neighbourhoods in Ethiope East local government area were selected randomly for this study using a purposeful random sampling technique. Sixteen neighbourhoods are chosen for this study for reason of proximity and convenience for data collection. A reliability test of the survey tool was also conducted on thirty study participants from Agbon, Isiokolo and Abraka communities. The internal uniformity of the items was assessed using the Cronbach Alpha method, as the table below illustrates.

Table 1: Reliability Results

Scale	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
Social media use	10	.793
Political literacy	10	.778

Source: Researchers' Computation, 2023

The obtained coefficients of 0.778 and 0.793 met the standard threshold of 0.70 for research indicators as recommended by Cronbach (1951). The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 was used to analyse the data through the t-test, correlation and linear regression analysis.

Study Results

We had a response rate of 68.75 percent because 275 of the 400 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and analysed. One hundred twenty-seven men and 148 women responded out of the 275 responses that were received.

Table 2: Questionnaire Distribution and Response Rate

S/N	Communities	No. of Questionnaire Distributed	No. of Questionnaire Retrieved	Percentage (%)
i.	Abraka	25	17	4.25
ii.	Samagidi	25	19	4.75
iii.	Ikinogho	25	21	5.25
iv.	Oria	25	17	4.25
v.	Ekerejeta	25	20	5.00
vi.	Umeghe	25	16	4.00
vii.	Ekirigbo	25	14	3.50
viii.	Urhuoka	25	18	4.50
ix.	Ekue	25	15	3.75
x.	Okuighele	25	15	3.75
xi.	Orhokpo	25	19	4.75
xii.	Mosogar	25	19	4.75
xiii.	Ejenesa	25	21	5.25

xiv.	Okuke	25	14	3.50
xv.	Erho	25	14	3.50
xvi.	Adjikpotor	25	16	4.00
	Total	400	275	68.75

Source: Researchers’ Computation, 2023

Testing of hypotheses

Determining whether respondents identified as male and female had different opinions about the social media platforms that are frequently used in neighbourhoods in Ethiopia East local government area of Delta State. The result was displayed in Table 3 down below.

H₁: There is a significant difference between male and female opinions on the frequently utilised social media in rural neighbourhoods.

Table 3: Opinion of Male and Female on Frequently Utilised Social Media in Rural Communities in Ethiopia East Local Government Area of Delta State

S/N	Variables	Group	N	Mean	SD	Cat.T	Crit. T
1	Facebook	Male	127	4.820	.547	1.421	1.758
		Female	148	4.609	.500		
2	Twitter	Male	127	4.375	.476	1.620	1.824
		Female	148	4.200	.443		
3	WhatsApp	Male	127	4.187	.430	1.533	1.756
		Female	148	4.092	.424		
4	Telegram	Male	127	4.056	.417	1.500	1.780
		Female	148	3.889	.406		
5	YouTube	Male	127	3.464	.385	1.457	1.745
		Female	148	3.357	.369		
6	Flickr	Male	127	2.312	.346	1.394	1.603
		Female	148	2.700	.322		
7	Imo	Male	127	2.397	.307	1.342	1.627
		Female	148	2.109	.300		

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

According to the results presented in table 5 above all calculated ‘t’ (1.421, 1.620, 1.533, 1.500, 1.457, 1.394 and 1.342) are less than the critical ‘t’ (1.603). This means that the male and female opinion do not differ in their expression on the widely utilised social media in rural communities in Ethiopia East local government area of Delta State. As a result, hypothesis one was disproved, and it was reiterated that there is no discernible difference in the opinions of male and female respondents regarding the frequently utilised social media in rural neighbourhoods in Ethiopia East local government area of Delta State.

H₂: There is a significant relationship between social media use and political literacy of first-time and eligible voters.

Table 4: Correlation Results on the Relationship between Social Media Usage and Political Literacy of First-time and Eligible Voters

Variables		Social media	Political literacy
Social media use	Pearson Correlation	1	.783
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.005
	N	275	275
Political literacy	Pearson Correlation	.783	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.005	
	N	275	275

**Correlation is significant at 0.05level (2-tailed)

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

Discussion of Findings

This study showed that opinions expressed by male and female respondents on the frequently utilised social media in neighbourhoods in Ethiopia East Local Government Area of Delta State are similar. These results provide strong support for earlier research by Opeibi (2019) and Igbinedion and Ajisebiyawo (2023). Table 4 depicts the relationship between social media and political literacy in rural communities in Ethiopia East local government area of Delta State. Social media and political literacy have a strong positive correlation ($r = .783$, $n = 275$ and $P = 0.005$). This suggests that social media has a strong and positive relationship with political literacy. This result aligns with the perspectives of Opeibi (2019) and Deddy et al. (2023), who believe that there is a strong relationship between social media and political literacy. Thus, there is a positive significant relationship between social media and political literacy of first-time and eligible voters living in neighbourhoods in Ethiopia East local government area of Delta State.

Consequently, social media has a statistically significant and positive impact on political literacy in neighbourhoods within the Ethiopia East local government area of Delta State. This result is in line with Davies (2014), Alquraan et al. (2017), Ohme (2019) and Deddy et al. (2023) views that social media encourages the creation and execution of successful policies that raise political literacy in rural areas. Davies (2014) goes on to say that social media's pragmatic nature contributes to the enhancement of political literacy. Moreover, Deddy et al. (2023) argue that social media plays a crucial role in rural residents' socio-political lives and attitudinal shifts that pave the way for political literacy. Therefore, social media significantly influences the political literacy of first-time and eligible voters living in rural communities in Ethiopia East Local Government Area of Delta State.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of this study have shown how important media sources are to political participation and literacy in Nigeria. Nigerian residents who are first-time and eligible voters should not be left in a state of isolation as the country shifts away from its previous digital age. The emergence of social media has, in the twenty-first century, widened the scope of political knowledge acquisition and engagement among the citizens in Nigeria. Modern democracy has advanced to an increasingly sophisticated stage thanks to its practices and the website's propagation of engaged

citizens through widespread utilisation of social media networks. The rapid and revolutionary path that social media has taken has profoundly impacted how we connect, communicate, and share knowledge.

