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**Youth Participation in Politics: A  
Comparison of Nigerian Youths  
Resident in Rural and Urban Areas**

**CHIDINMA CHIDUBEM AZUBUIKE-OBA**

**PhD**

**2023**

**Youth Participation in Politics: A  
*Comparison of Nigerian Youths  
Resident in Rural and Urban Areas***

**by**

**Chidinma Chidubem Azubuiké-Oba**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements of the University of  
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of Doctor of Philosophy

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**Supervised by  
Professor Bruce Mutsvairo  
Dr. Daniel Briggs**

## ABSTRACT

Over the years, youth participation in politics has shown steady decline and some researchers claim that in the last two decades, the proliferation of social media usage has given rise to youth political engagement globally (Ali, Habes, & Qamar, 2020). The idea that digital media has enhanced in various ways youths' participation in politics cannot be over emphasised given that the digital media, especially, the social media is not only interactive and youth friendly but also provides enabling environment for youth engagement, resulting in more politically engaged youths. Research shows that youths in urban areas are more likely to engage in online political participation than the youths in rural areas due to their limited access to internet connectivity compared to their urban counterparts. Based on the digital divide theory, this study seeks to comparatively assess urban and rural youth political participation in Nigeria. The study achieves this by comparing the responses gotten from an online survey distributed to Nigerian youths' resident in the urban areas (who have more access to social media) and a physical questionnaire given to those who live in rural Nigeria (who are reported to have less access to social media). The results show that while social media usage allows for more online participation, those in the rural area have participated more in voting and other forms of political participation. The study suggests that to ensure all Nigerian youths are encouraged to participate in politics, campaign managers and political parties should embrace both online and offline methods of political communication.

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## DEDICATION

To my Father, my lover! The creator of the ends of the earth and the one who sent me on this journey and walked with me every step of the way...

To JESUS the immortal, invincible God only wise! The project was always yours  
Lord, you just needed a body to note down the words and you chose me.

Thank you, Yahweh.

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I love you, Lord.

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To everyone who has supported me on this journey in any way, I am grateful. Thank you. May God always be near you through every season.



## DECLARATION

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas, and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee on 18 June, 2019.

I declare that the Word Count of this thesis after the final corrections is 74,015 words.

Name: Chidinma Chidubem Azubuiké

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chidinma Chidubem Azubuiké', followed by a colon.

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2023.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Participatory politics is the engagement of individuals and groups in interactive and peer-based activities aimed at expressing their opinions and exerting influence on matters of public significance (Kahne, Hodgins & Eidman-Aadahl, 2016). According to Ahmad, Alvi and Ittefaq (2019), political engagement involves several activities, such as voting, affiliating with political parties, attending political rallies, and engaging in communication with elected representatives. As noted by Kaskazi and Kitzie (2023), the aforementioned modes of political engagement are often seen as important to the effective operation of democratic systems, as they serve to facilitate public involvement in the decision-making process.

In the words of Kahne et al. (2016), participatory political acts comprise a variety of activities, such as blogging, disseminating political news, initiating a new political organisation, generating petitions, and mobilising one's social network in support of a particular cause. Political involvement refers to the voluntary actions carried out by the general public with the aim of influencing public policy, either through direct means or by influencing the selection of individuals responsible for policy-making (Uhlman, 2015). The author provides a comprehensive description of many activities, including but not limited to: (i) participating in electoral processes by casting votes; (ii) actively supporting political campaigns; (iii) contributing financial resources to candidates or causes; (iv) engaging in communication with authorities; (v) exercising the right to petition; (vi) engaging in peaceful demonstrations; and (vii) collaborating with other individuals to address pertinent concerns. Recent scholarly research has placed

significant emphasis on the examination of political involvement as it pertains to the political conduct of individuals, the validity of democratic systems, and the concurrent emergence of populist feeling (Oser & Hooghe, 2018, p. 711). According to Kahne et al. (2016), participatory political acts encompass a variety of activities, such as blogging, disseminating political news, initiating a new political organisation, generating petitions, and mobilising one's social network in support of a particular cause. Political involvement refers to the voluntary actions carried out by the general public with the aim of exerting influence on public policy, either through direct means or by impacting the selection of individuals responsible for policy-making (Uhlener, 2015). The author provides a complete description of several activities, including participating in elections through voting, assisting political campaigns, contributing monetary resources to candidates or causes, engaging in communication with officials, submitting petitions, engaging in protests, and collaborating with others to address societal concerns. The Saud, Ida, and Mashud (2020) study contributed an understanding of how democratic principles and processes influence the level of young individuals involvement in political activities. The findings of this study provided valuable vision for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders interested in promoting election. Recent scholarly research has placed significant emphasis on the examination of political involvement as a crucial aspect of citizens' political behaviour, as well as its implications for democratic legitimacy and the concurrent emergence of populist feeling (Oser & Hooghe, 2018, p. 711; Pansera et al., 2022; Boda, 2022; Djafar, 2022).

In a similar manner, Nam (2016) argues that participatory activities aim to expand the scope of political engagement to encompass the everyday lives of individuals within local communities. The primary assertion put forth by the author

pertains to contemporary political and governmental establishments, which are characterised by a focus on electoral activities and a dominance of elite individuals. In light of the prevailing practices observed within a wider participatory culture, it is worth considering. When it comes to engaging in general elections, young individuals are inclined to partake in electoral activities by means such as donning T-shirts, contributing funds to political parties, inspiring others, and advocating for youth-oriented political agendas at polling stations (Saud, Ida & Mashud, 2020). According to Robison, Clinton, Weigel, Purushotma, and Jenkins (2009), the aforementioned techniques frequently incorporate a combination of cultural and political activities without adhering to respect for elites or formal institutions. The individual's focus is centred on matters of concern. Political participation has emerged as a prominent subject of investigation in contemporary scholarly research concerning citizens' political activity, democratic legitimacy, and the operation of democratic systems, coinciding with the ascent of populist movements.

Furthermore, Henn, Oldfield, & Hart (2018, p. 721) incorporated specific social activities, such as "participating in a voluntary organisation, such as a community association, charity group, or sports club," and "engaging in political discussions with family or friends," into their categorization of non-institutionalised political actions. In their study, Kilybayeva, Nassimova, and Massalimova (2017, p. 65) identified several activities that they classified as forms of political participation. These activities covered engaging in discussions about political matters with family and friends, demonstrating interest and attentiveness towards politics among young individuals, recognising the significance of politics according to the opinions of young people, staying informed through reading and watching news sources, and engaging in civic participation through volunteering and charitable endeavours, among other related activities.

Similarly, the authors Kahne, Middaugh, and Allen (2015) expressed the viewpoint that the implementation of participatory political practices frequently contributes to the transformation of cultural and political perceptions, ultimately exerting influence towards instigating change. In contemporary times, there has been a noticeable decline in the prevalence of conventional modes of political engagement throughout numerous nations, particularly among the younger demographic (Alodat, Al-Qora'n, & Hamoud, 2023). The observed phenomenon can be attributed to various variables, including diminished confidence in political establishments, scepticism towards political factions, and a sense of detachment from the political mechanism (Zagidullin et al., 2021). Participatory politics takes various forms, notable among the forms are the normative and non-normative.

Normative participation can be defined as the act of engaging in politically expressive behaviours that are considered legitimate and socially accepted, such as voting. On the other hand, non-normative participation encompasses more radical activities that involve challenging the existing system, breaking social norms, and potentially resorting to violence, such as participating in illegal protests or demonstrations. This distinction has been discussed by various scholars, including Glatz and Dahl (2016), Kuhn (2004), Saha (2000), Tausch et al. (2011), and van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2013). The coexistence of these two modes of engagement is not mutually exclusive, as they both stem from the overarching participatory inclinations observed in teenagers (Šerek, Macháčková, and Macek, 2018). Normative actions can be defined as behaviours that align with the established norms of the prevailing social system within a democratic regime. Examples of such actions include participating in marches or rallies. On the other hand, non-normative actions refer to behaviours that deviate from the norms prescribed by the

aforementioned social system. Instances of non-normative actions may involve confrontations with law enforcement authorities (Zúñiga, Asún, and Louis, 2023).

### 1.1.1 Youth Political Participation in the social media Era

The use of digital devices, ranging from mobile phones to tablets, has forever changed the way information is both shared and received (Ragnedda & Mutsvairo, 2018; Sang, Lee, Park, Fisher & Fuller, 2020). Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube have become popular means of interaction, also playing an important role in "exposing users to political information and enabling them to express their viewpoints" (Yu, 2015, p. 2). Better still, social media platforms are known to have educational prowess, encouraging people to become more aware of news and developments that matter to them (Dron & Anderson, 2014; Ali, Habes, & Qamar, 2020). Indeed, politicians and voters alike are embracing digital tools as a way of influencing voting decisions, particularly among politically averse young adults (Bennett, 2008; Chopra, 2018; Curry, 2018). Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that it also propels political communication in the modern era (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2012; Himelboim, Lariscy, Tinkham, & Sweetser, 2012; Stieglitz, Brockmann, & Dang-Xuan, 2012; Karlsson & Åström, 2017). To argue that digital media are increasingly central to civic and political life is, in many respects, to state the obvious. Such changes are particularly prominent among youth. The affordances of digital media are providing youth with a way to be heard, to join together, and to work for change (Kahne et al, 2016). Many academics have found it intriguing to investigate the relationship between social media and politics. Social media is generally seen as persuasive and effective in changing or influencing beliefs when it comes to politics since it can rapidly magnify messages across a variety of media channels (Weeks,

Ardèvol-Abreu, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2017; Tucker et al., 2018; Zhuravskaya, Petrova, & Enikolopov, 2020; Azizi, 2023). It allows individuals to learn all about politics at their own pace, and more importantly, politicians use it to communicate with prospective voters (Loader & Mercea, 2011; Halpern & Gibbs, 2013; Postill, 2018; Gray & Gutierrez-Mannix, 2021). In fact, the union between social media and politics is credited to former President of the United States Barack Obama who has been addressed amongst some circles as "the first social media President" (Acker & Kriesberg, 2017, p.1). The Obama campaign in 2008 made use of social media and a website to sign up volunteers to work with the team, raise funds, and pass across their campaign message. Over the years, more politicians and other world leaders have made use of social media, even for political communication.

In addition, Postill (2018) asserts that some of the political class go beyond adding social media use to their campaigns to using social media as the primary means of announcing their intent to run for positions, totally boycotting the previous "traditional" means of communication—television, radio, and newspaper. This global shift by politicians from traditional mass media usage to social media is simply because social media now houses the citizens they are trying to reach (Weeks, Ardèvol-Abreu, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2017; Woolley & Howard, 2019). In Africa, Nigeria's current President Muhammad Buhari is presumed to have the largest following on social media, with more than 5 million followers across Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. President Akufo-Addo of Ghana and President Kagame of Rwanda also have a large number of followers. Similarly, other African presidents have official presidential Twitter handles and communicate with the public using these handles at different frequencies (eNitiata, 2017; Mapenzauswa, 2019). No wonder, Camerano (2018) argues that Twitter has become very embedded in political discourse more than

other social applications, so much so that the term "Twiplomacy" (Twitter Diplomacy) was coined in 2011 by some researchers who were looking into the use of Twitter by political leaders. Nevertheless, it's worth noting that several studies demonstrate that the youth use Facebook more than any other social media site for political discourse (Dagona, Karick, & Abubakar, 2013; Oyesomi, Ahmadu, & Itsekor, 2014; Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020).

Meanwhile, the growth of "political communication" as a field of study, especially in Africa, has been ascribed to shifts in how politicians and the public communicate (Okoro & Santas, 2006; Muswede 2022). In recent years, the development of African-focused academic publications like the Journal of African Elections attests to the growing interest in the study of African political communication. Globally recognised organisations like the International Association for Media and Communication Research, the International Communication Association, and the Association of Communication Scholars and Professionals of Nigeria have all recently held conferences to highlight the importance of studying African political communication. As a result, there have been discussions concerning whether or not the development of ICT has affected political communication in Nigeria (Anorue, Obayi, & Onyebuchi, 2012; Olabamiji, 2014; Oyesomi, Ahmadu, & Itsekor, 2014; Izunwanne & Nduba, 2020).

According to Dagona, Karick, and Abubakar (2013), there are over 60 million eligible voters in Nigeria, and 43 million of them are estimated to be online. Given the meteoric rise in popularity of social media platforms worldwide and in Nigeria over the last seven years, this number is only expected to grow. However, as important as voting is, there has been a worldwide decline in citizen participation in elections, especially among the young (Pontes, Henn, & Griffiths, 2018; Dahl et al., 2017; Sloam



& Henn, 2019). The issue of declining political participation is a global struggle, as varied researchers suggest that democracy on a global scale may be in danger (Karpf, 2010; Drumbi, 2012; Lim, 2013; Pontes, Henn, & Griffiths, 2018). While this issue cuts across all ages, the youths particularly have been mentioned as being set against voting, and as a result, youth participation, particularly through voting, has become "a central tenet of global and continental policy discussions over the past decade" (Asiamah, Sambou, & Bhoojedhur, 2021, p.1).

In Africa, youths have also been charged with absconding from voting, with a lot of researchers looking into the topic of youth political participation. South African author Ndlovu (2017) talks in his book about how social media may be used in mobilising youths to participate in voting, while Dabula (2016) writes about voter apathy amongst the youths in South Africa and how that has affected political marketing in the country. Similarly, Mare (2015), in an unpublished PhD thesis, compares youth voting in Zimbabwe and South Africa and finds that both countries suffer from the global downswing of actively voting youths. Furthermore, Resnick and Casale (2014) believe that access to political information plays a critical role in the declining levels of voting among African youth.

In Nigeria, a plethora of researchers have also investigated the topic of political participation, and the results are consistent with global findings that youths are needed in the political sphere to ensure continuity of democratic reign across the globe (Agu, Okeke, and Idike, 2013; Dagona, Karick, and Abubakar, 2013; Morah & Uzochukwu, 2019; Egbunike, 2017; Mustapha, 2017; Mustapha & Omar, 2020). Accordingly, the issue of youth political participation has been analysed from three major perspectives. One school of thought holds that prior to colonization, the Nigerian youth was involved in politics (Falola and Heaton, 2008). They claim that the 1990s saw a shift in Nigeria's

political landscape, with youths at the helm. Accordingly, the journey from being a colonised country to a free, independent nation can be credited wholly to Nigerian youths.

On the other hand, the second school of thought holds that, post-colonization, youths in Nigeria have had a steadily declining interest in and involvement in politics for varied reasons. Eze and Obono (2018) deduced from their research that "this increasing attitudinal change is mainly caused by individuals' quest for pleasure and lack of attention to political events in their immediate community" (p. 25). The youth of today are more interested in following political headlines than participating in physical political movements, e.g., voting. They say that even though social media has been praised as a great way to get youths involved in politics, they prefer to use social networking sites for socialising and entertainment rather than to learn about politics or get involved in politics.

Meanwhile, Ibezim (2019) blames the political class for the decline in youth political participation. He writes that though it is global knowledge that the youths are important in any society for generational continuity, and they should always be added to the decision-making process, the Nigerian youths are still left out. He believes that since politicians fail to seek to understand the needs and desires of youths before implementing policies to aid in job creation and better access to health care, among other things, these policies end up failing. No wonder. Osumah (2016) believes that youth political participation in Nigerian politics degenerated in 1999, with obviously reduced youth voter turnout in elections and youth engagement that has dwindled ever since.

Some researchers claim that a lack of media trust and warped media coverage is another reason why youth are not as active in the political sphere as they need to

be (Hari, 2014; Uwalaka, 2016; Uwalaka & Watkins, 2017; Adegbola & Gearhart, 2019). The youth of today do not trust the mainstream media as a credible source of news information. This leads to a lack of information and further reduces political participation. Youth would rather turn to social media or ignore whatever is being broadcast on the news as they believe that mainstream media is a pawn in the hands of wealthy politicians who grease the palms of news stations to ensure the news is broadcast to their taste (Adegbola & Gearhart, 2019).

Finally, some researchers hold that there has been an increase in participation in Nigeria since 2015, especially with the aid of social media (Osumah, 2016; Morah, Omojola, & Uzochukwu, 2016; Apuke & Tunca, 2018; Morah & Uzochukwu, 2019). Osumah (2016) holds that, since 2015, the level of youth political participation in Nigeria is on the increase. He asserts that youth were more proactive in mobilizing, educating, campaigning, and monitoring during the 2015 elections than they were in previous elections. As such, this keeps one wondering: has the middle ground between cyber optimists and pessimists, as proposed by Kalsnes (2016), been achieved? In addition, given the demographic differentials and digital gap that exist in Nigeria, can the conclusion reached by authors like Osumah (2016) be applied to youths in rural and urban areas? As a result of these questions and previous observations, this study is being conducted to provide explanations for them and contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the topic.

