

## USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY PETER OBI FOR POLITICAL MOBILISATION DURING NIGERIA'S 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN LAGOS STATE

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### Abstract

This study explored the influence of social media on Peter Obi's presidential campaign in the 2023 Presidential Election; how they impacted the mobilisation and active participation of Nigerians in the election, and their effect on his entrant into the race and the *Obi-dient* movement. The study applied democratic participant and diffusion of innovation theories in conceptualising social media as critical tools for propagating political messages and mobilising voters' involvement in elections. Also, survey research and questionnaire were used for data collection, while statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was utilised in testing the hypotheses. The findings showed that social media are veritable instruments for setting agenda and diffusing ideas and programmes to their audience, especially the youth, hence they were key in the emergence of the Obi-dient movement and Obi's performance at the polls. It revealed that social media have positive influence and thus, enhanced voters' participation in the election. The study advocates, among others, that the utilisation of social media should be continuously encouraged as means of deepening our democratic process; such claims like massive effect of the Obi-dient movement and its campaign messages in the presidential election and that Obi's entrant into the presidential race tremendously influenced political participation and curtailed voters' apathy should also be verified through additional studies, while politicians and political parties should improve on their application of social media as their intrinsic advantages like massive outreach, real-time nature, interactivity have been identified.

**Keywords:** Political communication, Presidential campaigns, Presidential election, Social media

### Introduction

The mass media - print and electronic - acclaimed as agents of social engineering, have brought immeasurable revolutionary changes since their emergence centuries ago. In Nigeria as elsewhere, they have acted as veritable instruments for engendering development, especially in the sphere of politics. They are tools for sensitizing and mobilizing people towards political involvement and participation. This the media have consistently done. Even in the dark days of brutal military dictatorship in the country (1966-1979 and 1983-1999), the media have been strong advocates of change and advancement,

(Moemeka (2012), Ajayi (2007), Ogbondah (2003), Aliede (2003), Egbon (2001) and Okunna (2000). However, their reach is limited by such factors as ownership, government regulatory policies (intimidation and harassment) and limited resources like logistics. However, most of such obstructive government control and other challenges have been drastically overcome, thanks to the emergence of the new media.

Media and communication space has been unimaginably widened by the presence of the social media. This was made possible by advancement in science and technology which

occasioned unprecedented dynamism in the advent of new/social media. Currently, information dissemination and sensitization of people take place instantaneously, more effectively and impactfully. This is as a result of their easy of accessibility, availability and interactivity, (Aliede, 2015). Besides, other attributes of social media, among which are relative affordability, breakage of social and economic barriers and minute technical operation, have made them the toast of even the common man, hence even with the cheapest mobile phone, one can access some social media platforms for information, education, socialisation and entertainment.

Social media tools have redefined the pattern of human relations and communication around the world. The often free and speedy flow of information, which is the major index of these media technologies, has promoted liberty and enhanced the actualization of man's inalienable rights to freedom of speech, expression and association. Fundamentally, these media exist as organs of information sourcing/retrieval, storage and dissemination (social engagements, enlightenment and mobilization). These functions distinguish the social media from others as an important factor in the relationship between the government and the governed, thereby making them indispensable for good governance, the deepening of democratic culture, societal growth and development generally (Olujide, Adeyeimi, & Gbadeyan, 2010).

Nigeria was in a dire state as the nation went to the polls on February, 2023 for the presidential election. Nigeria has a population that has grown at one of the fastest rates worldwide and is currently estimated at about 220 million and projected to double by 2050, (NPC, 2023). Proportionally, the country has one of the highest populations of young people in the world, with 42% of its citizens under the age of 15 and 70% under 30, while its median age is 18. These demographic features underlie Nigeria's young electorate as nearly 40% of registered voters (37 million) are between the ages of 18 and 34, followed by 35.7% of middle-aged voters (33.4 million) between 35 and 49 years of age, (NBS (2023). Of the 93.4 million registered voters in Nigeria, over 75% are 49 and under, (INEC, 2023). Despite the demographic heft of youthful voters in Nigeria, its democracy has under-