The perceived results of the study show that opinions expressed by male and female respondents on popular social media platforms used in rural communities in Ethiopia East local government area of Delta State are similar, a local government area of Delta State, are similar. The study also showed a strong and positive correlation between political literacy and social media usage. Furthermore, it was showed that social media had an effect on the political literacy of eligible and first-time voters residing in rural communities in Ethiopia East local government area of Delta State. This study was conducted in Ethiopia East local government area of Delta State; there may be concerns about the validity and applicability of the findings. We believe that our results may be influenced, in particular, by the research population's distinctive cultural traits. More research on this subject involving different local government area of Delta State would be beneficial. However, our study's results convinced us that social media profoundly impacts political literacy. Consequently, this study proposes the following:

- i. For eligible voters who are new to the area and live in remote regions, social media serves as a source of political literacy and knowledge to them. Social media organisations should establish fact-checking desks in order to handle the flood of false information that will arise in the run-up to the general elections in 2027.
- ii. As long as first-time and eligible voters reside in rural communities predominate in using social media, election organisers should produce content for the social media outlets so as fulfil out their responsibilities. This will enable election organisers to carry out their social control role and advance democracy as a result.

References

- Akinyetun, T. S., Odeyemi, D. D. & Alausa, J. A. (2021). Social media and electoral violence in Nigeria: Sustainable development goal 16, a panacea? *KIU Interdisciplinary Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(2), 169 – 194.
- Alodat, A. M., Lamis, F. A., & Muwafaq, A. H. (2023). Social media platforms and political participation: A study of Jordanian youth engagement. *Social Sciences*, 12 (402), 1 – 18.
- Alquraan, H., Abu-Shanab, E., Banitaan, S., & Al-Tarawneh, H. (2017). Motivations for using social media: Comparative study based on cultural differences between American and Jordanian students. *International Journal of Social Media and Interactive Learning Environments*, 5(1), 48 - 61.
- Ayeni, T. P. (2019). The role of social media in voter education in Nigeria. *American Journal Computer. Science, Information and Technology*, 7 (33), 1 - 3.
- Baym, N. K. (2015). *Personal connections in the digital age*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

- Bello, S., & Kolawole-Ismail, B. (2017). Social media and political participation in Nigeria: A theoretical perspective. *Ebonyi State University Journal of Mass Communication*, 4(1), 149 - 164.
- Davies, R. (2014.) Social media in election campaigning. *European Parliamentary Research Service Blog*, 12, 1 - 8.
- Deddy, S. M., Zulfadli, M., & Zuhri, A. I. (2023). The role of social media in increasing political literacy of beginning voters. *Malikussaleh Social & Political Reviews*, 4(2), 77 – 81.
doris+dokua+sasu+pdf&oq=doris+dokua+sasu+pdf&gs on 25th February, 2024.
- Ekwueme, M., & Folarin, S. (2017). Role of social media in electioneering: The case of the Nigerian 2015 presidential election. *Proceeding of the Covenant University Conference on e-Governance in Nigeria (CUCEN2017)*, pp. 299 - 311.
- Igbinedion, O. C., & Ajisebiyawo, A. S. (2023). The influence of social media on voters' choices during the 2023 presidential elections in Nigeria. *IRE Journals*, 7(3), 252 – 264.
- INEC. (2023). *Summary of registered voters & PVCs collected in Delta State*. Abuja: INEC Publications.
- Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1974). Uses and gratifications research. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37(4), 509 - 523.
- Li, H., & Chen, G. M. (2018). *Uses and gratifications theory in the 21st century: Applications in the digital age*. New York: IGI Global Publishers.
- Madueke, O., Nwosu, c., Ogbonnaya, c., & Anumadu, A. (2017). The role of social media in enhancing political participation in Nigeria. *IDOSR Journal of Arts and Management*, 2(3), 44 - 54.
- Ohme, J. (2019). When digital natives enter the electorate: Political social media use among first-time voters and its effects on campaign participation. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 16(2), 119 - 136.
- Okoro, N., & Nwafor, K. A. (2013). Social media and political participation in Nigeria during the 2011 general elections: The lapses and the lessons. *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1, 29 – 46.
- Omotayo, F. O., & Folorunso, M. B. (2020). Use of social media for political participation by youths in Oyo State, Nigeria. *Journal of Democracy*, 12(1), 133 – 158.
- Opeibi, T. (2019). The twitters phere as political engagement space: A study of social media usage in election campaigns in Nigeria. *Digital Studies/Le champ numérique*, 9(1), 1– 32.
- Sasu, D. D. (2023). *Number of active social media users in Nigeria 2017-2023*. Retrieved from
- Smith, T. (2009). *Social media sites use for the 2008 United States elections*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Unwuchola, A. A., Adinlewa, T., & Udeh, K. (2017). An appraisal of the role of ICT as a tool for participatory democracy in Nigeria. *Media and Communication Current*, 1(1), 69 -87.

Yamamoto, M., Kushin, M. J., & Dalisay, F. (2015). Social media and mobiles as political mobilization forces for young adults: Examining the moderating role of online political expression in political participation. *New Media and Society*, 17(6), 880-898.