Furthermore, this research aims to assess the growth of political communication in Nigeria in order to unearth new patterns that might assist expand and broaden our knowledge on the role that social media platforms are playing in affecting African politics. Moreover, by analysing the growth of political discourse in Nigeria, this research hopes to shed light on unanticipated tendencies that will

enhance our knowledge of the impact of social media youth political participation. The Nigerian Presidential Elections of 2019 served as a case study for this investigation into the evolution of political communication in Nigeria, with the goal of illuminating the impact that Nigeria's youth have had on the rate of this evolution and highlighting the obstacles and possibilities that stand in the way of their efforts to shape the political discourse in this West African country.

### 1.1.2 The 2019 Nigerian Presidential Election: An Overview

The 2019 Nigerian election is arguably the most researched election Nigeria has undertaken. The general election was scheduled to hold on the 16th of February 2019, and five hours before the polls were to be opened, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) announced the elections had to be postponed to the 23rd of February 2019 for the presidential and national assembly elections, and the governorship and state house of assembly elections were postponed to the 9th of March, 2019. In their announcement, INEC mentioned logistical challenges as a reason for the postponement (Maclean and Egbejule, 2019). These challenges are but not limited to the late delivery of electoral materials and the malfunctioning of card readers, which led to delays and the extension of voting in some areas. This last-minute postponement caused more agitation as the two leading political parties accused each other of trying to buy more time to finalise their plans to engage in electoral misconduct. This also affected the voting results, as some citizens who had made plans to travel to their polling units were not afforded the opportunity to make repeat plans (Ononihu and Okonkwo, 2020).

While there were 73 presidential candidates contending under the umbrella of 91 registered and accredited political parties, it is alleged that the fight was really

between two parties: the People's Democratic Party with Atiku Abubakar as the flag bearer and the incumbent President Muhammad Buhari of the All Progressives Congress fighting to retain power (Amao, 2020). Known political players like Oby Ezekwesili of the Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN), Kingsley Moghalu of the Young Progressive Party (YPP), and Fela Durotoye of the Alliance for New Nigeria (ANN), all contested in the election, but the results proved they did not amass as much support as the PDP and the APC (BBC, 2019). The campaign leading up to the election was marked by intense political activity, with the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) and the opposition PDP engaging in a heated battle for the presidency. The Presidential campaign was also dominated by discussions about the economy, security, and corruption. Buhari campaigned on his record of improving security, particularly in the fight against Boko Haram, and on his efforts to tackle corruption. Atiku, on the other hand, focused on the need to diversify the economy and create jobs, as well as his plan to restructure the country to ensure more equitable distribution of resources. Furthermore, the campaign was marked by allegations of vote buying and electoral irregularities, with both the ruling party and the opposition accusing each other of trying to influence the outcome of the election.

Muhammad Buhari is not new to political rulership in Nigeria. He was Head of State under military rule in 1983 and was eventually overthrown (Amao, 2020), and before his win in 2015, President Buhari had run for the position of president every time elections have come around since the return of democratic rule to Nigeria (Ajakaye, 2015). President Buhari was voted into power in 2015 with the mantras "Sai Baba" and "APCChange." The country at the time was battling the onset of the Boko Haram insurgency, bombings, and kidnappings, and the then-President Goodluck Jonathan was described as weak in the face of these challenges. Buhari's campaign

at the time presented him as the vehicle for change that the country needed, and this won over support and finally the presidential seat. Unfortunately, BBC wrote that the sound of "Sai Buhari," a Hausa phrase meaning "only Buhari," swiftly changed to "Buhariya," a Hausa phrase meaning "the Buhari way," and has been used to describe every negative turnout in the country within one year of President Buhari's rule (BBC, 2016).

Furthermore, the BBC (2016) explains that in the one-year review of President Buhari's regime, they discovered that while safety and security issues appeared to have been partially addressed, insurgency in the Niger Delta was on the rise, and exchange rates between the dollars and naira had nearly doubled to the naira's detriment, affecting all produce in the market (for example, a basket of tomatoes went up from 3,000 naira to around 18,000 naira in one year). The past government had given positions to women, trying to bridge the male and female dichotomy in the place of governance in Nigeria. President Buhari appeared to have set the country back a year (Amao, 2020; Butu, 2016). In addition, Amao (2020) stated that the percentage of the unemployment rate in Nigeria has risen every year between 2015 and 2019—the four years that Buhari has led the country. Regardless of what was being said in the news, President Buhari decided to run for a second term in 2019, and the campaign strategy this time was that he constantly fought against corruption in the country (Amao, 2020). The campaign ads as seen on social media had the slogan #NextLevel and were founded on the belief that "one good term deserves another." They opined that President Buhari be voted into power for another four years to complete what he started in 2015 (Ahmed, Abdulbaqi, and Adisa, 2019). Aladejebi and Oladapo (2020) explain that the APC manifesto was focused on addressing five main challenges facing the country: unemployment, insecurity, corruption, education, and

health. They promised to invest in creating 3 million jobs for the country as their attempt to hear the desires of the citizens, curb unemployment among the youth, and attempt to eradicate poverty. APC's manifesto also stated that they would employ 100,000 more security personnel at various stages and properly train and equip them to be able to fight insurgencies and particularly wage war against Boko Haram. According to the manifesto, the President Buhari-led party will take action against the corrupt members of society, introduce free meals for students, offer free healthcare, and provide free education.

At 71 years old, two-time Vice President of Nigeria Atiku Abubakar ran for President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and was the incumbent's strongest opponent. Atiku, who is also a Muslim and a northerner, strategically chose Peter Obi as his running mate in order to gain the support of the Southeast, a people who have expressed dissatisfaction with President Buhari (Akwayiram, 2018). President Buhari has systematically and evidentially ensured that the leaders of the majority of the Federal parastatals are Northerners, and for years, there has been political agitation with the Southeast alleging that the North have become power huggers who have refused to allow another tribe to rule the country. This claim, among others, has led to the reawakened desire of the south-eastern states to pull out of Nigeria and become their own country, Biafra (Johnson and Olaniyan, 2017). Atiku was the running mate and eventual Vice President under the rulership of President Olusegun Obasanjo, and the duo ruled for two terms between 1999 and 2007 under the umbrella of the People's Democratic Party. It was alleged that towards the end of their second term, Obasanjo's desire to run for a third term caused them to have personal, political, and tribal (Buhari is of Hausa descent and Atiku is from Yoruba land) disagreements. Popoola (2011). As a result, Atiku decamped from the PDP and joined another political party, the Action

Congress of Nigeria (ACN) (formerly known as Action Congress), where he became the flag bearer for the party and ran for president of Nigeria in 2007. He lost, returned to the PDP, and ran for president of Nigeria in 2011 and 2015, where he lost again (Popoola, 2011).

Atiku's political career has been associated with corruption (Onifade and Abati, 2019), and this was mentioned by the APC during the campaigns. Atiku's campaign strategy was focused on character rebranding, showcasing him as more than a politician—a businessman, an employer, a wealth creator, and inherently a better candidate to be elected into power. His campaign slogan included #Atikulated (a play on the word articulated) to show that whoever used the slogan supports Atiku. While Okpowhor, Godwin, and Nsereka (2020) believe that the Atiku campaign and the Buhari campaign had similar strategies, Okigbo (2021) believes that different strategies were employed. They claim the Atiku campaign was involved in negative campaigning backed with evidence; they used documentaries and storytelling methods (to show the other sides of Atiku) while the Buhari campaign played on the social and economic needs of the citizens, using jingles and 60-second clips promising to fight corruption and bring them the change they desire (Okigbo, 2021). Mirroring the promises made via the APC manifesto, the PDP manifesto suggests the country led by Atiku would benefit economically as the agricultural sector, which has been seemingly abandoned, would be revived, effectively tackling the three main problems Nigeria faces: hunger, unemployment, and poverty. The Atiku manifesto also promised help and assistance to small businesses. The PDP also vowed to ensure a peaceful nation by eradicating insecurity (Onifade & Abati, 2019).

Compared to the 2015 election, the 2019 election feels like a retrogression. Nigerian and international observers alike heralded the 2015 election as the most



peaceful, free, and fair election Nigeria has ever had (Sule & Sambo, 2020; Oyewole & Omotola, 2022). In the months leading up to the 2015 election, there was political and tribal strife, as well as rumours that Nigeria would cease to exist after 2015. When then-President Jonathan called to congratulate President Buhari on his victory, the world rejoiced (Onapajo, 2015). Similarly, the political climate in Nigeria was agitated with the 2019 election, and this has been the first election where there are multiple accusations of involving external organisations to help tamper with the election results. Rumors circulate that the use of social media in politics has been weaponized as a tool of electoral malfeasance, as discussed in Chapter 1 of this study. The PDP and the APC have both been accused of being involved in dirty politics by employing political campaigners to rig the election using fake news (Debre, 2019).

Ononihu and Okonkwo (2020), in their research titled "Credibility Of The 2019 General Elections And The Growth Of Democracy In Nigeria," found that Nigeria is a state in "credibility deficit" (p.1), and this over time eroded the democratic system of government in Nigeria. Onuh and Ike (2021) expressed that electoral malpractice has transpired in Nigeria since the inception of democratic rule in the following ways: "corrupt practises by the election management body and its officials; voter intimidation; multiple registration and voting; underage voting; diversion, theft, and sabotage of electoral materials; alteration and falsification of results; manipulation of voters' registers; violence and thuggery; compromise of security agencies; and impersonation of voters" (p. 239). Furthermore, they believe that the involvement of civil society organisations (CSOs) in the electoral process as external monitors in some ways acted as an accountability company for the government. Deploying members to oversee the distribution of electoral material, providing live coverage of said event, and encouraging their members and youths generally to cover and post their

experiences of the election in their polling units also helped make the process more transparent. They used social media to help make the electoral process free and fair (Onuh and Ike, 2021). Agreeing, Oshodi and Oshodi (2020) suggested that though the 2019 election process showed some improvement, women were still less represented and there were more reports of electoral malpractice than in 2015. Amao (2020) advised that the nation needs to invest in electronic voting as this would curb election malpractices.

A key, repeated feature of the 2019 election is election violence. Onimisi and Tinuola (2019) narrate that the 2017 election appears to be one of the worst elections in the history of Nigeria in terms of violence, as over 60 people lost their lives. Apart from the killings, people were injured, and property, including INEC buildings, was destroyed as thugs attempted to steal ballot boxes. Worse, the violence continued post-election as more lives were lost. It was announced via news stations that places like the southwest and north had continued violence after the election results were announced. They conclude that in Nigeria, electoral violence is a targeted tactic applied by politicians to scare voters away from voting for the opposition; a ploy to distract onlookers, INEC staff, and voters from acts of electoral malpractice ongoing; and a great cover with which to legally seek annulment of election results if what is announced doesn't favour them (Onimisi and Tinuola, 2019).

Amao (2020), citing the report of the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa election observer mission (EISA EOM), led by the former President of Zambia, Rupiah Banda, wrote that electoral violence permeated the 54 polling units spread across Nigeria and that this has continuously transpired through the six elections Nigeria has so far organized. According to Salihu and Yakubu (2021), politicians and political parties use thugs to incite violence because there is no long-

term relationship between political parties and their voters. They believe building a lasting relationship with voters (not just months before an intended election) would help political parties be more confident in voter turnout and largely reduce the need for violence. Ezeibe (2021) argues that beyond the hiring of thugs to incite physical violence, the PDP and APC are both guilty of making accusatory references against the other party and inadvertently causing their supporters to be at loggerheads. According to Ezeibe (2021, p. 930),

“the speeches in which it was said that ‘INEC had finished a rigging plan to favour APC’ and to ‘expect war if President Buhari rigs the 2019 presidential election’, which were credited to Uche Secondus, provoked an illegal course (war) of action by members of the PDP against INEC staff and APC supporters. Similarly, the speech in which it was said that the ‘PDP is working with terrorist groups including Boko Haram to orchestrate widespread violence and truncate the 2019 presidential election’, which was credited to the Nigerian Minister of Information Lai Mohammed, incited the security agencies to violence against the PDP rather than warning them against it”.

Ultimately, the results of the elections were contentious, with the People's Democratic Party (PDP), alleging widespread irregularities and voter manipulation. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) declared Buhari the winner of the presidential election with 15,191,847 votes, while Atiku Abubakar of the PDP received 11,262,978 votes. The results were challenged in court by the PDP, but the court upheld the results of the election. The 2019 Nigerian general election is considered to be one of the most closely contested and controversial in the history of the country, with both parties and supporters

accusing each other of electoral malpractice and voter manipulation. As a result, this election becomes the case study of this study

## 1.2 Purpose of the Study

### Research Aim and Objectives

**Aim:** The purpose of this study is to examine the political participation of youth in Nigeria, with a particular emphasis on comparing the urban and rural cohorts.

To achieve this aim, this research has the following objectives:

1. To find out what the level of interest Nigerian youths in urban and rural areas have in politics.
2. To find out the knowledge level of youths in urban and rural areas about politics in Nigeria.
3. To find out what forms of political participation are emerging among Nigerian youth both offline and online.
4. To find out how Nigerian youths use social media in politics.

### Research Questions

This study will attempt to answer the following research questions in light of its objectives:

1. What level of interest do Nigerian youths in urban and rural areas have in politics?
2. What is the knowledge level of youths in urban and rural areas about politics in Nigeria?
3. What forms of political participation do Nigerian youths in urban and rural areas engage in?
4. How do Nigerian youth in urban and rural areas use social media in politics?

## Research Approach

This research seeks to address these issues by analysing the current controversies surrounding young political participation and reviewing the existing literature on the subject. This research's primary method for answering these questions is a survey administered to youth in both urban and rural settings. The survey questions will be framed in accordance with the theories behind the study. Additionally, the obtained data will be analysed and interpreted to provide answers to the questions.

## Scope of the Study

This research aims to establish the extent to which social media influences the development of political communication in Nigeria, with a particular focus on the nation's youths, comparing both urban and rural areas. Furthermore, it seeks to contribute to current debates on the development of political communication by offering empirically-driven findings from the continent's largest country by population. Within this framework, this study will compare and contrast the political participation of youth in urban and rural areas by looking at their levels of interest in politics, their knowledge of politics, the methods they use to get involved in politics, and the role social media plays in their political lives.

## 1.3 Significance of the Research

Milton and Mano (2021, p.256) states that “the study of media and communications in the global South is limited by uncritical overreliance on theories and methodologies from the global North”. While other researchers like Karam and Mutsvairo (2021) have made similar claims, they have also admitted the overwhelming effect of colonization penetrates academia and makes it almost impossible to decolonize academia particularly theories. Milton and Mano (2021) postulate

Afrokology as the solution to this problem. To attempt a definition of the word Afrokology, the root words are considered. *Afro* means related to Africa and *ology* refers to a subject of study, or a branch of knowledge. In their words “Afrokology is an attempt to re-imagine media and communication studies and to reunite its practice and theory with philosophical roots in Africa”. This could translate as a study of African concepts, within an African perspective by Africans both those residents in the motherland and the diaspora, without the infiltration of theoretical backings of the western world. Mano and Milton (2021) submitted that Afrokology should be an interdisciplinary practise to enable Africa to create more specific knowledge thereby contributing more to the global knowledge base. Research based on African perspectives are important in promoting afrokology hence researching into the differences and similarities in political participation amongst youths living in rural and urban Nigeria is essential, making this research necessary. Given the precarious nature of Nigeria's political climate right now, this study is timely and couldn't come at a better moment. Moreover, the focus on youth is critical and relevant because Africa has the youngest population in the world, with 70 percent of sub-Saharan Africa projected to be under the age of 30 (United Nations, 2020). Studying the potential of the youth in political engagement in an African country such as Nigeria is therefore very important because most of these youths have grown up using digital technologies. While many studies have looked at the role of social media in influencing political communication and youth political participation, many of them concentrated on the 2015 election and had a very limited scope for certain parts of the country. As such, this study tends to be novel in the academic community since it addresses a pressing literature gap by taking a national perspective rather than concentrating on a single state. Also, very few studies have compared the political engagement of youth

in urban and rural areas, so this is a fresh perspective in this regard. Given this, the findings of this study could prove useful in further understanding the complexities associated with the issue of youth political participation. Consequently, the study has scholarly weight since it adds to the expanding body of research in this area. To theorists, it is important because it provides a concrete illustration of the concepts in use.

## 1.4 Conceptual Clarifications

### Youth

Globally the term "youth" is not defined. However, for the purposes of statistics, the United Nations (2022) defines "youth" as those between the ages of 15 and 24 years old. This definition is established without reference to other definitions adopted by Member States. On the other hand, the African Union Charter (2006) defines youth or young people as anyone aged 15 to 35 while the 2019 Nigeria's National Youth Policy defined youth as people within the ages of 18 and 35 (National Youth Policy, 2019). This study refers to youth as those between 16 and 35.