delivered on its promise. Eras of growth have not resulted in material benefits for most people and social inequality has increased. Since 2015, two recessions have left the country in its most dire state, while double-digit inflation, record unemployment, unrelenting insecurity, a heaving debt burden, pervasive corruption and government mismanagement, poor-quality education and healthcare are crippling the futures of Nigeria's youth and fuelling widespread feelings of hopelessness and discontent. With 133 million people described as poor in terms of income, education and access to basic services by the country's National Bureau of Statistics (2023), Nigeria's poorest are often children suffering chronic food insecurity and deprivation which compromises their mental and physical development.

In addition, millions of young Nigerians are unable to find fulfilling and productive work; 53.4 per cent of youth aged 15-24 are unemployed followed by 37 per cent aged 25-34. The rate of unemployment in the youth population is 42.5 per cent. Nigeria's tertiary education sector also fails its 2.1 million students. Academic staff in Nigeria's federally-funded universities have been on strike nearly every year in the past six years, with the most recent which lasted eight months ending in October 2022. According to NBS (2023), the country also has the highest number of school-age children in Africa, most of them girls, who are not able to go to school.

Many highly skilled and professional Nigerians are leaving for Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia and Saudi Arabia in search of greener pastures and security of their lives and property. The reality is that Nigeria has invested fewer and fewer resources to ensure opportunity, security and a confident future for its young citizens and the country's first truly democratic generation. The bleak employment and educational prospects as well as worsening labour conditions have contributed to a workforce brain drain. Nigeria is reportedly the highest workforce-exporting country in Africa with 52% of Nigerians keen to leave the country permanently. Highly skilled Nigerians, especially healthcare workers, are leaving in droves for Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia and Saudi Arabia. Between 2021 and 2022, the UK received 13,609 healthcare workers from Nigeria (Ebunuwele, Ekhareifo & Asemah, 2023).

The foregoing analysis, an ugly scenario attributable to inept governance, has led to the grave desire by Nigerians for an alteration of the status quo and change from the old order of political governance in Africa's most populous nation. As a result, Nigerians were optimistic for a positive change in governance and the affairs of their country as the 2023 presidential polls approached. For many, it was an opportunity to be heard and to make a difference in electing a new leader to steer the affairs of the country to the proverbial/biblical promise land. It is noteworthy to state the high sense of reputation and credibility the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) garnered when it promised to make the votes of Nigerians count by deployment Biometric Voter Authentication System (BVAS) for voter accreditation to prevent multiple voting and the real time uploading of election results into Result Viewing Portal (IREV) server from where Nigerians can access election results in real time.

It is instructive to note that the promise to utilise these measures not only raised the hope, but also rekindled optimism and eagerness of Nigerians, especially the youth to actively participate in the 2023 presidential election and actually made a lot of difference compared with past elections in the country. It was, as well, the singular factor that motivated the emergence of the Obi-dient movement, which simply was the culmination of the huge positive difference Nigerian youth identified between Peter Obi and the presidential candidates of other political parties. These were, probably among the factors that made majority of the Nigerian youth to back his candidature, more so as he promised them a "new Nigeria". It is on this premise that this study assessed the influence of the Peter Obi factor in the election which was largely inspired by the social media through the Obi-dient movement, with a view to identifying the difference they made in the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria.

### Research Problem

Democracy thrives on periodic elections where the people are expected to continuously assert their authority by directly or indirectly choosing their political leaders. Mainstream media's role in aiding citizen participation in elections has been accentuated in academic literature (Duru, 2017; Menocal, 2014; and Muriungi, 2006). However, this study focused on how social media aided

Nigerians' participation in the 2023 presidential elections. The postulation is that social media were instrumental in citizens' communication, mobilisation and involvement just as is the case in other climes, being useful tools in reinforcing citizen participation before, during and after elections. Studies show the wide application of social media platforms in Nigerian past elections, for instance, the 2011 and 2015 elections that ushered in Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari's administrations, respectively (Bello, Yusuf, Yusuf & Akintola, 2017; Madueke, Nwosu, Ogbonnaya, Anumadu, & Okeke, 2017, and Opeibi, 2019). However, only few studies focused on whether/how social media aided or caused the arousal of massive and unprecedented political awareness and consciousness in Nigeria like the Obi-dient movement in the 2023. The study was also framed to focus on the effect of Peter Obi's participation in the presidential election (Abdu, Alamai, & Halilu, 2018; Chinedu-Okeke & Obi, 2016). Thus, it x-rayed the relationship between social media, citizen political participation.