Youth are a valuable asset to any country because they have an abundance of energy and the passion that is important for the progress of the nation (Clark et al., 2020). As a result of this, it is believed that the youths need to join the political arena of a country as their actions that will determine the progress a country makes.

### Politics

The ancient Greek term polis, meaning "city-state" or "community," is the source of our modern English word "politics" (Leshem, 2016; Ojakangas, 2020). The study of politics examines the mechanisms of government and the exercise of political power (Jessop, 2016; Keping, 2017; Lasswell & Kaplan, 2017). Decision making, as well as

the process of influencing and making a decision, also fall under this broad category. Decisions concerning the distribution of power in a society are made via the political process (Lasswell & Kaplan, 2017). Political candidates employ their views on societal needs as part of their campaigns, with the goal of getting elected and then passing laws that better address those concerns than the public at large could on their

own. Politics has an impact on nations and their citizens everywhere; it's through politics that nations and their populations reach consensus on matters of law and policy, paving the path for more peaceful coexistence (Schlager, 2019; Birkland, 2020). It is through politics that civilizations continue to function, crucial policies are enacted, and global concerns are handled, regardless of whether they embrace a democratic, federal, communist, dictatorial, or republican approach (Lasswell, 2013).

Governments in most countries are created by coalitions of one or more political parties, all of which may have radically different ideologies. Politicians, who seek out positions of employment within political parties, are tasked with using their oratory and charm to win votes and power so that they may implement the ideas they have advocated for (Rossini, Hemsley, Tanupabrungsun, Zhang, & Stromer-Galley, 2018; Sampugnaro & Montemagno, 2021). Politics plays an essential part in the operations and everyday lives of billions of people throughout the world, from managing the welfare of a nation for its services like the running of hospitals and schools, to developing facilities and housing that will benefit the people who inhabit their country.

### **Political Participation**

The term "political participation" refers to any number of volunteer actions carried out by members of the general public with the goal of influencing public policy, either directly or by having an effect on the selection of the individuals who are



responsible for formulating such policies (Lundåsen, 2015; van Deth, 2016; Fayomi & Adebayo, 2018). People are able to form and express their ideas on the world and how it is governed, as well as attempt to take part in and influence the choices that impact their life, via a diverse array of activities that fall under this category of political participation (Skoric & Zhu, 2015; Pickard, 2019; Weiss, 2020). Although it is most commonly associated with taking part in elections, political participation can also include activities such as volunteering for political campaigns, donating money to candidates or causes, making contact with public officials, circulating petitions, participating in demonstrations, and engaging with other people on political issues.

### **Political Communication**

The study of political communication, which is a branch of both communication and political science, focuses on the ways in which information disseminates and has an effect on politics, policy makers, the news media, and people (Suhay & Druckman, 2015; Van Aelst et al., 2017; Robinson, 2019). It is concerned with the generation of ideas and views as well as their interchange among members of the general public, public officials, political institutions, and other associated organisations like as the media. It encompasses discourse at every stage of the political process in local, state, national, and international political systems, as well as the ways in which information and discourse may be used for political advantage or to accomplish political objectives (Van Aelst et al., 2017).

### **Social Media**

The term "social media" refers to a broad category of Internet-based tools that enable users to build and participate in online communities and share and spread content about their shared hobbies, interests, and experiences (Wolf, Sims, Yang, Birkbeck, & Birkbeck, 2018; Duong, 2020). Users interact with social media sites

through the internet and mobile devices such computers, tablets, and smartphones. The value of social media lies in the potential to interact with and share information with almost anybody on the planet, as well as with a large number of individuals all at once (Vromen, Xenos, & Loader, 2015). Over 3.8 billion people are now active on social media platforms all over the globe. Accordingly, every year brings a new social media app, such as TikTok or Clubhouse, to compete with the likes of Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram (Duffy, Pinch, Sannon, & Sawey, 2021).

## 1.5 Dissertation Structure

This chapter has introduced the topic, identified the research questions, and defined the objective and significance of the thesis, all of which are crucial background information for the rest of the study. The remaining parts of the thesis are divided into eight chapters. The political climate of Nigeria is examined in Chapter 2, with all the key ideas and background information provided. Chapter 3 carries out a literature review, highlighting essential works on political communication and youth engagement in politics in Nigeria in various sectors. Chapter 4 further shows how this research would fill in the literary gaps on the subject. Chapter 5 discusses the theoretical framework used to support the validity of this research, explaining why it was chosen over others, while Chapter 6 discusses the methodology used to build the research and why it was chosen. Chapter 7 would detail and analyse the data collected from the young adults through questionnaires. An interpretation of the data collected is done in Chapter 8, which delves into the results, drawing comparisons to previous studies while answering the research questions listed above. Chapter 8 concludes the research, stating its major findings and recommendations for future studies.

## CHAPTER TWO

# CONTEXTUALIZING THE NIGERIAN POLITICAL TERRAIN

## 2.0 Introduction

This chapter sets the scene, offering a glimpse into the political landscape, against which the events of this thesis unfold. This chapter is an essential part of this study because it offers a critical examination of Nigeria's political history, which is necessary to fully grasp the current state of young engagement in Nigerian politics. Besides, considering the role the media plays in developing democracies, the content presented here sheds light on the political background of Nigeria by highlighting the media's function as a means of educating the public and galvanising youth to take an active role in politics.

## 2.1 The Political History of Nigeria

This section will be organised according to the three main periods of Nigeria's political history: before, during, and after colonial rule (pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial rule).

### 2.1.1 Pre-Colonial Era

As the name implies, the pre-colonial era of Nigerian politics covers the period before Nigeria was colonised by Britain. Lord Lugard, a representative of the British government that colonised Nigeria, is credited for legally establishing Nigeria in 1914. However, the "*Niger area*," as it was then known, had been inhabited by people of a wide range of cultural backgrounds long before that (Crowder, 1968; Ikime, 1980;

Falola, 2021b). Even though the *Niger area* lacked formal, centralised governments in the 12th century, Falola (2021b) argues that life in the region may be traced back to that era because of the presence of decentralised groups ruled by individuals in positions of authority.

According to Falola (2021a), power and governance in Africa's precolonial state formations were arranged in networks of relationships and control. The king was usually at the apex, especially in centralised settings. This was true of some of the leadership positions among the *Niger* people prior to colonization. Also, Nigeria today is said to have three "major" tribes: the Igbos, Hausas, and Yorubas, but in precolonial times there were multiple strong colonies with their own chosen leaders. The "*Edos*," the "*Ibiobios*," the "*Tivs*," the "*Nupes*," the "*Kanuris*," the "*Ijaws*," the "*Itsekiris*," and the "*Kalabaris*" all had independent colonies and their own chosen leaders.

Some of the leadership styles were similar but local to its indigenes, and the ruler's authority was limited to their community members alone (Ikime, 1980). Furthermore, Oladiti (2014) explains that before the British rule in Nigeria, leadership was closely linked to religion. At that time, Islam and traditional worship were the main religions, with Nigeria and the decentralised communities led by religious rulers who were believed to be the voice of God to the people (Johnson, 1966; Oladiti, 2014). For instance, the Yorubas, who were found in the south-western part of the Niger area, had a traditional ruler known as "*Oba*," who was the entity designated to seek the face of the gods on behalf of the community (Johnson & Johnson, 1921; Oladiti, 2014). However, in some ways, the "*Babalawo*" (chief priest) was more powerful than the king (A.B. Ellis, 2007). To that end, the "*Oba*" went to the "*Babalawo*" (chief priest) to seek the opinion of the Oracle on how the people should be governed. Judicial issues, land disputes, and all other "civic unrests" were taken to the oracle, and the "*Babalawo*"

gave the final verdict, which the King or Chief enforced (Johnson & Johnson, 1921; A.B. Ellis, 2007). The "*Babalawo*" also served as a system of checks and balances to ensure the King, Chiefs, and all the traditional rulers were fair and just and also had the power to proclaim the oracle's displeasure with any King or Chief, which would require either a penitential sacrifice or the removal (sometimes through commanded suicide) of the King (Biobaku, 1952; A.B. Ellis, 2007; Forde, 2017).

In addition, Oladiti (2014) explains that secret cults like the "*Ogboni*," the "*Osugbo*," the "*Ilari*," the "*Age-grades*," the "*Guilds*," and the "*Ekpe*" were formed as elite groups. These groups served as representatives of the indigenes and chiefs, and eventually the "*Oba*" would be selected from such syndicates. As a result, men aspired to belong to these groups as this gave them some dominance (Johnson & Johnson, 1921; A.B. Ellis, 2007; Oladiti, 2014). Members of these groups were also endowed with authority by the "*Oba*" to enforce rules and regulations in the villages. They could settle trade issues and regulate the costs of goods and services on behalf of the "*Oba*." The women were not left out, as they had their own guilds and cults where they wielded some level of political power (Johnson & Johnson, 1921; A.B. Ellis, 2007; Oladiti, 2014; Forde, 2017). For example, the "*Iyaloja*" (head of the market women) was the primary power seen in the marketplace and had the backing of the *chiefs* and the "*Oba*."

Moving on, the Igbo people, who lived in the south-western part of the country, also had a decentralised form of administration before the arrival of the colonial masters. Falola & Heaton (2008) report that while traditional worship was also the religion of choice of the Igbo man in the 1800s, they were very different from the Yorubas in more ways than one. The languages were very different, hence the gods worshipped had different names, interaction between the two cultures was difficult, and more importantly, they had a different system of leadership. Harneit-Sievers

(1998) believed that of all the settlements and communities in the Niger area before colonization, the Igbo land was the most deconcentrated. They were spread out into more villages and did not have chiefs like the Yoruba and other tribes did (Harneit-Sievers, 1998; 2006). Chuku (2009) holds that Igboland in the 1800s was set up as "kingdoms or mini-states" (p. 83), and each kingdom or mini-state had its own leader.

In the words of Ezenagu (2017, p. 23), "considering this system of governance, most scholars described the traditional Igbo community of pre-colonial Nigeria as having a republican system of government." "This system of government guaranteed the natives a fair say in community affairs through its delegation of power to leaders of social institutions" (Ezenagu, 2017, p. 23). Therefore, to date, there is a saying, "*Igbo Enwe Eze*," meaning "Igbos have no king" (Azuonye, 1991; Okoye & Okoye, 2016; Nwalutu, 2019; Okoli, 2020). The Igbos believed that age rather than religious title was a better character trait needed in an able ruler (Nwalutu, 2019). They believed that the older members of the society had more experience and were better custodians of the culture; hence, they were worthy of serving as the best cultural enforcement agents needed to maintain a balanced community (Harneit-Sievers, 1998; Chuku, 2009; Ezenagu, 2017). In place of a dominant political ruler like a king, the Igbos had several levels of leadership who played important roles in the running of the community (Okoye & Okoye, 2016; Ezenagu, 2017; Nwalutu, 2019).

Accordingly, the highest form of leadership in the pre-colonial Igbo community was the Ndiichie (council of elders) (Azuonye, 1991; Harneit-Sievers, 1998; Okoye & Okoye, 2016; Ezenagu, 2017; Nwalutu, 2019; Okoli, 2020). This council was made up of representatives from each family or clan, usually the oldest person in the family unit or clan. The "Ozo" title holders were next in the hierarchy of leadership. This was the highest title a person could hold in Igbo Land at the time. "Ozo" title holders were

wealthy and seen to be able to communicate with ancestors and dead relatives, and this ability meant they could get more wisdom from the dead, consequently making whoever held the title more trustworthy in the eyes of the people (Nwokporo, Busari, & Orakwe, 2022; Nwalutu, 2019; Okoli, 2020). The chief priests were regarded as the next authority figures in the community. They served as the voice of the gods to the people, upholding morality, working with the "*Ndiiche*" and "*Ozo*" title holders to maintain peace, and ensuring the people kept the rules the gods had laid out. Subsequently, the "*Umunna*" (an organised forum of the male members of the society) were recognised as leaders in the communities and weighed in on decisions being made by the council of elders (Ezenagu, 2017; Nwalutu, 2019; Okoli, 2020).

It is also worth noting that the women were not left out, as the "*Umuada fora*" was said to be a notable political force in Igboland (Ezenagu, 2017; Obasi & Nnamani, 2015). Chuku (2009) explains that the women in pre-colonial Igboland played different political roles. "*Isi Ada*" (the eldest daughter in the family) was the advocate for the other women in the family, attending meetings with the men to protect the needs of the other women in the family unit when decisions are being made (Chuku, 2009; Nwoye, Okafor, & Akpangbo, 2022). The "*Nneomumu*" (mother of the society) was a powerful political figure; so powerful she had her own palace, her insignia and dressed in similar attires as the male "*Ozo*" title holder. She served as a judicial system of government, ruling in cases brought by women to her courts, and her rulings influenced men in the community as well. The "*Umuada*" (the council of first daughters) were very important in the running of the communities. They ensured women obeyed the laid-down rules of the community and were allowed to fine both men and women who disobeyed. Men had to ensure the "*Umuada*" were satisfied before taking a

woman in marriage, and any man who was a terrible husband often faced the wrath and punishment of the "*Umuada*".

Falola & Heaton (2008), after a short examination of Nigeria's history, argued in their book that the colonial centralised system for leadership may be found in the northern region of the Niger area. Known as an empire, "*Kanem-Borno*" had the colonies of Kano, Katsina, Zaria, and Gobir as part of its territory, and they were bound primarily by their combined use of the Hausa language (Bunza, 2005; Falola & Heaton, 2008; Sampson, 2014). Politically, the "*Kanem-Borno*" was led by the "*Mai*" or the "*Sarkin*" (King) (Falola & Heaton, 2008). This prestigious position was handed down from father to son. The Kings also had chiefs who represented the people and protected their interests. Additionally, the Igala region was also part of the northern Niger before colonization (Audu, 2014). They speak Hausa as well and have a similar centralised system of governance. The "*Attah*" (king) was the highest form of leadership among the Igala people, and this title was also hereditary and passed from one man to the next with blood ties in the royal family. "The functions of the king in the traditional Igala pre-colonial political system can be categorised into two dimensions: (i) He was the head of the royal clan, and (ii) He was the head of a centralised system of territorial administration" (Audu, p. 397). Like the Yoruba's, religious and leadership roles were intertwined, as the "*Attah*" was also seen as the human representative of the deity being worshipped by the Igala people and oversaw the spiritual well-being of the people. The hierarchy of leadership was as follows: "*Onu*" (district officers) served as a council of chiefs that advised the "*Attah*"; "*Gago*" (clan heads) worked directly with "*Omadachi*" (village heads) to ensure community peace; and finally, the "*Ochiokolobia*" (youth leader) ensured youth were not a threat to society. Women were



very industrious and contributed to the economic growth in the north through their textile trading (Akyeampong & Fofack, 2014).

Ultimately, while leadership in the Niger area was largely decentralized, it featured various enviable democratic qualities that made the communities run peacefully (Akuul, 2010). Qualities like popular will, participation, consultation, or consensus, checks and balances, representation, accountability, rotation, and decentralization, among others, were found in the precolonial communities (Ibenekwu, 2010; Bradley, 2011; Aiyedun & Ordor, 2016; Wane, Opondo, Alam, Kipkosgei, & Tarus, 2022). While the forms of leadership were not "democratic" according to the British definition, precolonial decentralised societies allowed the people to have and exercise their free will, and the most popular decisions were always followed (Falola & Heaton, 2008; Palagashvili, 2018). The majority of the inhabitants of the society, young and old, participated freely in all activities needed to run the community smoothly. Taking the Igbo society as a microcosm, the youth could participate via age-graded activities. Projects like road construction, clearing market squares, enforcing council orders, fighting wars, etc. by the youth were counted as participatory activities in government (Akuul, 2010). Palagashvili (2018) argues that before colonialism, most leaders were fair and just servant leaders who implemented the desire of the people. However, like democratic rulers, precolonial monarchs and leaders now seldom take decisions without first seeking advice from a council of chiefs who embody the will of the people (Baldwin, 2016).

## 2.1.2 Colonial Era

It is historically reported that colonisation of African countries was birthed at the Berlin Conference of 1884 (Craven, 2015; Florestal, 2007; Denzer, 1994; Falola & Heaton, 2008). It is often said that reducing the slave trade in Africa was a primary

motivation for colonising the continent, and Craven (2015) says that the conference was required to find a strategy to prevent tensions among these nations. This conference consisted of European, American, and Australian leaders who had already begun to "scramble" for colonising African countries (Florestal, 2007).

While it is assumed that colonial rule in Nigeria started in 1914, Makinde, Hassan, & Taiwo (2016) established that the British had started trying to take over leadership in the different parts of the Niger area as early as the 1860s. In agreement, Falola & Heaton (2008), in their book *"A History of Nigeria,"* noted that many details of the colonisation process in Nigeria are often unmentioned. They explain that colonisation of the Niger area took about 40 years in total, and in the 1840s the British had taken an interest in Nigeria with the aim of influencing the mode of leadership and particularly eradicating the slave trade. The Christian missionaries at this point spearheaded this movement, with the aid of some "British political and military resources" (p. 86) for safety. Christianity was then welcomed by some of the traditional rulers who also believed it proffered a less violent means of worship.

Another way the British infiltrated Nigeria in the 1980s was through the provision of education. Many Nigerians at the time were uneducated, and while the British settlers tried to understand the traditions and varied languages, they introduced "formal" education as it provided an easier form of communication and a better flow of trading between them and the Nigerians. By 1861, the British interference in Nigeria included politics. Makinde, Hassan, & Taiwo (2016) elucidate that the administration at this point practised a mode of leadership termed the "indirect rule." This type of governance relied on the traditional rulers to carry out instructions on behalf of the British. Ikime (1968) explains that these chiefs who were employed by the European officials were called "warrant chiefs." While it was easy for some communities and

rulers to accept the indirect rule system, many other communities fought against it for varied reasons. One pertinent reason why the indigenes of communities fought the indirect rule system is that the warrant chiefs were not chosen by the indigenes but imposed upon them by the colonial masters (Ikime, 1968). Furthermore, Nwabughuogu (1981) as well as Falola & Heaton (2008) expound that the British were inherently racist and believed that Nigerian rulers who could not be educated and could not speak English could not hold top leadership positions. Those who were educated like Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, and Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa were made "*indirect rulers*" as the British found it easier to communicate with them. Ironically, it was their education and exposure that afforded the aforementioned "*indirect rulers*" the ability to push for Nigeria's independence after the Second World War and win. To make governance easier, the British rulers merged smaller communities that spoke the same language into larger districts and appointed a leader over them. As a result of having a larger tax base, such leaders were able to earn a higher salary. This way, community leaders did all they could to satisfy the British colonial administrators (Aju, 1976). For example, during the colonial period, the towns of Idofa, Iwoye, and Afon found in the Southwest were all made to report to the "*Onimeko*" of the Meko kingdom as the smaller towns were integrated to become part of Meko.

In 1851, the British consul for the Bights of Benin and Biafra, John Beecroft, was convinced by some missionaries to unseat the then King of Lagos, Kosoko, who was replaced with Akitoye. The main reason for the change and imposition was that Kosoko was confrontational with the missionaries and their ideologies and had not pushed for the end of the slave trade in Lagos. This birthed the indirect rule system (Falola & Heaton, 2008). With Lagos conquered, the British proceeded to push for

indirect rule in Ijebuland, where the King and the people had put up a great fight against British interference. The King refused to meet with the British representatives to consider their suggested trade terms, and in retaliation, the British forces invaded the town and took over. This show of power subdued the other leaders in Yorubaland, who in 1893 denounced their authority, handed over to British indirect rule, and were absorbed into the Protectorate and Colony of Lagos (Falola & Heaton, 2008). After the British had taken over the communities in the West and created the Lagos Colony, Lord Lugard invaded the Sokoto Caliphate. He led some military armed forces in a battle against the caliphate and killed the Caliph (the King) in July 1903, and Sokoto came under British leadership. In Igboland, indirect rule and the British army were met with some resistance, and like other communities, force was used.

Some researchers believe that indirect rule and colonisation destroyed inherent traits of citizens in the Niger area, like cultures, traditions, and religions, and the aftereffects still linger (Ejeh, 2020). For example, some hold that this use of force and constant conflict was new to the Niger area and introduced by the British, damaging the concept of peaceful leadership the people were used to (Wole-Abu, 2018). In the words of Falola and Heaton (2008, p. 107),

“A point must be made here on the role of violence in the British colonial takeover of Nigeria. The use or threat of violence on the part of the British must be seen as the single most important factor allowing them to assume political control over the territories that made up the various protectorates of Nigeria. To refuse to play by British rules was to sign one’s own death or deportation warrant. British military might, in the form of the Royal Navy, cannons, and machine guns, and the willingness of the British to use military means to protect the interests of the

United Kingdom and her allies made the British a desirable ally for many indigenous rulers against local rivals”.

In addition, Palagashvili (2018) believed that while pre-colonial leaders and chiefs were very interested in fulfilling the needs of their people, colonisation took that away. The warrant chiefs were made to be pawns who only danced to the tune of the colonial masters at the risk of their own people. The main incentive the chiefs received from the colonial masters was salaries. The more loyal a chief was to the colonial master, the more they advanced in their political position and the more salaries they received (Crowder, 1968). Under colonial rule, the chiefs were mainly tasked with collecting taxes and ensuring the people obeyed the rules and regulations laid down by the colonizers. The reward for carrying out this task differed by location. In Ekiti, the Oba earned about 60 pounds per annum, while in the Southwest, the King earned about 100 pounds per annum, and this was calculated as a percentage of all the tax the King collected from his subjects (Akintoye, 1970). Palagashvili (2018) argues that because the chiefs were no longer directly dependent on the people for their source of income during the British indirect rule but got paid salaries by the British coordinators, it became easier to ignore the people's needs and focus only on the directives from the colonial masters. Similarly, the lack of healthy competition among the chiefs (the kind of competition available during pre-colonial times saw the chiefs wanting to outdo each other in pleasing the people because the people were essential to ensuring their continued reign) encouraged a lack of accountability among these new rulers. This then bred corruption, as chiefs would falsify the amount of tax paid to gain higher salaries. Besides, some chiefs protested to the British rulers, but they were ignored (Asiwaju, 1970).

In the words of Palagashvili (2018), "British officers and residents often reported significant instances of extortion on the part of the chiefs, but all agreed to ignore it so long as it did not cause mass violence or attempted takeovers" (p. 295). In agreement and with the theory that indirect rule sabotaged governance in Nigeria, Van Allen (1972, p. 165) claimed that "British colonial officers and missionaries, both men and women, generally failed to see the political roles and the political power of Igbo women." The actions of administrators weakened and, in some cases, destroyed women's base of strength. "Since they did not appreciate women's political institutions, they made no efforts to ensure women's participation in the modern institutions they were trying to foster" (p. 166). According to Wole-Abu (2018), one of the British's fundamental beliefs was that males were superior to females, which influenced how they inadvertently passed on this mindset to Nigerians during colonial rule. He argues that the BBC's silence on female voices at the time contributed to the view that women were subordinate to males.

On the contrary, some researchers like Denzer (1994) hold that without colonisation, Christianity and education may have never come to Nigeria, and these two have been strong additions to the development of the country. Denzer further claims that under colonial rule women were more respected and valued, with women's rights being fought for, and that though they did not hold political positions, women were essential to the economic growth of the country. While they were previously confined to the marketplace, farm, or kitchen, women were allowed to pursue education and engage in white-collar jobs during colonial rule. Similarly, social concerns like child marriage, forced marriage, and slavery, which always harmed women more than men, were also banned.

According to Falola (2021), "the 1914 amalgamation of the territory later known as Nigeria would be marked by two practises that characterised the British administration." "One was autocracy, in which power was taken from the people and given to a select few who were only accountable to their masters in London and the other was exploitation, in which the government transferred resources from Nigeria to Europe" (p. 249). The name Nigeria was coined by Flora Shaw, wife of Lord Lugard, who amalgamated the northern and southern protectorates of the Niger area. "In his speech, Lugard argued that the key reason for the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Nigerian Protectorates with the Lagos Colony was to provide a unified railway policy" (Bourne 2015, p.3). In agreement, Falola & Heaton (2008) state that the major reason for the creation of Nigeria was economic. They claimed that the Northern Protectorate struggled with finances and that no matter what efforts were made; the protectorate was unable to financially provide for itself under indirect rule. While some textile commerce took place, it was not enough to meet the demands of the people living there, and the area as a whole was unable to provide a sustainable income for its residents. "To finance itself, the northern protectorate relied on annual subsidies from southern Nigeria and an imperial grant-in-aid from the British government to the tune of approximately £300,000 per year." (p.117). The British authorities and Lord Lugard felt that by merging the Northern and Southern protectorates, they might reduce costs for both territories, share in the money provided by the other regions fairly, and increase trade between the two. It is also worth noting that by drawing together different ethnic groups into an artificial creation (i.e. Nigeria as a unified country), the British were pursuing their long-standing imperialist policy of divide-and-rule (i.e. encouraging tensions between different ethnic groups so that Africans do not direct their anger at the colonial authorities). This has arguably permeated the post-

colonial period and has been exploited by Nigeria political elite (i.e. setting the mainly Muslim North against the Westerners, Easterners and Southerners).

Furthermore, though the Northern and Southern Protectorates had been merged to become one country, indirect rule remained, and Nigeria was still colonised by British representatives. Lord Lugard was succeeded by Hugh Clifford in 1919. Clifford was opposed to the indirect rule and believed Nigeria would run better with the introduction of local authorities and a legislative council. Among the many reforms credited to the Clifford administration, the establishment of Governors with decision-making authority over their respective states and the adoption of the electoral concept in Nigeria in 1923 are particularly lauded (Cookey, 1980).

### 2.1.3 Post-Colonial Era

Nigeria is described as a country currently in its fourth republic with a very rich political history (Promise, 2021). The discussion of Nigerian politics in the post-colonial era begins with nationalism. Chukwu (2000 p. 114) defines nationalism as "a patriotic feeling that brings oppressed but related people together to demand their independence." "It is often found rooted in and promoted by the presence of another superior power." Many Nigerians, both before and during the colonial period, were wary of the leadership of the British and wanted to be free to practise their religion and way of life without external interference, but most were fighting on tribal levels. Nigeria's nationalism movement emerged as a result of colonialism and rising levels of knowledge among the country's populace, both of which galvanised opposition to British rule (Olasupo, Oladeji, & Ijeoma, 2017).

Ajayi (1961) explains that there were two forms of nationalism in Nigeria: traditional and modern. Traditional nationalism explains the opposition to colonialists from the aboriginal Nigerians, while modern nationalism covers all the activities that



transpired with the aim of making Nigeria an independent nation. According to Ubaku, Emeh, & Anyikwa (2014), the initial advocates for the nationalist movement in Nigeria were interested in changing the political and economic structure of the country. They explain that both internal and external factors were involved in making nationalism spread through the nation. "Some of the internal factors therefore include the early resistance struggles, the activities of the press, the colonial policies and elite discontent, and the economic depression during this period" (Ubaku, Emeh, & Anyikwa, 2014, p. 58). Nigerians who studied abroad and saw how other countries got their independence—the Garvey movement—and soldiers who saw other countries fight for their freedom during World War II were all outside forces that helped start the nationalist movement in Nigeria.

Ubaku, Emeh, & Anyikwa (2014) narrate that the Nationalist movement in Nigeria was impactful in gaining Nigeria's independence in many ways: the creation of political parties, encouraging more Nigerians to be aware of the politics in the country using the media, and the rise of political organisations and professional unions to demand rights for the workforce like equal treatment and payment between the British and the Nigerian workforce. One of such organisations was the Zikist movement, championed by a young man named Nnamdi Azikiwe, and the major demand of this group was the reform of the Richards Constitution. The movement used riots, strikes, and tax boycotts to gain the attention of the colonisers and obtain the reform they desired. In 1951, their efforts produced some level of change, and the McPherson Constitution was created. This constitution allowed Nigerians to have more political power, which led to the creation of more political parties and allowed more regions to contest for power. This constitution was reviewed in 1954 and again in 1957, every time handing over more authority to Nigerian indigenes. 1958 saw fundamental human

rights being added to the Nigerian constitution, and this was allegedly a means to ensure the minority groups in Nigeria were well represented. In 1959, the House of Representatives, the legislative branch, the senate, and the local level of government were all defined. After this, it was decided and approved in January 1960 that Nigeria would become independent from the United Kingdom on October 1, 1960, as the Federal House of Representatives had asked in a petition to the British Crown.

Falola & Heaton (2008) revealed that while the nationalists were successful in gaining independence from British rule, the new country faced foundational problems. They elucidate that though the British succeeded in dividing the multi-tribal Nigeria into three main geopolitical zones—North, East, and West—these zones had smaller ethnic groups that felt maligned and subdued in the distribution of power and leadership, and this posed a great challenge for the new country. In p. 159, they opine that "as a result, when Nigeria became an independent sovereign state in 1960, in many ways it was a state without a nation." Leaders tried to bring together all the different ethnic groups through the arts, literature, cultural displays, speeches, etc., but this didn't work, and in 1967, the country had some coups that led to a civil war, also called the Biafran war.

The Biafran War was between two parties: The Federal Government of Nigeria, which was fighting for the country to remain united, and the Igbos, who were fighting to become independent from Nigeria. Nigeria was led at the time by General Yakubu Gowon. Led by Lt. Colonel General Ojukwu, the Biafrans believed the political, economic, and cultural interests of the Igbo people were not being considered, as public-service jobs were unevenly distributed in favour of Northerners and power was being selfishly held by one geopolitical zone—Northern Nigeria. The Biafrans also alleged that there was Igbophobia evident in the way an Igbo person was treated by

an average Northerner. The war raged for about two and a half years, from July 1967 to January 1970, and ended with the Biafran ruler conceding defeat. During this time, the United Kingdom supported the Nigerian army (Chukwu, 2000; Ayatse and Akuva, 2013; Doron, 2014).

Wuam (2012) records that the constant rotation of leadership and power to the west and north gave credence to Biafra's allegations that there was prejudice against the Igbo. Of particular concern was the fact that these leaders were barely educated because, when Nigeria got independent in 1960, the North had lower levels of education than other regions because they were opposed to Western education and religion. This was important, especially because Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, an educated Igbo man, was one of the main people who helped Nigeria get its independence.

Mustapha (1986) writes that after the Biafran war, there was a general fear that the nationalist spirit that bound Nigeria as one country was lost. He argues that the end of the civil war may have shown that even though all the tribes and regions were "one" under the political umbrella of the country "Nigeria," there remained the lack of genuine nationalism, as tribalism was evident, and each region was more interested in fighting for its own growth than the development of the whole country.

Nigeria, plunged into military rule soon after the end of the civil war, became a republic in 1963, giving the Nigerian Military President full control over the country rather than the Queen of Britain. On the 29th of May 1999, Nigeria finally became free from the military leadership and has run a democratic system of governance since then (Ikime, 1980).

While Nigeria has been a democratic country since 1999, there have been recurrent reports of civil unrest, corruption, poverty, and underdevelopment, to name a few (Posibi, 2021). Falola & Heaton (2008) believe that many of the issues affecting

Nigerian politics today, for example, corruption, thuggery, and bullying, have been evident in the Nigerian political system since the first republic. Some authors even argue that women are underrepresented. Oloyede (2015) writes that the idea of women in politics in Nigeria has never returned to its pre-colonial state, where women were nearly as involved as men. Nigeria has never recovered from the post-colonial era, which saw the rise of women in politics. In 1960, Nigeria gained its first female member of the Federal Parliament, representing the West: Mrs. Wuraola Esan. The next year, Chief (Mrs.) Margaret Ekpo from the eastern part of Nigeria became a member of the House of Assembly. The number of women in politics grew in the second republic, mainly at the House of Representatives and state house assembly levels; two women were appointed Federal Ministers, and one woman emerged as a Permanent Secretary. Between 1979 and 1983, more women were appointed as commissioners; some women contested and won elections at the local government levels; and Ms. Franca Afebgua was the only woman elected to the Senate. From the years of military rule until now, there has been a dwindling and uneven number of women represented in politics.

According to Iroanusi (2000), the major problem plaguing Nigeria and promoting political unrest and economic retrogression is regionalism—the same cause of the civil war. He claims Nigeria, with its many regions and large population, struggles with having a united agreement on how the country and its various regions should be run. In accord, Ayatse & Akuva (2013) reveal that regionalism has even affected the creation of political parties in Nigeria since 1960 and continues to the present day. As early as 1959, political parties were created according to regions. For example, the Action Group (AG) created by Awolowo, a Yoruba man, mainly fought for the interests of the indigenes of Yorubaland and was known as the Yoruba Political Party. By 1979,

the North had established three political parties: The National Party of Nigeria (NPN), led by Shehu Shagari; the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), led by Aminu Kanu; and the Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP), led by Waziri Ibrahim. The Igbos, not to be left out, had their own political party, the Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP), headed by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe.