### Objectives and Hypotheses of the Study

The specific objectives of this study therefore include:

1. To assess Nigerian electorates' level of exposure to political campaign messages on social media.
2. To determine if political campaign messages of the 'Obi-dient' movement influenced Nigerian electorates' choice of presidential candidates in the election.
3. To ascertain the level of impact Peter Obi's entrant into the presidential race revolutionised the election in terms of increased participation.

These were the applied hypotheses:

Ho1: Nigerian electorates were not exposed to political campaign messages on social media.

Ho2: Political campaign messages of the 'Obi-dient' movement did not influence Nigerian electorates' choice of presidential candidates in the election.

Ho3: Peter Obi's entrant into the presidential race did not revolutionise the election in terms of increased participation.

## Literature Review

### Social Media as Instruments of Political Mobilisation

According to Baran (2010), the internet is characterized by freedom and self-governance, which are also the hallmarks of true democracy. It is no surprise then that computer technology is often trumpeted as the newest and best tool for increased democratic involvement and participation. In this vein, Chatora (2012) argues that social media have great potentials to press for collaborative political involvement because they enable ordinary citizens to voice out their opinions and interact with and even shape their political systems. Since the 2000 US elections, more Americans' usage of the internet as elsewhere for political purposes, including for campaigns, widened, (Deluca, 2009).

As an illustration, in 2008, Senator Barack Obama took the utility of social media to entirely another level. Obama was aspiring to accomplish what had never been achieved before in US politics -someone from a minority race (Afro-Americans, Hispanics or Jews,) becoming the President of the United States of America. In order to stand a chance at all, he reach out to a critical segment of the electorate that were hitherto unreachable - youths and minorities. He found the bridge in the form of social media. Being internet-savvy, Obama put his skills to good use by opening and operating Facebook, MySpace and Twitter accounts, uploaded speeches on YouTube and created a website mybarackobama.com which he used for campaigning and mobilizing supporters.

Obama's utilization of social media for electioneering paid off, as it proved to be very popular not only among the youth, grassroots and minorities, but also among the majority of Whites in America. According to Twitaholic.com, Obama has about 9 million followers on Twitter, while he has got about 22 million friends on Facebook. He is credited as having cultivated the largest number of volunteers and also setting a new record of largest campaign donations in the history of United States politics. The 2008 US presidential election also witnessed an unprecedented mass participation of youth and minorities groups in the electoral process which eventually led to the epoch making victory of internet-savvy Sen. Obama over his internet-deficient rival, Sen. John McCain. As Deluca (2009) notes, Obama

campaign's usage of the internet and blogosphere has been a resounding success. The application of the internet was clearly what edged out his well-known and more powerful opponents within both his own party, Democratic and the Republican Party.

In Nigeria, politicians have joined the social media bandwagon for political purposes. As Igbinidu (2011) observes, the increasing penetration of internet and telephone technology has culminated in an embrace of social media platforms by the Nigerian electorates, especially the youth who are increasingly becoming vibrant and technology savvy. To connect with this target group, Nigerian politicians have no choice but to leverage on these media platforms through which they reach out easily. In this vein, Nigerian presidential aspirants used several social media platforms in their political communication to woo voters throughout the electioneering of the 2023 presidential election.

### Peter Obi, Obi-dient and the Obi's Effect on the 2023 Presidential Election

Peter Obi represents the aspirations of the teeming but marginalised Nigerian youth population. He symbolises the voice of the underprivileged that yearn for a better Nigeria where justice, equity, fairness and respect for human rights would be sacrosanct. He typified hope. A look at the development of Obi's character reveals discipline, responsibility, prudent management of resources, consistence, probity, credibility and positive impact on the society.