Jinadu (2011) asserts that “in order to de-emphasize the dysfunctional or centrifugal salience of ethnicity in party politics, based on the experience of the First Republic, military-brokered transitions in the country in 1975-1979 and 1985-1999 tried to proscribe or discourage the formation of ethnic-based parties” (p. 4). They tried to establish political organisations with a national outlook by imposing a number of structural or organisational conditions that political groups seeking recognition and registration as political parties would have to meet. According to Krawatzek (2022), the presence of structural variables, including political, economic, and cultural contexts, establishes a framework within which young individuals are required to navigate. The author emphasised that these elements vary in their origins and the degree to which they are relevant for all individuals within the younger generation. Hence, the political climate would improve, allowing for free and fair elections and reducing the electoral violence that plagued the nation between 1962 and 1965. “Other structural reforms of the post-military party system were intended to (i) facilitate internal democracy within the political parties, through requirements like party conventions and party nomination primaries, and the establishment of a party bureaucracy, involving a distinction between career politicians and party technocrats; (ii) engendering a new political culture through encouraging and nurturing the emergence of a “new-breed” of politicians, with a more positive and system-supporting orientation to politics; and (iii) emphasize issues-based or ideological differentiae, to

distinguish one party from the other, and to de-emphasize the personalization of party politics” (Jinadu, 2011, p. 4). Following this, Nigeria established the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in 1999, which is essentially in charge of managing elections and controlling the country's permissible number of political parties. If a political party is found to be in violation of the Constitution, the commission may decide to deregister it.

To that end, political parties were restructured in Nigeria, with most new parties emerging through mergers and the old ones being eliminated or losing support. For instance, SDP was formed in 1989 as a merger of PSP (People's Solidarity Party), PFN (People's Front of Nigeria), and NLP (Nigerian Labor Party). APC was formed in 2013 as a merger of CPC (Congress for Progressive Change), ANPP (All Nigeria Peoples Party), and ACN (Action Congress of Nigeria) political parties. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC) are largely regarded as the two most important political parties in Nigeria today. This is often determined by looking at how many seats each party has in the National Assembly and, more crucially, who sits at the helm of those parties.

In Nigeria, the number of women elected to public office did not rise following the 2019 election, and in fact, saw a fall compared to women's earlier appearances (Ugwu & Okoye, 2022). With President Muhammadu Buhari running for the All Progressives Congress and Atiku Abubakar running for the People's Democratic Party, the two largest parties in the country were once again at the centre of the competition. President Muhammadu Buhari was sworn in for a second term after what some may perceive to have been an election that was not free and fair. This demonstrates that despite extensive military reforms, the effects were temporary and appear to have subsided. As such, many are wondering whether Nigeria should stick

with the presidential system, return to the parliamentary system, or embrace a hybrid of the two.

Some argue that the parliamentary system is the most suitable for Nigeria because it reduces administrative costs, fosters democratic growth and accountability, and encourages collaboration between the legislature and the executive branch (Blindenbacher, 2006). On the other hand, proponents of the presidential system argue that the parliamentary system was attempted for six years after independence and failed, while the presidential system has been in place for over ten years and should be maintained (Blindenbacher, 2006). Hence, it's undeniable that Nigeria's experiment with federalism is at a crossroads right now (Adamolekun, 2005). There is a noticeable lack of stability in the government, political parties, and the federal system.

Among the most pressing political concerns in Nigeria today are those related to youth engagement and the role of the media in the country's political process (both of which are addressed in Chapter one). The influence of the political regime on the extent of political agency and daily lived experiences is a crucial factor to consider. However, to fully understand the impact of the regime on young individuals, it is necessary to take into account the cultural milieu and economic circumstances they encounter (Krawatzek, 2022). Moreso, Rottach et al. (2022) highlight the significance of assessing democratic ideals and the extent of engagement among young individuals as vital rudiments in evidence-based policymaking within the European context. As a result, a considerable body of research has been undertaken to investigate the statistical correlations between youth engagement, democracy, and the demographics of young individuals. There seems to be a decline in the number of young Nigerians who participated in and led the nationalist movement, fought for

independence for their country, and ultimately won that freedom. Several studies have focused on this fascinating topic, and they all appear to agree that youth's diminished attention spans can be traced back to their increased use of social media, the internet, and other forms of technology (Adelabu, 2010; Dagona, Karick, & Abubakar, 2013; Okoro & Nwafor, 2013; Oyesomi, Ahmadu, & Itsekor, 2014; Olabamiji 2014; Dele, 2016; Ufuophu-Biri, 2020; Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020). This premise would also be investigated in this research to get a better understanding of how and why youth make use of social media to participate in political processes.

## 2.2 Development of Nigeria's Political Media systems

The media industry is said to have taken off with the invention of the printing press in 1439. The printing press led to the creation of books, pamphlets, and then newspapers, which rapidly became a platform for political communication (Mutsvairo & Ekeanyanwu, 2021). Rev. Hope Waddell, leader of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland Mission in Calabar, is credited with the first use of the printing press in Nigeria when he opened a printing press on the church premises in 1846 to help produce literary material to help its members deepen their faith and encourage them to get educated (Elebute, 2014). A few years later, in 1859, Reverend Henry Townsend of the Christian Missionary Society (CMS) in Abeokuta created a printing press along with a printing press school and the first Nigerian newspaper called "*Iwe Irohin*" (Omu, 1967; Mutsvairo & Ekeanyanwu, 2021; Àkángbè, 2020). However, the discovery of an isiXhosa newspaper, "*Umshumayeli Wendaba*," which began publication in 1837, casts doubt on the idea that "*Iwe Irohin*" was the first newspaper published in Africa (Salawu, 2015). Furthermore, "*Iwe Irohin*" was preceded by two other Xhosa-language publications besides "Umshumayeli." Two of them were published in Africa between



1844 and 1850, and they were titled "*Ikwezi*" and "*Isitunywa sennyanga*," respectively (Salawu, 2015).

In the struggle for Nigeria's independence, the role of the media has consistently been pivotal throughout the whole discord. Politicians from the first generation considered media ownership crucial to advancing their careers and agendas. Newspapers like *The West African Pilot*, *Nigerian Tribune*, *The Daily Star*, and *The African Messengers* were founded by early politicians like Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Chief Anthony Enahoro, and Mr. Ernest Sesei Ikoli to bring their personalities and interests to light, criticise the British administration, and raise awareness for an independent, sovereign country (Falola & Heaton, 2008). This demonstrates, in essence, that early political leaders understood the crucial role that the media would play in political communication, the dissemination of information, the promotion of ideas, and the mobilisation of voters.

Finally, Nigerians were now under the three-way sway of print, television, and radio. The print generally catered to aristocratic audiences, including the educated upper class with a strong preference for attractive English, politicians, power brokers, and leaders of the business sector (Barber, 2018). The radio, on the other hand, was mostly listened to by the opposite demographic: illiterate people who, thanks to the invention of the portable, battery-operated transistor, were suddenly privy to news not just in their immediate vicinity but also, on occasion, from across the globe (Lee, 2005; Abubakar, 2011). TV, like radio, attracts listeners from all walks of life, but because it relies on electricity, which has historically been a major issue in Nigeria, regular access to TV depends on one's social standing and capacity to provide their own power (Falola & Heaton, 2008). Print, radio, and television therefore had a good amount of

sway over the Nigerian media landscape until the turn of the century, when the rise of the Internet started to have a noticeable effect on journalistic practices.

In this regard, we may point to the establishment of Sahara Reporters, one of the first internet news organisations. Eventually, news would be delivered digitally and on-the-go through portable electronic devices like smartphones, tablets, and desktop and laptop computers. The 24-hour news cycle and the widespread use of social media as a platform for gathering, presenting, and spreading news (Rosenberg & Feldman, 2009; Newman, 2011) made these innovations important parts of the news industry. Journalism as a profession had been transformed, and the dynamics of the media had been upended.

During the next decade, print newspapers, once the backbone of Nigerian journalism, saw a significant decline in readership. The decline of newspapers and the declining importance of newsprint led to a decrease in newsrooms as publishers realised they needed to rethink their business models to survive (Agboola, 2014; Ita, Ekanyanwu, & Aniebo, 2016; Ekeanyanwu, Batta, & Oyokunyi, 2017). To compete with newer digital news outlets, traditional newspapers began to shift their focus online. However, this was more than simply a newspaper craze. As traditional newspapers launched online editions, so did digital media. Radio and television networks would quickly realise they would fail without an internet presence. Even now, the Internet remains the nerve centre of Nigerian journalism, with all other mediums—print, radio, and television—drawing inspiration from its immense resources and large audience. The internet may be the lifeblood of Nigerian journalism, but politics was still found to be the king in the country's print, broadcast, and digital news outlets. The Nation, a leading daily, was established in 2006 by the politician Bola Tinubu. Orji Uzor Kalu, who became Governor of Abia State in 2001, also launched a prominent

newspaper, The Sun, in 2001. In 2014, a year before the 2015 presidential election, Kalu created a sister daily called The New Telegraph.

In any case, politicians still understood the importance of the media for political communication. However, this often led the media, which is supposed to keep an eye on the government, occasionally find itself on the receiving end of surveillance instead. They turned from "watch dog" to "watched dog" (Casero-Ripollés, Izquierdo-Castillo, & Doménech-Fabregat, 2014; Jamali, Shoukat, & Mahesar, 2021). As a result, the public no longer trusts what they read in the media and must filter the news to find the actual story among all the fluff (de Vreese, 2005; Chong & Druckman, 2007; Coleman, Anthony, & Morrison, 2009). In the history of the media, state interference has always been excessive. Media outlets were closed at the whim and fancy of the state during the military rule, and many journalists were arbitrarily imprisoned and thrown in jail (Olukotun, 2004). For instance, on two separate days in 2014, the Army, under the directives of President Goodluck Jonathan, seized and, in some cases, destroyed thousands of copies of several newspapers, including the Daily Trust, Leadership, The Nation, and Punch, on the grounds that they had gotten word that materials with grave security implications were to be distributed alongside the newspapers (Tukur, 2014; Nkanga, 2014). This and other events have caused many to doubt the effectiveness of modern political communication in Nigeria.

## 2.3 Political Communication in Nigeria

Earlier studies on political communication, like many other fields, failed to include the African viewpoint since they were primarily concerned with interpreting and illustrating the concept through the lens of the United States and Europe. Nonetheless, it is believed that this is because the American political system is regarded as the most developed, setting the standard for other countries to follow (Esser & Pfetsch,

2004; Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Next, it's important to note that, purportedly, studying African political communication is difficult. Published scholarly works on African political communication (Nnaemeka, 1990; Olukotun & Omotoso, 2017; Mutsvairo & Karam, 2019; Obeng & Debrah, 2019; Karam & Mutsvairo, 2021) swiftly shows the Eurocentric nature of the subject. Nnaemeka (1990) argues that the military and government involvement in media ownership via excessive media control and the wide cultural variation across African nations are the two main reasons why understanding African political communication is difficult.

Furthermore, Ndlela & Mano (2020) argued that in the 1970s and 1980s, most African media was owned by the government, limiting freedom of information and political communication. It's easy to see how this contributes to the trend of "*personalization of politics*" a term used to describe the growing presence of politicians on social media showcasing their personal traits, family, and more private content, with the desire to humanise themselves before their citizens and garner more political followership and votes (Enli & Skogerb, 2013). This culture has rapidly spread to African countries, e.g., Nigeria, and is evident as the President of Nigeria, Muhammad Buhari, has an active social media presence, filtered with posts about his family (Facebook, n.d.). This "*personalization*" has even developed to the point where the media cannot criticise the ruling party (Mutsvairo & Karam, 2019, Karam & Mutsvairo, 2021).

With the dawn of the 90s and the new century, media ownership was relaxed, and with them came more forms of political communication: "one-to-many" communications, augmented with oral forms of communication, door-to-door canvassing, poster advertising, mass rallies, as well as a few news media outlets, with limited distribution beyond urban centres and limited access to those wishing to reach

audiences" (p. 1). Today, technology use is penetrating the African continent, as with the rest of the world. No wonder, Nnaemeka (1990) believed that technologically and ideologically, westernisation was taking over indigenous African systems. In fact, De Bruijn, Nyamnjoh, & Brinkman (2009, p. 3) referred to mobile phones and social media as "the new talking drums of everyday Africa."

Today, this is an important issue in modern society, and the truth may be that younger generations are more versed in this reality. Citizens who were previously news consumers have become news and content creators and now have access to a vast repository of media and a global audience (Mano & Meribe, 2017; Lubinga & Baloyi, 2019; Aina, Atela, et al., 2019; Theocharis & Jungherr, 2021). With the Nigerian government's current propensity for neglecting its citizens' concerns, youth are increasingly turning to other forms of political engagement, such as the media, to voice their opinions and interests, just like our previous leaders did. Political communication on social media now can take the form of texts shared in groups, posts with comments underneath that can be reposted or retweeted, or jokes and memes. As seen in American and Nigerian elections, these jokes and memes spread widely, and it becomes very difficult to stop their circulation (Cullum, 2010).

According to Cullum (2010), the rapid dissemination of political messages through mobile phones and social media is a major selling point for their usage in activism and political communication. However, Mutsvairo & Karam (2019) explain, that different African political leaders respond in different ways to the technological revolution brought using the internet in political discourse, and that some resort to threats of death, violence, and jail time to stifle political communication. Also, while the use of social media has undoubtedly increased political communication and public involvement, one major concern is that this has come at the expense of the integrity

of the democratic process. It has "given rise to more potent forms of fake news, information distortions, and below-the-belt campaigning methods that are undermining electoral democracy in Africa" (Ndlela & Mano, 2020, p. 9). In fact, Onyechi (2018) asserted that the use of social media in political communication in Nigeria during the 2015 political campaign was riddled with character assassinations, violence, and hate speech.

Beckett (2017) argues that though fake news is not a new sensation in news reportage and the dissemination of information, it has now become rampant as even politicians use this medium to discredit opposing parties and political opponents in a bid to gather more votes. Beckett holds that fake news has become more popular via the use of ICTs, as news can now be published by unchecked bodies or individuals who can say the wrong things at will. In agreement, Morozov (2017, p. 1) alludes to this fact, stating that fake news sells because "digital capitalism makes it profitable to produce false but click-worthy stories."

To avert such events, Okigbo & Onoja (2017) argue that in the current political landscape, strategic political communication is necessary. They define strategic communication as the "purposeful selection, packaging, and distribution of particular information to achieve predetermined objectives" (p. 65) making it a potential cure for the rise and spread of fake news. Also, in combating the spread of fake news, political parties, political players, and politicians should utilise social media in conveying information to the public through "*verified*" pages (Popa, Fazekas, Braun, & Leidecker-Sandmann, 2020).

## 2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided some background information and given a brief overview of the political situation in Nigeria. It provided a critical analysis of Nigeria's

political history, which is essential to have a complete understanding of the present status of youth's participation in Nigerian politics. This also helps set the record straight on some of the mysteries and controversies surrounding Nigerian politics. It also gives light on the political backdrop of Nigeria by stressing the role of the media as a means of political communication. The following chapter will provide a detailed analysis of youth so that we may get a sense of their political and social status.

## CHAPTER THREE

# NIGERIAN YOUTHS IN CONTEXT

### 3.0 Introduction

An introduction to the political lives, actions, and roles of young Nigerians is provided in this chapter. To properly understand the present situation of youthful involvement in Nigerian politics, a critical evaluation of the Nigerian youth is offered in this chapter. Moreover, the information supplied here provides insight into the political background of young by emphasising the function and common activities they participate in as political citizens, which is particularly important given the role youth plays in strengthening democracies.