To self-fund his secondary education, he traded. He is known for his "egg principle": that even one egg meant for sale should be carefully guarded as losing it meant the loss of profit in the venture. Renowned for his prudence and financial discipline, Obi's performance as a governor of Anambra State was a popular reference in various quarters long before his shot at national politics: commitment to frugal government, building state capital, saving for rainy day, outstanding service delivery (in education and healthcare in particular) and exemplary accountability (no record of corruption case against him while in government) and distinct financial discipline resulting in the now known popular aphorisms: "Doesn't give 'shishi", (he) does not bribe anyone, even with a dime) and "Go and verify (his facts)" - qualities that endeared him to the hearts of most Nigerians.

The unwillingness of the People's Democratic Party to cede its presidential ticket to the South-East region, the dubious highest bidder arrangement of the party's primaries and the acrimonious relationship among the party's leaders propelled Obi's defection to the Labour Party in May 2022. Following his exit from the PDP after the primaries, Peter Obi was adopted as the presidential candidate of the Labour Party, with Kaduna State senator, Yusuf Datti Baba-Ahmed, as his running mate. While the LP was re-established in 2002 (there had been previous Labour Party in earlier republics), it has languished at the electoral margins, having only won one governorship election and a handful of parliamentary seats. With Obi's antecedents, his emergence as Labour Party's presidential candidate attracted young people who rallied round the Obi-dient call. Obi's candidacy quickly turned the "third force" that could upstage the two dominant political parties - All Progressives Congress (APC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). His entrant and on relatively unpopular political party took many Nigerians by surprise as whoever made any meaning impact in the past were on the two major parties. Thus, his candidacy was underestimated. A former minister of Information and National Orientation, Labaran Maku, buttressed this fact while on Channels Television, where he asserted that the ruling APC and the opposition PDP under-rated Obi and his supporters as they thought he lacked political structure and as such would not accomplish much, (Maku, 2023). Maku, however, noted that the two parties were shocked with the massive turnout of Obi and the Labour Party's followership, especially among the youth in the build-up and during the presidential election on February 25.

### **Empirical Review**

A five-country study covering Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe was conducted to find the possibilities of using social media platforms to encourage political participation in Africa. Chatora (2012) argues that they have great potentials to press collaborative political involvement because they enable ordinary citizens to voice their opinions and interact with and even shape their political systems. Falade (2014) finds low levels of citizen participation among some voters in Ondo State in the 2007 and 2011 elections. Their low

participation was caused by endemic factors like political apathy, loss of faith in the political processes, electoral violence culture, and lack of trust of political leaders and institutions. Ibrahim, Liman & Mato (2015) observe that social media messages contributed to making university students and middle-aged citizens participate more actively during the 2015 Nigerian general elections, yet, the fear of post-election violence and insecurity resulted in low general turnout during these elections. Similarly, Madueke, *et al.* 2017 in their study of the 2011 elections suggests that social media's impact on citizens' participation in the election was marginal. However, they state the media had good prospects. This seems to tally with Duru's (2017) study of citizens' attitudes toward civic and political participation in Nigeria between 2011 and 2012. He concludes that although respondents are exposed to social media, they do not trust the political processes. There was low political participation among the randomly selected 2,400 respondents. Bello, *et al's.* (2017) investigation of social media usage and political participation among 387 university undergraduates in Nigeria revealed that students use social media mostly to mobilize themselves to vote during elections, engage in protests, join political parties, volunteer for political campaigns, engage in community initiatives, sign petitions, among others. Adigun (2020) investigated the factors that determined voter turnouts in the 2019 Nigerian presidential election. His report showed that the North-West and North-East zones had the highest turnout rates of 44.00% and 41.71%, respectively. The South-South and South-East zones had the lowest turnout rate of 28.91% and 26.16%, respectively. North-Central zone had 35.75% while the South-West zone had 36.27%. The election period witnessed southerners moving to the south for fear of post-election crises and northerners rushing back to the north for the same reason.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Democratic Participant Theory**

The Democratic Participant Media Theory of McQuail (2005) assumes that the traditional media have suffered much bureaucratization, commercialization and professional hegemony. These constrain citizen participation (Tsegyu, 2016). The traditional media may not afford easier

access to all potential users and consumers because they need to make a profit, align with regulations of the countries they operate in and the limitations of time, reach and space that they also face. Therefore, social media platforms are seen as attempts to democratize real-time media access and participation. Thus, Democratic Participant Media Theory believes the emergence of social media has weakened elitist or dominant groups media access because more citizens now have the platforms to share their views, give voice to their convictions, reach out to communities of like-minded people and even engage in political activism if they so choose. Therefore, while Social Capital Theory emphasizes the benefits found in numbers that social media can enable, the Democratic Participant Media theory believes that encumbrances on the way to citizens' participation in holding their governments accountable have been quashed with the advent of social media.

### **Diffusion of Innovations Theory**

According to Rogers (1995), diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over a period of time among the members of a social system, while an innovation is an idea, practice or object that is perceived to be new by an individual or other unit of adoption. Communication is a process in which participants create and share information with one another to reach a mutual understanding. This theory centres on how an idea, practice or opinion which is disseminated to a given set of people may be adopted or rejected due to several factors. Rogers (ibid) posits that "Diffusion of innovation theory predicts that media as well as interpersonal contacts provide information and influence opinion judgment." This leads to the related Two-Step flow theory which describes how some people with exposure to media messages or information relay same to other people who have less exposure to the mass media. It was observed that the people exposed to the media messages (known as opinion leaders) were not only relaying the information to their "followers", but were also shaping and interpreting such information. In this study's context electoral participation campaign messages is diffused by, National Orientation Agency (NOA), political parties and their

candidates, through the social media. Nigerians of eligible age who see these messages may then relay such messages to their friends, colleagues, neighbours, parents, siblings, etc who may not have access to social media thereby encouraging them to participate in the 2023 presidential elections. In the build up to the election, the social media was awash with a flurry of political messages from the presidential contestants and their parties. On their part, the Obi-dient movement in support of Peter Obi and the Labour Party stood out with youth followership on social media platforms.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted the survey research method which is suitable for examining people's perception and opinion towards issues (Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekharefo & Okpanachi, 2017). The population of study comprised 12,550,578 people resident in Lagos State (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016.). A sample size of 500 was drawn for the study in line with Comrey & Lee's 1992 recommendations that a sample of 50 is very poor; 100 is poor; 200 is fair; 300 is good; 500 is very good; and 1,000 is excellent (Asemah, *et al*, 2017). A multi stage sampling technique was used to select the respondents. At the first stage, stratified sampling was used to divide the population into three senatorial districts – Lagos South, Lagos North and Lagos Central.

From the three geopolitical zones, two local government areas each were selected. That was six local government areas out of the twenty LGAs in the state, for the administration of the 500 copies of the questionnaire. Four LGAs each got 83, while two had 84 copies each of the questionnaire. Data were collected using the questionnaire which contained structured and unstructured questions. Meanwhile, prior to administration, the instrument was subjected to content validity by two experts in research and media studies who affirmed that the contents were intelligible enough to elicit responses that would actualize the objectives of the study. On reliability, a pilot survey was conducted using 20 residents of Ikeja, a town outside the study area. The result yielded 85% consistency level using the Guttman scale which implied reliability of the data set. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used for analysis.

### Discussion of Findings

Our data indicated that all the respondents have access to one social media platform or the other and were exposed to political messages on the social media platforms that they had access to. On their preferred sources of major information on the 2023 Presidential Elections, an overwhelming majority of the 500 respondents – 321 (64.2%) identified social media against 179 (35.8%) for television, radio and newspapers. Similarly, they strongly agreed the actively participated in the 2023 presidential electoral processes, including voting.