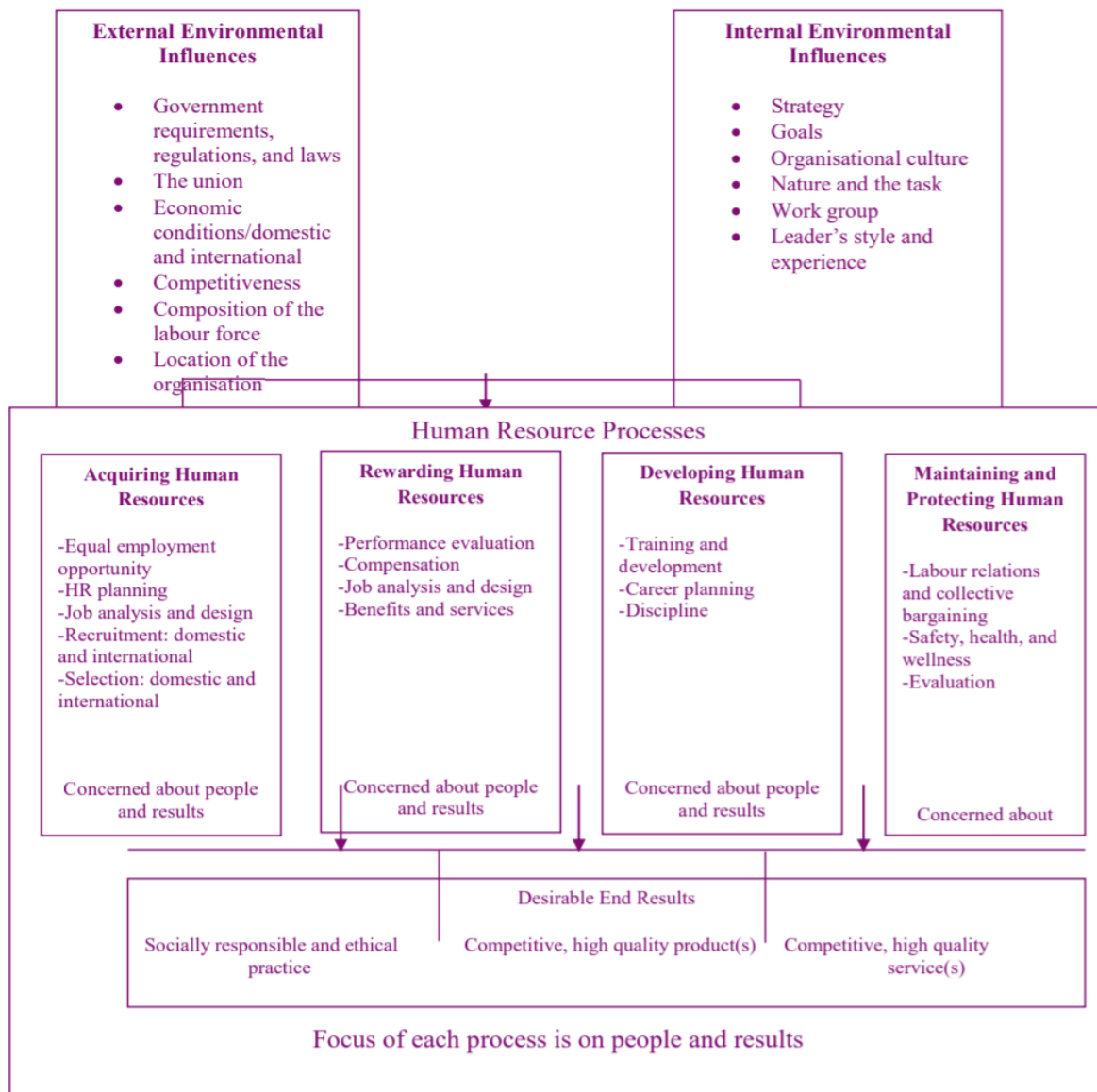
### 3.1 Nigerian Youth, Unemployment and Nation-Building

Hoeft and Veenendaal (2019) defined the concept of nation-building as "a domestic process in which political elites (or state agents) attempt to overcome pre-existing cultural, ethnic, linguistic, or religious divisions in order to forge a national identity" (p. 173). Their paper shows that the process of achieving nation-building in countries like Suriname that are multiethnic and were previously colonised is more demanding than in other countries. They claim this is because the colonizers, in their bid to take overpower, created divisions between the various ethnic, cultural, and even religious groups through "divide-and-rule policies" (p. 185), turning them against one another, and this lack of trust has been passed on from one generation to another, affecting the youth of today.



Similarly, Oyewole and Adegoke (2018) opine that the term "nation building," though commonly used, has been difficult to define. They claim this is because nation-building entails different facets. They define nation-building as "the intervention in the affairs of a nation-state for the purpose of changing the state's method of government" (p. 25). Oyewole and Adegoke (2018) compare nation-building to building a house, highlighting that, just as different components and materials are needed in building a house, so are different components needed in ensuring nation-building. They classify the components needed in nation-building into two categories: material and human, and the Nigerian youth are an indispensable part of the human capital needed in building the nation. Their article reveals that human capital development is a huge part of national building and includes equal employment opportunities, job creation, training and development, safety, health, and wellness, with the ability to provide a solid bedrock for national development to be built on. Figure 4 below shows the framework of the human resource development process postulated by Oyewole and Adegoke (2018). They conclude that the process of nation-building is a continuous one, and for Nigeria, it should involve peace consolidation efforts, respect for local communities and their ownership, and creating better living standards, especially for the youth, among others.

**Figure 1- Oyewole and Adegoke's (2018) framework of human resource development process.**



Okafor (2011) wondered why African countries with similar histories to Nigeria, including some that gained independence later than Nigeria did, like South Africa and Egypt, have recorded more progress in nation-building. He writes that his research

reports that the reduced unemployment rates in these countries could be the difference. Furthermore, socio-economic status has been known to create a divide amongst humans generally, and this is evident in Nigerian society. This divide makes nation-building difficult. One of the consequences of poverty and belonging to the lower socioeconomic spectrum is that some of these people become easy targets for criminal activities, sometimes working for politicians, making Nigeria unsafe and investors uninterested in working in Nigeria (Okafor, 2011).

It is evident from the above that for Nigeria to achieve success in any nation-building venture, the unemployment rates need to be driven down, and at the moment they are higher than usual. Meanwhile, researchers such as Edosa (2017), Kakwagh and Ikwuba (2010), Abdullahi, Abdullah, and Mohammed (2013), Obumneke (2012), Eme (2015), Lasisi and Suluka (2018), and Ezeogidi, Okezie, and Okezie (2021), among others, have conducted research and written papers on the importance of youth involvement in Nigerian development, and the consensus remains that poverty and unemployment among youths must be eliminated.

The present youth unemployment crisis in Nigeria may be traced back to the country's economic growth policies and results since independence in 1960 (Essien et al., 2016; Ekong & Ekong, 2016; Ajibola, 2016; Okolie & Igbini, 2020). In fact, the structure of unemployment and the status of unemployed people saw extremely substantial changes between the years 1960 and 2000. In the 1960s and 1980s, the bulk of the country's educated jobless were secondary school dropouts (Akran, 2018; Adam, Garba, Ibrahim, & Abba, 2021). In the 1990s and 2000s, University graduates who were once certain of getting employed after finishing their degree also got affected. In particular, the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) implemented in 1986, led to deterioration of the situation even further, impacting not just the

unemployed and underemployed but also the rural and urban informal sectors, leading to cutbacks in both the public and commercial sectors (Surajo, Aminu Zubairu & Karim, 2016; Usoro, Udongwo, & Ebong, 2021).

To help speed up job creation, lower the country's high unemployment rate, and provide full, productive, and freely chosen work for everybody, the Nigerian government reached out to the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1995 for guidance in creating a national employment strategy (Surajo, Aminu Zubairu & Karim, 2016). A national workshop on national employment policy was held in Abuja in 1998, bringing together politicians, economists, social partners, and other stakeholders to explore the sufficiency and efficacy of the national employment policy framework in lowering unemployment and poverty in Nigeria. Despite all of these efforts, unemployment and underemployment continue to be the most significant obstacles to the growth of the country. As a result, these obstacles have implications that manifest in the economic well-being, social stability, and personal dignity of the people.

For a long time, Nigeria's shaky economy has been a major contributor to the country's already high unemployment rate. In Nigeria, 73 million youths are unemployed (Rapheal, 2022). Youth unemployment rate in Nigeria is estimated to reach 33% (Sasu, 2022). Babatunde (2014) asserts that in 2001, over 70.1% of Nigerians were living on less than one US dollar per day, and that by 2010, over 90% of Nigerians were living on less than two US dollars per day. Like the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, Nigerian youths are poor. In fact, many youths, both in rural and urban regions, are experiencing financial hardship. Under these conditions, authors like Cairns, de Almeida Alves, Alexandre, & Correia (2016) assert that youth would lose interest in politics. Youths who must do several jobs to make ends meet have no spare time to put into a political system that has failed to improve their lives.

## 3.2 Nigerian Youth and Violence

Nolte (2004), in his research, demonstrated that an increase in violent activities in Nigeria, and youths seem to be at the heart of violent events, particularly during elections. Nolte believes that the country's economic imbalance is to blame for the unrest and increased violence, which are instigated by politicians who provide financial incentives to youths for them to cause unrest. In agreement, Rotimi (2020) revealed that, though the increased violence is manifested majorly by the Nigerian youth, it is spearheaded, funded, and encouraged by political parties. In Nigeria today, it seems that politics is synonymous with violence (Ikyase, Johnkennedy, Egberi, & Ejue, 2015; Angerbrandt, 2018; Rotimi 2020; Igwe & Amadi, 2021). Rotimi further expounds that the political terrain in Nigeria has always been laced with violence because it is believed that politics is the quick way to make wealth in the country. The drive for financial gain at the expense of the citizens of the country drives politicians to do everything to maintain ruling power to be able to syphon funds, making them able to offer financial incentives to youth. Youths who are unemployed are then hired by politicians to become political thugs to champion "pre-election, election, and post-election violence" (p. 74). These acts of violence have been delivered in various forms—robbery, assaults, gang, and party clashes, burning polling units, ballot snatching, kidnapping, and acts of terrorism, among others.

In a bid to offer a solution to the rise of violent activities in Northern Nigeria, the book *"Youth Peace Building in Northern Nigeria"* (eds. Armiya'u & Kwaja, 2020) was written. This book was written because of their work with youth organisations to serve as a wake-up call about how youth are used as pawns in a political game because of their "energy, passion, and resourcefulness" (p. vi). The contributors and editors believe that if the Nigerian youths, particularly the Northern youths, come together,

they can become "veritable agents of peacebuilding and countering violent extremism" (p. vi).

Specifically, Kwaja and Owonikoko (2020), in their contribution to the book, argued that Nigeria's various geopolitical zones are rife with various unrests, many of which are rooted in politics and have young adults at the centre of them. They opine that the South-South zone faces militancy as the primary political unrest as well as cultism activities, robbery, killings, kidnappings, and communal disagreements that could potentially lead to bloodshed. The South-East Zone is well-known for its independence agitation, also known as the Biafran War or Struggle (Amamkpa & Mbakwe, 2015; Egugbo, 2019). This is rooted in the civil war of 1967 and has periodically become heated and a cause of unrest, even as recently as 2019. This zone is also known for land ownership clashes, chieftaincy, and traditional title disputes. The Southwest Zone is no stranger to violent acts, as it is known for "omoonile" crises, farmer-pastoralist conflicts, especially in remote areas, and essentially, violence and insecurity usually motivated by political activities (Kwaja & Owonikoko, 2020, p. 16). The North Central and Northeast zones have cattle rustling, indigene settlement, cattle herder clashes, ritualism, and kidnapping as the major causes of violence amongst the dwellers.

Considering these internal security issues, it is not unexpected that Campbell and Rotberg (2021) consider Nigeria to be a failed state. However, Kwaja and Owonikoko (2020, p. 36) advised that attention should be paid to educating the young adults. Formal education may not be accessible to all, but skill acquisition should be made available to keep youths busy and provide a source of financial income, making it more difficult for them to succumb to the monetary lures of politicians who want to incite violence. Agreeing, Oluwaniyi (2010) argues that to guarantee peace in the

Niger Delta and South-South zone, development and broadening the economic sector of the zone—ensuring more youths are gainfully employed and not just reliant on oil and gas—is a sine qua non (p. 310). The same holds true for other regions since unemployment is the leading cause of poverty. On the other hand, youth may feel their votes don't matter and become disengaged if they live in poverty and see violence at polling stations. In view of this, it is suggested that youth be appeased and that new employment prospects be created for them.

### 3.3 Youth Participation in Voting in Nigeria

A common theme in researching youth participation in Nigeria is youth participation via voting. Voting had been described as a dividend and a proof of democracy. Agu, Okeke, and Idike (2013) opine that voting serves three main functions: accountability for elected officials with the threat of not being re-elected; legitimacy effect where only qualified people are elected to office; and representative effect where the desire of the majority of the population is known through the number of votes cast. While online forms of participation are described as "soft" forms of political participation, voting is classified as a more traditional form of political participation because it requires physical involvement and is an offline action. As important as voting is, there is allegedly a decline in youths engaging in voting, both globally and particularly in Nigeria (Agu, Okeke, & Idike, 2013). Using quantitative analysis, Agu, Okeke, and Idike (2013) shared questionnaires with 1,120 respondents and found that age, occupation, and gender influence a youth's involvement in voting in Nigeria.

Correspondingly, Onwuama (2019), studying the 2019 Nigeria general election, finds that poverty is a stronghold that deters youths from participating in voting in

Nigeria. The 2015 Nigerian election was historic, not just because it had more voters than previous years (youth included), but because it was the first time that an opposing party, the All Progressives Congress (APC), won an election over the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP). General Muhammadu Buhari won the election over President Goodluck Jonathan (Onwuama, 2019). While this win was different in the Nigerian political sphere, Onwuama echoes that the 2019 election is said to have less credibility and "less democratic quality" (p. 56) than the 2015 elections. He writes that the inability to afford basic human needs—shelter, clothing, food, and health facilities—has made youths and Nigerians averse to voting, believing the votes are in vain and do not provide the change they desire. Onwuama's paper submits that equality, justice, and freedom of speech need to evidently become core values of the Nigerian government, as well as poverty eradication, and this would encourage more citizens to turn up on election days and vote.

Isiaka, Ibrahim, and Kolawole (2021) argues that since 1999, Nigeria has had a presidential election every four years, as the constitution states, with 2019 being the most recent election, and the expectation is that with every election there should be an increase in voter turnout, but that hasn't been the case in Nigeria. They report that in the 1999 Nigerian presidential election, 52% of all registered voters voted; in 2003, 69% voted; in 2007, 57% of total voters voted; in 2011, 54% voted; in 2015, 43.65% voted; and in 2019, only 34.75% of total registered voters voted. Theoretically, Isiaka, Ibrahim, and Kolawole (2021, p. 1250) believe that "individuals always make prudent and logical decisions that offer him the greatest satisfaction, given the choices available, and are in his highest self-interest." They hold that the youth voter apathy evident in Nigeria is proof that youths do not believe that voting offers them satisfaction. Youths do not trust the Independent National Electoral Commission



(INEC), the government, the political parties, or the politicians. They deduced that a high level of integrity demonstrated by INEC and good governance were required to make youths interested in voting and politics again in the country.

On the other hand, Ohazurike (2020) believes that the declining numbers of voters in Nigeria have hampered the democratisation of the country. She declares that "this low turnout has shown that the selection of leaders may not be a reflection of the majority of eligible voters, which most likely leads to the emergence of unpopular leaders and also indicates problems in the electoral process" (p. 10). As Ohazurike exposes, the increase in youths registering to vote is not a direct reflection of interest in voting and politics, as many youths register because of the importance of owning a voter card. One of the aforementioned benefits of being a registered voter in Nigeria is that the voter's card is a valid form of identification that could be used to prove identity when trying to open bank accounts. This study also lists electoral violence as a reason why voter apathy is on the rise. People believe stepping out of their homes to vote on election day is not safe, and they could lose their lives. The last-minute postponement of the election also played a part in the low voter turnout, as some whose polling units were distant from their homes could not make arrangements to travel and vote (Ohazurike, 2020). The need for a more secure Nigeria, especially on election day, cannot be overstated, and until this is achieved, there will be a percentage of people, including youths, who will not step out to vote for fear of losing their lives or possessions. Ohazurike also suggests that there be an overhaul of the electoral process in Nigeria, allowing for voters to cast their votes from their homes, offices, and other places convenient to them, including online, rather than from an actual physical polling unit.

These findings are mirrored in Nwankwo (2019), who submits that elections and voting in Nigeria have gone through several changes but the decline in youth voter turnout remains and has been influenced by factors like tribalism, geography, religion, educational levels, and gender; while Resnick and Casale (2011) opine that research shows that people with strong religious involvement are more likely to vote. Asha (2023) states that religious beliefs have been found to shape political participation, attitudes toward gender roles, immigration, social activism, and environmental attitudes. These findings highlight the importance of considerate interplay between religion and sociopolitical dynamics and provide valued understandings for policymakers, religious leaders, and society as a whole. Sule, Sambo, and Saragih (2021) propound that finance plays a role in the absence of youths from the political scene, both in terms of participation through running for office and voting. They assert that youths do not vote for fellow youths in elections because of "money politics" (p. 44), as the older politicians have fraudulently amassed wealth that they throw around to lure votes from poor youths. Money politics is the practise of engaging in bribery, mostly financially (but also using other means like free transport, clothes, food, cars, and phones as much or as little as possible depending on the wealth of the giver) to ensure the recipient of such monies votes for whomever their "benefactor" is (Saidi, Charles, & Bujiku, 2021). Money politics is an epidemic in Nigeria, where people living in abject poverty can be swayed with as little as 500 naira and a plate of food (Adekola & Olumide, 2019).

### 3.4 Impact of Gender on Nigerian Youth Political Participation

Another theme common to research into Nigerian youth participation in politics is the role of gender in participation. Chuku (2009), in her paper titled "*Igbo Women*

*and Political Participation in Nigeria, 1800s–2005,*" believes that there are two main theories when the involvement of African women in politics is studied. One school of thought believes that in pre-colonial times, women were actively wielding "political" power, albeit traditionally, and that this was valued by all, including men, and that with colonisation came patriarchy and women were systematically pushed out of power. The second school of thought holds that the present-day depreciation of African women in politics has roots in African culture and was not entirely brought about by colonialism, as the question of how much power women wielded traditionally would show. Chukwu (2009) delineates that both men and women in Igboland commanded power to different degrees in pre-colonial Igboland. While the title of *Eze* (King) of any Igbo colony remained a male role, women had political titles like the *Isi Ada* (oldest daughter of the lineage), and they were able to influence political and sometimes religious happenings in the colony. Similarly, titles like *Otu Umuada* or *Otu Umuokpu* (society of daughters of the lineage, who might be married, unmarried, divorced, or widowed), *Otu Alutaradi/Inyemedi* (association of lineage wives), and *Oha Ndinyom/Ndiome* (women's assembly) are powerful positions women fill in Igboland. This changed during colonial time as "the colonial administrators and other Europeans in the Igbo region imposed their Western conceptions of state, family, and gender roles on the Igbo—notions that were prejudiced against" (Chuku, 2009, p.88). The colonial masters chose to deal directly with males and appointed male leaders, even in roles that previously were led by women, and with time, this had a negative impact on females in politics. This erosion of women's power as a result of colonisation didn't just happen in Igboland but in every part of Nigeria, and the effect lingers to this day.

A report by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) shows that of the over 84 million registered voters for the 2019 general elections, 47.14% were

women (Independent National Electoral Commission, 2020). According to the Centre for Democracy and Development, while there were nearly 5 million women voters, women occupy only 4.17% of the available elected positions in the country (see figure 2 below).

**Figure 2- Breakdown of women elected into office in the 2019 Nigerian General Elections**

	Total Positions Available	Total Number of Candidates	Women Candidates	Women Elected Officials
President	1	73	6	0
National Assembly- Senate	109	1,904	235	7
National Assembly- House	360	4,68	533	12
Governor	26	2,412	74	0
State Houses of Assembly	990	14,583	1825	37

Pursue the impact of gender on political participation. In Nigeria, Agbalajobi (2021) wrote a book titled "Promoting gender equality in political participation: New perspectives on Nigeria." The book, divided into six chapters, begins by giving an overview of global trends in gender disparity, highlighting that there is a disproportion between the numbers of women in politics compared to their male counterparts globally.

Chapter two shows that though the numbers of women participating in politics and even being elected into political offices have risen in many countries, Africa still sits at a disadvantage as the numbers of women in politics are not rising as they should. Agbalajobi (2021) writes that the abolition of laws hindering women from voting in many countries, along with holding public discourse and research on the topic of women in politics, have had a positive impact on women participating in politics.

In Chapter 3, she focuses on Nigeria, giving a history of women's participation in politics in Nigeria. She explains the changes that have transpired during the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras. Agreeing with Chuku (2009), Agbalajobi (2021, p. 43) writes that "while gender relations in precolonial African society were not characterised by equality, they often entailed greater independence than "modern" societies, with men and women having different but, in many ways, complementary roles." Quoting other researchers like Mba (1982), Van Allen (1972), Omitola and Lalude (1998), and George-Genyi (2010), Agbalajobi shows that different tribes had varying traditional and political roles for women in the pre-colonial era. History recounts Queen Amina and Nzingha as women wielding political power in the North. In the South, the *Iyalode* and the *Erelu Ogboni* were palace priestesses involved in informal traditional rulings. She further explains that while the British rule in Nigeria saw a great decline in the political and traditional recognition given to women, women tried to fight to be heard and regain their voice, power, and position. The women's war in the southern part of Nigeria, the Aba women's march, popularly called "Aba Riots", and the Egba women's revolt are examples of how women fought to have their voices heard during the colonial era.

Although Nigeria fought for independence and became an independent country, the damage brought by the British colonial leaders and their patriarchal leadership methods lingers. During colonization, men were more likely to be educated, and women were relegated to the kitchen. As a result, Nigeria's first republic was dominated by men—"there were only three female legislators and no women in ministerial appointments" (Agbalajobi, 2021, p. 50). Similarly, the second republic had only six women in the top three tiers of leadership in the country out of over 500 available positions. In May 2015, 28.57% of ministers were female, a greater

percentage than previous years, but this shows women are still grossly underrepresented at the helm of affairs in Nigeria.

Chapters 4 and 5 of Agbalajobi's book give statistical backing to the claims that women have been side-lined in politics in Nigeria for too long. In these chapters, she also delves into reasons why women are unable to engage in politics as much as their male counterparts and finds that family responsibilities, illiteracy, finance, gender-based violence, and patriarchy, amongst others, hold women back. According to Agbalajobi (2021), "low representation of women impedes and undermines the goals of equality, development, transparency, and peace, as well as negatively affecting the quality of democratic, electoral, and legislative outcomes" (p. 85).

Concluding the book, Agbalajobi claims education, training, mentoring, and counselling, the intervention of the United Nations and other international organisations, media campaigns, annihilating gender-based violence against women, eradicating patriarchal laws and behaviours, creating mandatory quotas for women to fill in political parties and offices, and reducing campaigning costs are proven ways to ensure increased willingness from women to dabble in politics and play their parts. She maintains that countries like Asia, Rwanda, Uganda, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Jordan, Afghanistan, South Africa, Argentina, Latin America, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Italy have implemented some of the above suggestions and procured increased participation of women in politics. Hamoud (2023) explored the influence of social media on the political involvement of young individuals, highlighting the importance of considering gender disparities when formulating strategies to effectively engage young people in political activities.

## 3.5 Conclusion

It is unavoidable, taking into consideration the roles that youth play in politics, that youth first need to have their demands fulfilled before they can become politically active. The current state of Nigeria's economy, together with the country's history of political violence and widespread corruption, creates an atmosphere that discourages youth from becoming politically active. Most of them have the impression that they have been excluded from the democratic process, while a portion of them live in constant fear. Problems like unemployment and poverty need to be addressed, since they may motivate more people to participate in politics and make a difference in their nation. In the next chapter, a comprehensive literature review will be presented, covering the wide variety of conceptual and empirical views, as well as the many debates that have been made in relation to the topic of youth political participation.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 4.0 Introduction

Concerns about youth political participation have prompted a slew of research on the topic, with authors drawing from a diverse array of theoretical and methodological angles. To that end, this chapter presents the many arguments that have been made when discussing young political participation and offers a thorough examination of the underlying ideas.

### 4.1 Political Participation: Conceptualisation

Typically, when people think of politics, they think of the government, politicians, and political parties. A more inclusive definition would take into account the dynamics of authority in all spheres of social interaction, including the interactions between adults, parents, and their children. Being involved in politics in some capacity or another can be understood as "participating" in politics. However, as pointed out by Alm (2015), there is dissidence amongst researchers on the definition of political participation. At this point, it seems like just about everything a person does may be seen as a political activity of some form (van Deth, 2001). Besides, Hooghe, Hosch-Dayican, & Van Deth (2014) opine that these different definitions emerge because of the changing face of technology and its impact on our social and political terrain. However, this expansion—or fragmentation—has presented many scholars with the conundrum of choosing between adopting an outdated conception that excludes several new modalities of political participation or broadening their notion to embrace almost everything.



Verba, Nie, & Kim (1978) proposed a widely accepted concept of political engagement. They declared that political participation may be defined as "legal activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions that they take" (p. 46). As argued by Verba, Nie, & Kim, citizens may participate in politics in a plethora of ways beyond merely voting and joining political parties. Hence, in their widely used typology, Verba, Nie, & Kim considered four dimensions of participation: "voting"; "campaign activity" (such as joining or working for a political party or organisation as well as providing financial support to such organisations); "contacting public officials"; and "cooperative or communal activities" (any action taken with a focus on local concerns). Similar ideas were also proposed by Parry, Moyser, & Day (1992) as well as Pattie, Seyd, & Whiteley (2004), who, in contrast to Verba, Nie, & Kim (1978), emphasised that political participation does not absolutely have to be directed towards the government but potentially aim for other institutions instead.

Researchers like Conge (1988) criticise Verba, Nie, & Kim's (1978) definition because they feel that it omits "civil disobedience and political violence" (p. 243). For Conge, Nelson's (1979) definition of political participation as "an action by private citizens intended to influence the actions or the composition of national or local governments," was all-encompassing (p. 8). Conge believes that Nelson's definition of political participation was broader because it "includes illegal and violent actions" that could be used to gain the attention of politicians and thus influence government decisions. Other frequently cited definitions from this perspective are quite similar. For instance, political participation was described as "actions of private citizens by which they seek to influence or support government and politics" (Milbrath & Goel, 1977, p. 2) as well as "all voluntary activities by individual citizens intended to influence either

directly or indirectly political choices at various levels of the political system" (Kaase & Newton, 1995, p. 42).

At the very least, this line of thought about political participation allowed for the examination of actions beyond just voting, such as, for example, protests, boycotts, and strikes. Pioneering this line of thought early on was Barnes & Kaase (1979), who in their book *"Political Action: Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies"* concluded that conceptions of lawful activities are evolving, just like the profiles of the activists. Additionally, Brady broadened this concept of political engagement by asserting that it is an "action by ordinary citizens directed toward influencing some political outcomes" (p. 737). Firstly, as Brady (1999) stresses, we should consider political involvement as people's *manifest* and visible acts or activities in which they voluntarily engage. Second, "people" refers to common people, not political elites, or government officials. Thirdly, the idea encompasses making an effort to sway those in authority. Brady explains that being engaged in politics and social concerns, or even talking about politics regularly, is insufficient. As a result, he draws the conclusion that engaging in politics is an effort to sway the will of others, including political elites, government officials, influential citizens, and major corporations, when it comes to matters of public policy. As a result, activities aimed against any and all players (or elites) in the political, social, media, or economic spheres could be considered "political participation" (Norris 2002, p. 193; Teorell, Torcal, & Montero, 2007, p. 335).

Along with developments in studies on people's involvement in politics, several academics have been exploring the concept of "civic engagement" (Putnam, 2000; Norris, 2002; Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Carpini, 2006; Berger, 2009; Flanagan, 2013; Daskalopoulou, 2018). However, it has been suggested, rather provocatively, that the idea of "civic engagement" is set to be tossed out (Amnå &

Ekman, 2015). It's become somewhat of a catchall term in recent years, applied to activities as diverse as joining a bowling league and attending political protests (Berger, 2009; Amnå & Ekman, 2015). There is consensus that Putnam (2000) is responsible for popularising the notion and that his contribution was to highlight the significance of "social capital" for a healthy democratic society. It may be said that he was less concerned with civic or political issues and more concerned with actual engagement among citizens. When examining people's involvement in society, Putnam considered everything from newspaper consumption to voting to social networks to trust among friends and strangers to membership in civic organisations. Adler & Goggin (2005) note, however, that some people restrict civic involvement to activities like volunteering, group projects, and voting.

Nevertheless, other researchers, like Putnam, have opted for broader definitions of civic engagement (in terms of political participation) that include a wider range of activities. Notably, Norris (2002, p. 16), cited by van Deth (2014, p. 352), posited that political participation includes all activities that "impact civil society" or "attempt to alter systematic patterns of social behaviour." This definition, according to van Deth (2014), makes room for more recent political activities carried out via social media, such as making posts and commenting on social media posts to indicate support or opposition for a party. This agrees with Chatora (2012), who describes political participation as activities carried out by citizens to make an impact in their political sphere. This could be translated to choosing who the political leaders would be at the helm of all political affairs—via the voting process, participating in electoral campaigns, and "engaging in grassroots politics in the local community" (p. 3).

Another broad definition of political participation was provided by Teorell, Torcal, & Montero (2007), based on the research of Verba, Nie, & Kim (1978) as well

as Brady (1999). They proposed a more comprehensive typology that includes five dimensions: "*electoral participation*"; "*consumer participation*" (petition signing, charitable giving, political consumerism, and boycotting); "*party activity*" (active participation in, membership in, and support of a political party); "*protest activity*" (engaging in strikes, demonstrations, and other protest actions); and "*contact activity*" (communicating with organisations, authorities, politicians, or representatives). This typology excels because it places special emphasis on "*manifest*" political engagement in the restricted sense, i.e., actions taken to affect concrete political outcomes by focusing on the appropriate elites in politics or society (Brady, 1999). Furthermore, the scope of the typology extends much beyond voting behaviour.

As pointed out by van Deth (2001) in a more succinct manner, political participation throughout the 1940s and 1960s was generally described as "activities concerned with traditional conceptualizations of politics as campaigning by politicians and parties, and with well-accepted contacts between citizens and public officials" (p. 5). These "conventional" forms, however, grew in scope between the 1970s and the 1990s, when "unconventional" forms that deviated from society's standards began to emerge. Many of the activities that are now considered political in contemporary democracies are, at first glance, "non-political" or "semi-political." This means that the activities don't directly try to change the people in power, but they still affect the world around them (Masiga, 2018).

Schudson (1999) put forth a similar notion with his concept of "monitorial citizens." According to Schudson, modern individuals are not apathetic, ignorant, or passive when it comes to politics; rather, they adopt a proactive stance by actively seeking out political knowledge and maintaining an interest in the process. They will only interfere or take political action when they really believe it to be necessary. As a

result, they stay away from the typical methods of becoming engaged in politics. However, to claim that they aren't politically active would be inaccurate, as they are "monitorial citizens." Several writers have backed up this idea with their views on "post-modern" attitudes held by today's populace (van den Hoven, 2005; Hooghe & Dejaeghere, 2007; Hustinx, Meijs, Handy, & Cnaan, 2011; Ytre-Arne & Moe, 2018). In light of this, Ekman & Amnå (2012) further expanded Teorell, Torcal, & Montero's (2007) typology and included latent participation, which consists of "pre-political" or "on standby" behaviours including talking about politics in general, reading or watching about politics through the media, and discussing political issues in one's local community. The idea of latency stems from the realisation that many of the actions taken by citizens are not easily categorised as "political participation," but may still have far-reaching consequences for more conventional forms of political participation in the future (Ekman & Amnå, 2012).

Given the ideas of "manifest" and "latent" forms of political participation (Ekman & Amnå, 2012) as well as many more diverse definitions of political participation, authors like Theocharis (2015) warn that the concept of political participation may be overstretched. This is further exacerbated by classifications like conventional and non-conventional participation, as well as legal and illegal political participation (John, Fieldhouse, & Liu, 2011), and institutional and non-institutional political participation (van Deth, 1986). To that end, van Deth (2014) offered a novel method for characterising political participation that should help academics better understand the complexities of the phenomenon and "recognize a mode of participation if they see one" (p. 5). According to his logic, political participation is only genuine if it is: an activity; voluntary and not imposed by law or controlled by the ruling class; understood by individuals in their capacity as amateurs; and related to politics and the government.

Thus, "any voluntary, nonprofessional activity concerning government, politics, or the state is a specimen of political participation" (van Deth, 2016, p. 3). By this logic, engaging in politics online, as seen nowadays, may be considered a valid kind of political participation. This idea, however, also shows that political participation cannot be simply defined, as shown by existing literature.

## 4.2 Youth and Political Participation

Political participation has been heralded as essential to today's political climate. van Deth (2014) opines that this is manifested in the constant adjustment of the accepted modes of political participation in the last decade. In his words, "participation is the elixir of life for democracy" (p. 350). As a result, political participation is essential to ensure democracy thrives in any country (Pontes, Henn, & Griffiths, 2018), and as such, the youth need to be involved in political participation. In a like manner, Gümüş Mantu (2023) highlights the need of recognising typical arenas in which young individuals engage in political activities. The author emphasizes the need to explore alternative frameworks for conceptualising political engagement among the youth population. In accordance with Finn, Williams, and Momani's (2023) research, Arab youth in Canada are more politically active than their non-Arab counterparts. The author also stated that, in contrast to the stereotype of politically apathetic Canadians, these people are highly engaged in their communities and demonstrate strong civic values. Moreover, Kerr (2019) argues that active political involvement among youth translates into more physical civic engagement because it teaches youth the importance of civic duty and equips them to fulfil it. As stated by Kessler (2022), the political activities undertaken by youth demonstrate that young individuals are capable of actively participating in the realm of politics, asserting their own organisational objectives, and employing strategic approaches to political engagement. Most

importantly, it creates much-needed youth representation in political and civic matters. Martini et al. (2023) indicate that youth civic involvement yields beneficial outcomes at both the individual and community levels. Specifically, the study highlights the correlation between youth civic engagement and increased political participation. With the global population of individuals aged 15–24 estimated at 1.2 billion (United Nations, 2019), or about one in every six people, Kerr (2019) believes that youths need to be politically engaged in order to be ready to assume leadership roles in their own nations when the time comes. Belle et al. (2023) affirmed that a sizable portion of young people view politics as a crucial part of their personal identity. Furthermore, over three-quarters of the youth expressed confidence in their ability to actively engage and effect positive change within their respective communities. A significant number of young individuals, particularly those belonging to historically marginalised communities, frequently express their lack of confidence and knowledge when engaging in political activities (Belle et al., 2023). Several young individuals expressed their willingness to partake in the event if provided with the opportunity.