On if the political campaign messages of the Obi-dient movement influenced the voting preference of respondents, a majority of 366 (73.2%) agreed; 52 (10.4%) strongly agreed, while 82 (16.4%) disagreed. They widely

affirmed that social media were credible sources of information, 385 (77.0%) agreed; 66 (13.2%) strongly agreed as against 49 (9.8%) who disagreed. The respondents as well reacted to a question on the effectiveness and efficacy of political campaigns on the social media. Most of them affirmed its effectiveness – 386 (77.2%); 67 (13.4%) against 39 (7.8) who disagreed. Next, they massively agreed that Peter Obi and his 'Obi-dient' movement on social media had significant influence on the 2023 presidential elections as it extremely increased political participation, 386 (77.2%) agreed and 67 (13.4%) strongly affirmed.

The analysed hypotheses below further strengthened the findings of the study thus:

#### Hypothesis One

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Nigerian electorates were not exposed to political campaign messages on social media.

**Exposure to Political Messages on Social Media by the Respondents \* Political Campaign on Social Media is Effective Cross-tabulation**

		Political Campaign on Social Media is Effective				Total	
		Strongly Disagree	Agree	No Opinion	Strongly Agree		
Exposure to Political Messages on Social Media by the Respondents	Yes	Observed Count	50	283	65	0	398
		Expected Count	40.6	225.3	68.5	63.7	398.0
	No	Observed Count	1	0	21	80	102
		Expected Count	10.4	57.7	17.5	16.3	102.0
Total	Observed Count	51	283	86	80	500	
	Expected Count	51.0	283.0	86.0	80.0	500.0	

#### Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	396.218 <sup>a</sup>	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	400.446	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	362.052	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	500		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 10.40.

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to run the analysis. From the Chi-square analysis of the research hypothesis one, it was observed that chi-square calculated value of 396.218 greater than chi-square tabulated value of 7.815 at 3 degrees of freedom with the P-value of (0.000 asymptotic sig. level is) less than 0.05 significant level. Based on the above result stated, null research hypothesis which says “Nigerian electorates were not exposed to political campaign messages on social media” was rejected while the alternative hypothesis is thus accepted.

#### Hypothesis Two

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Political campaign messages of the 'Obi-dient' movement did not influence Nigerian electorates' choice of presidential candidates in the election.

**Political Campaign Messages of Obi-dient Movement Influenced the Voting Preference \* Respondents Active Participation in the 2023 Presidential Elections by Voting Cross-tabulation**

		Respondents Active Participation in the 2023 Presidential Elections by Voting			Total	
		Strongly Disagree	Agree	No Opinion		
Political Campaign Messages of Obi-dient Movement Influenced the Voting Preference	Strongly Disagree	Observed Count	6	1	0	7
		Expected Count	4.4	1.4	1.2	7.0
	Agree	Observed Count	242	0	85	327
		Expected Count	204.7	66.7	55.6	327.0
	No Opinion	Observed Count	65	21	0	86
		Expected Count	53.8	17.5	14.6	86.0
	Strongly Agree	Observed Count	0	80	0	80
		Expected Count	50.1	16.3	13.6	80.0
	Total	Observed Count	313	102	85	500
		Expected Count	313.0	102.0	85.0	500.0

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	420.752 <sup>a</sup>	6	.000
Likelihood Ratio	442.653	6	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	20.817	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	500		

a. 3 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.19.

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to run the analysis. From the Chi-Square analysis of the research hypothesis one, it was observed that chi-square calculated value of 420.752 greater than chi-square tabulated value of 12.592 at 6 degrees of freedom with the P-value of (0.000 asymptotic sig. level is) less than 0.05 significant level. Based on the above result stated, null research hypothesis which says “Political campaign messages of the 'Obi-dient' movement did not influence Nigerian electorates' choice of presidential candidates in the election” was rejected while the alternative hypothesis is thus accepted.

**Hypothesis Three**

**H<sub>01</sub>**: Peter Obi's entrant into the presidential race did not revolutionise the election in terms of increased participation.



**Peter Obi's 'Obi-dient' Movement had a Massive Influence on the 2023 Presidential Elections by Increasing Political Participation \* Respondents Active Participation in the 2023 Presidential Elections by Voting Cross-tabulation**

		Respondents Active Participation in the 2023 Presidential Elections by Voting			Total	
		Strongly Disagree	Agree	No Opinion		
Peter Obi's 'Obi-dient' Movement had a Massive Influence on the 2023 Presidential Elections by Increasing Political Participation	Strongly Disagree	Observed Count	15	1	35	51
		Expected Count	31.9	10.4	8.7	51.0
	Agree	Observed Count	179	0	50	229
		Expected Count	143.4	46.7	38.9	229.0
	No Opinion	Observed Count	65	21	0	86
		Expected Count	53.8	17.5	14.6	86.0
	Agree	Observed Count	54	0	0	54
		Expected Count	33.8	11.0	9.2	54.0
	Strongly Agree	Observed Count	0	80	0	80
		Expected Count	50.1	16.3	13.6	80.0
	Total	Observed Count	313	102	85	500
		Expected Count	313.0	102.0	85.0	500.0

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	518.198 <sup>a</sup>	8	.000
Likelihood Ratio	511.844	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.733	1	.392
N of Valid Cases	500		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.67.

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to run the analysis. From the Chi-Square analysis of the research hypothesis one, it was observed that Chi-Square calculated value of 518.198 greater than chi-square tabulated value of 15.507 at 8 degrees of freedom with the P-value of (0.000 asymptotic sig. level is) less than 0.05 significant level. Based on the above result stated, null research hypothesis which says “Peter Obi's entrant into the presidential race did not revolutionise the election in terms of increased participation” was rejected while the alternative hypothesis is thus accepted.

**Conclusion**

The study examined the influence of social media on Peter Obi's performance in the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. The data showed that the use of social media platforms during the electioneering campaigns by Nigerians was very high and their application improved the quality of social engineering, communication and mobilisation for political purposes during the election. It also revealed high awareness and use of social media networks like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, Skype, Yahoo, Google, etc.

The study established that social media platforms effectively convey political messages, resulting in massive and unprecedented turnout of youths for the 2023 presidential elections. Applying social media, Nigerian youths were inspired by the Obi-dient movement and supported Peter Obi by trouping out en masse to vote for the Labour Party in the election. This was contrary to the past when a large chunk of the youth lost hope in the process and their votes not counting. The Obi-dient movement had awakened young Nigerians to shake off their complacency and translate their slumber to eagerness, to active participation and

involvement in the process that will birth a new Nigeria. as promised by politicians. The political mantra of the Obi-dient movement, “a new Nigeria is possible”, became a rallying point for Nigeria's new politically conscious youth.

These results are substantiated by the Democratic Participant and Diffusion of Innovation theories which were used as the theoretical foundation of the study. It believes that the emergence of social media has weakened elitist or dominant groups' media access because more citizens now have the platforms to share their views, give voice to their convictions, reach out to communities of like-minded people and even engage in political activism if they so choose. The diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over a period of time among the members of a social system, while an innovation is an idea, practice or object that is perceived to be new by an individual or other unit of adoption. In this context the innovation is the social media.

There is also the indication from the study that high adoption and utilization of social media by Nigerians has enhanced the process of political campaign, communication of political messages, mobilisation and participation in elections as visibly reflected in the 2023 presidential

elections. The results agreed with the applied theoretical basis which sees that social media as innovation that is diffused among Nigerians and engender citizen participation in politics and elections, hence, it is an obvious that social media are agents of social engineering as exemplified in the Nigerian political space.

### Recommendations

In furtherance of the findings of the study, the following recommendations suffice:

1. With social media proven to be veritable instruments for political engineering, due to their massive accessibility and use, the utilisation should be continuously encouraged as means of deepening our democratic process.
2. The claim of enormous influence of the Obi-dient movement and its campaign messages in the presidential election should further be authenticity through more studies.
3. The assertion that Obi's entrant into the presidential race tremendously influenced political participation and curtailed voters' apathy should also be verified through additional studies.
4. Nigerian politicians and political parties should improve on their application of social media as the latter's intrinsic advantages like massive outreach, real-time nature, interactivity, among others, have been identified.

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