However, Pontes, Henn, & Griffiths (2018) state that the youth have been largely "singled out as a problematic group, displaying low levels of electoral turnout" (p. 1). As such, Quintelier (2007) asserts that "youth are less concerned with politics, are less politically knowledgeable, do not participate in social or political activities, are more apathetic, and have low levels of political interest" (p. 165). Farthing (2010) believes that a more useful approach calls for acknowledging that both political participation and disengagement are occurring simultaneously among young people. The author Reframe young people's political engagement this way would strengthen young people's antipathy to politics without condemnation; it would regard them as profoundly apolitical. Some experts agree, citing a worldwide fall in youth participation

and political interest among youths (Norris, 2004; Farthing, 2010; Gaiser, De Rijke, & Spanring, 2010; Dahl et al., 2017; Sloam & Henn, 2019). This plunge has often been attributed to the failure of the current political class to inculcate the needs of the youth and largely to a lack of political education and literacy (Agbaje & Adejumobi, 2006; Lewis, 2009; Bosch, 2013). Besides, youth show an increased level of political apathy because of their distrust of the political system or political cynicism (Amná & Ekman, 2015; Oyedemi & Mahlatji, 2016). Thus, Balarabe Kura, Shehu, and Ladan (2023) study additionally claimed that there was a conspicuous lack of trust in political institutions among young individuals. According to the authors, there is a lack of trust among the youth towards INEC, political parties, and the government as key institutions of political involvement throughout the state. People have less faith in political parties because they don't have any internal democratic processes and there are a lot of powerful people in them, like godfathers and other political elites (Balarabe Kura, Shehu & Ladan, 2023) INEC's low trust can be attributed to factors such as inadequate management of elections, instances of electoral manipulation, and the complexity of election processes. In the realm of governance, the factors contributing to diminished confidence encompass instances of corruption, nepotism, a pervasive sense of insecurity, and a failure to adequately fulfil the populace's needs and ambitions (Balarabe et.al 2023). They have little faith in politicians, political campaigns, or the policies of the parties that have dominated government for the last decade (Henn, Weinstein, & Forrest, 2005; Farthing, 2010; Pontes, Henn, & Griffiths, 2018). As a result, even the average age of party membership has become undoubtedly high (Barney, 2010; Fields, 2011).

Meanwhile, some other scholars argue that this youthful voting bloc is still active, although in novel ways, most notably through internet political participation



(Micheletti & Stolle, 2011; Kann, Berry, Gant, & Zager, 2011; Kiersa et al., 2011; Macafee & De Simone, 2012; Cammaerts, Bruter, Banaji, Harrison, & Anstead, 2013; Dahlgren, 2014; Pilkington & Pollock, 2015). Furthermore, these novel ways tend to incorporate behaviours such as internet activism, volunteering, consumer politics, and protests. Many authors believe this is because traditional forms of participation fail to address the issues that plague young culture (Hendricks & Kaid, 2002; Kaye, 2002; Coleman, 2007; Dalton, 2011; Kann, Berry, Gant, & Zager, 2011). Hence, it has been replaced by newer forms of democratic participation prompted by modern concerns and special interests (Loader, 2007; Phelps, 2004). Therefore, several authors contend that youth may not be losing interest in politics, even if they aren't participating in the same ways that prior generations did (Kimberlee, 2002; O'Toole, Marsh, & Jones, 2003; Gil De Zúñiga, Puig-I-Abril, & Rojas, 2009; Cammaerts, Bruter, Banaji, Harrison, & Anstead, 2013; Grasso, 2016). In a recent study, Tariq, Zolkepli, and Ahmad (2022) investigated the relationship between political interest among young voters and their utilisation of social media platforms. The study also explored the mediating role of political efficacy, political expressiveness, and partisanship in facilitating the transfer of positive effects from social media to both online and offline political participation. The results of study indicate that individuals who possess political interests exhibit a higher level of engagement with social media platforms (Tariq et al. 2022). Consequently, Stattin and Russo (2022) observed that a person's own political interests can shed light on their interactions with significant others in terms of politics. The political interest of youth has a stronger influence on their perceptions of political interactions with significant individuals, as compared to the perceived impact of these interactions on their political interest. The political engagement of young individuals serves as a contributing factor to their political

growth, thereby positioning politically oriented youth as active participants in their political engagements with significant individuals in their lives (Stattin & Russo, 2022).

Having said that, it can be concluded that there are two main schools of thought among researchers who have looked at "*youth and political participation*": those who say that political participation among youth is on the decline (the disengagement paradigm), and those who say that youth are still involved in politics, but in novel and innovative ways (the engagement paradigm). Ting and Wan Ahmad (2021) argue that there are various factors that may contribute to the disengagement of youngsters from political participation. To the authors, the two main causes of the rise in youth disengagement from politics are a closed political environment and the perception that politicians' self-interest drives politics in a morally compromised manner. This occurrence has the potential to induce political disinterest among young individuals (Ting & Wan Ahmad, 2021). In fact, Hay (2007, p. 23), cited by van Deth (2014), believes that those scholars who apply the more "conservative" definitions of political participation would report a decline in political participation and engagement as the years go by, but those scholars who are more inclusive in their definitions realise that political participation is not in decline, rather the "modes" of political participation have changed and evolved.

At this juncture, two key questions must be addressed. First, can we really say that there is a generational gap in how youth and older generations approach political engagement? Second, what factors contribute to the divergent political practises between young and elderly people?

The first, and in the opinion of some scholars, most significant, explanation is the natural progression of life (lifecycle). Here, there is a non-linear relationship between age and participation: it increases from young adulthood to midlife but

declines thereafter in old age. This phenomenon has been studied by academics for decades (Jennings, 1979), and it is crucial to distinguish between lifecycle effects and generational effects. Lifecycle effects centre on how changes in life circumstances affect people's propensity to become involved in politics (Nie, Verba, & Kim, 1974). In this context, political engagement is usually low on everyone's list of priorities because people's time is being diverted away from more important pursuits, particularly among the younger generation (Highton & Wolfinger, 2001). Those who haven't yet found permanent employment, committed to a relationship, or even gotten married have a limited window of opportunity to participate in politics (Stoker & Jennings, 1995). Accordingly, many scholars argue that if youth weren't limited in this way, they would engage in more traditional forms of political activity (Beyerlein & Hipp, 2006; Saunders, Grasso, Olcese, Rainsford, & Rootes, 2012; Earl, Maher, & Elliott, 2017).

Generational effects, on the other hand, are based on the idea that early socialisation has long-term consequences for later political socialization. In this regard, a person's youth is the critical time for the formation of their political philosophy. Following this line of thought, Martikainen, Martikainen, & Wass (2005) argue that youths today will never become as politically engaged as the elderly since they are not politically active. Additionally, studies frequently show a difference between how the younger generation and the older generation define and perceive political participation (Beck & Jennings, 1979; Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Carpini, 2006; Yin, 2022). In fact, researchers and respondents do not always agree on what constitutes political activity. Parry, Moyser, & Day (1992), for instance, found that just 18% of respondents to their study perceived a list of political activities in the same way as the researchers did. This leads Quintelier (2007) to conclude that "the low political participation rate among youth is a by-product of their narrow conception of politics and their impression

that politicians do not truly care about their needs" (p. 169). This has prompted an increase in studies investigating the nature and scope of political participation among youth as well as how they perceive politics today (Henn, Weinstein, & Wring, 2002; O'Toole, 2003; Henn, Weinstein, & Forrest, 2005).

Finally, Quintelier's (2007) cross-generational research found that young adults and adults have comparable political opinions, with the caveat that adults have more possibilities to become involved in politics than youth do. She goes on to say that young individuals, in contrast to older generations, exhibit a higher propensity to participate in non-institutionalized forms of political activity. Therefore, as Rainsford (2017, p. 2) asserts, "it seems as if the problem of youth political participation is less a matter of whether they participate and more a matter of where they participate." As such, democratic societies require both types of engagement; youth need to express their views via many other channels, but they also, arguably, need to vote in order to be politically relevant.

## 4.2.1 Online Youth Political Participation: social media in Perspective

Democracies thrive on the active participation of their citizens. Thus, political theorists and philosophers believe that an educated populace is essential to democracy (Hochschild, 2010; Memoli, 2011; Hyun & Kim, 2015; Khan et al., 2019). As a result, media systems have come to be idolised in both historical and modern civilizations for their role in informing the populace (Robinson, 2001; Wolfsfeld, Segev, & Sheaffer, 2013; Bode, 2015; Negrine, 2016). Several current trends are, in fact, indicative of this. For instance, youths today are less interested in participating in politics the conventional way, with one possible explanation being that they prefer to be kept informed via more accessible channels. Furthermore, they are increasingly

using it in a variety of political activities, and it is frequently viewed by them as a mode of political participation.

Within research conducted on media and youth political participation, several views have emerged. In the 1990s, studies on the effects of computing power began to emerge, and their consensus was that the Internet had the ability to foster direct democracy and public empowerment (Negroponte, 1995; Toffler & Toffler, 1995; Rash, 1997). The public was finally able to reach their representatives and have access to information they'd long been denied. However, studies conducted in the late 1990s and early 2000s urged scepticism against the idea that online media might encourage political participation. Some scholars argued that online media posed a threat to democracy because of their potential to decrease people's desire to collaborate on political issues (Wu & Weaver, 1996; Davis, 1999); diminish their social capital (Galston, 2002); and divert their spare time away from politics (Kraut et al., 1998; Putnam, 2000). Furthermore, authors, such as Rojas & Puig-i-Abril (2009), consider it "expressive participation" and a "subdimension" of political engagement (p. 907). Like many academics who believe that the rise of internet media has contributed to the loss of youth participation in politics (Rice, 2002; Boulianne, 2009; Mitchelstein & Boczowski, 2010), some forms of youth political participation have gotten a bad rap with pejorative labels like "clicktivism" and "slactivism," which indicate that their proponents are too lazy or uninterested to put in much effort (Morozov, 2009; Karpf, 2010; Drumbl, 2012; Lim, 2013).

However, a growing corpus of scholarly evidence suggest that online media might be the vanguard of a new era of engagement (Jenkins H., 2006; Loader, 2007; Livingstone, 2007; Gerodimos & Ward, 2007; Couldry & Markham, 2007; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008; Loader & Mercea, 2011; Bennett, Wells, & Freelon, 2011; Martin, 2012).

From the premise that people are less interested in traditional forms of political involvement like voting and party allegiance (Pharr & Putnam, 2000; Dalton, 2004), scholars in this school of thought have claimed that the proliferation of social media and other forms of online communication channels have given individuals unprecedented access to a platform from which they may build coalitions and take direct action on matters of personal importance (Wellman et al., 2001; Kaye, 2002; Hendricks & Kaid, 2002; Coleman, 2007; Kann, Berry, Gant & Zager, 2011; Dalton, 2011). Additionally, the advent of social media has expanded people's ability to express themselves politically and mobilise others, which has become a paradigm-shifting phenomenon (Östman, 2012; Titus-Fannie, Akpan, & Tarnongo, 2013; Gil de Zúñiga, Molyneux, & Zheng, 2014; McAllister, 2016; Darshan & Suresh, 2019). It has increased the number of ways individuals take part in politics (Sloam, 2012; Bennett, 2012; Xia & Shen, 2018), demonstrated a lot of potential for the development of democracy (Bennett & Entman, 2001; Bakker & de Vreese, 2011), and disproved the widely held belief that, as a result of the increasing commercialization of the post-materialist media landscape, the world had entered a "democracy without people." (Barnett, 1997; Vaccari et al., 2013). To actively engage with and express their agency in relation to social and political issues that are important to them personally, adolescents prefer to access political information and news through digital media platforms, relying on their social networks rather than traditional media sources, as suggested by the findings of Kaskazi and Kitzie (2021).

Notably, social media allowed for less hierarchical and more horizontal communication among youth that traditional media had previously excluded due to ideological and structural constraints (Baron, 2006; Petrova, 2008; Newman, Dutton, & Blank, 2012; Kahne, Middaugh, & Allen, 2015). To formerly marginalised

communities that have been disenfranchised owing to the elite dominance of the mainstream media, the social media are providing a platform for expression and mobilisation in an alternative and extremely democratic media arena (Allen et al., 2014; Sveningsson, 2015; Kahne, Middaugh & Allen, 2015; Miladi, 2016). Citizens use social media for a wide variety of reasons (Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009; Cheng, Liang, & Leung, 2015; Gan & Wang, 2015), but it has also been recognised as an essential arena for both institutional and non-institutional political participation (Goerres, 2010; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). For many, the rise of social media to the stature of the "the Fifth Estate" can be traced back to the disillusionment with politics felt by youth when the mainstream media was taken over by the strong economic, corporate, and political elites (Dutton, 2009; Jericho, 2012; Uwalaka & Watkins, 2018). As a result, it has evolved into a new kind of political public sphere and social sentinel, one that meets the requirements of youth for news and a forum for political expression while also setting off a wide range of political behaviours (Dutton, 2007; 2009; Newman, Dutton, & Blank, 2012).

Consequently, studies have explored the many ways in which youth participate in politics, notably how the ever-evolving media landscape influences the sorts of civic and political activities that youth find interesting (Vitak et al., 2011; Valenzuela, Arriagada, & Scherman, 2012; Lee, Shah, & McLeod, 2013; Gil de Zúñiga, Molyneux, & Zheng, 2014; Xia & Shen, 2018). Some academics believe that our reliance on social media could undermine traditional democracies (Bode, 2016; Bowyer, Kahne, & Middaugh, 2015; Prior, 2007; Putnam, 2000), while others see it as a 'political nursery' that trains the next generation to take the kind of collaborative steps that can sustain political cultures based on active participation (Gil de Zúñiga, Molyneux, & Zheng, 2014; Vaccari et al., 2015; Hyun & Kim, 2015; Yu, 2016; Lee & Kim, 2017).

It's no secret that social media has evolved into a potent instrument for engaging and galvanising individuals to take part in democratic processes and initiatives (Chen & Vromen 2012, p. 4). This fact was well-expressed by Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan (2013).

“In recent years, social media are said to have an impact on the public discourse and communication in the society. In particular, social media are increasingly used in political contexts. More recently, microblogging services (e.g., Twitter) and social network sites (e.g., Facebook) are believed to have the potential for increasing political participation. While Twitter is an ideal platform for users to spread not only information in general but also political opinions publicly through their networks, political institutions (e.g., politicians, political parties, political foundations, etc.) have also begun to use Facebook pages or groups for the purpose of entering into direct dialogs with citizens and encouraging more political discussion” (p. 1280).

In a more concrete sense, the idea that participation in social media might influence electoral results has been resonating among politicians, political organisations, academics, and other interested parties. Specifically, Adelabu (2011), cited in Okoro & Nwafor (2013), claimed that "the success of President Obama's presidential campaigns in 2008 and his eventual emergence as the first black president of the United States was largely credited to his active use of Facebook to mobilise millions of volunteers and voters" (p. 35). It's also possible that former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan's victory in the 2011 election was a direct result of his decision to run for office on Facebook. (Oyesomi, Ahmadu, and Itsekor, 2014;



Okoro & Santas, 2017). Given this, one could say that social media and politics are in a "robust, divergent, but symbiotic relationship in a functioning democracy" (Barner, 2010 as cited by Mustapha, Gbonegun, & Mustapha, 2016 p. 132).

However, the fragmentation capacity of social media is punctuating the euphoria around the democratic power of these platforms by posing a challenge to the consensus that a digital landscape is essential to democratic politics (Sunstein, 2009; Garrett & Resnick, 2011). As such, research findings have been divided into two camps: those that find positive effects (Dimitrova, Shehata, Strömbäck, & Nord, 2011; Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012; Bode, Vraga, Borah, & Shah, 2013; Jha & Kodila-Tedika, 2019); and those that discover negative ones (Anduiza, Cantijoch, & Gallego, 2009; Vitak et al., 2011; Kahne & Middaugh, 2012; Bode, 2016). Prior studies that downplayed the impact of social media on political participation was predicated on the idea of "*political homophily*" (users tend to congregate with those who share their views) (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2017), resulting in an "*echo chamber*" where users only hear and speak with others who share their opinions (Garrett, 2009; Stroud, 2011; Flaxman, Goel, & Rao, 2016). An additional criticism stems from the risk of "*filtering*," in which social media viewers choose soft, entertaining news at the expense of serious news (Heatherly, Lu, & Lee, 2016; Goyanes, Borah, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2021). It has also been said that users' primary motivations for engaging with social media are sociable in nature rather than informational (Livingstone, 2007). If these concerns are justified, it's unrealistic to assume that social media will help people consume a wide range of political news from different sources (Kahne, Middaugh, & Allen, 2015; Xia, & Shen, 2018) since their audiences are likely to be people who only care about light, entertaining material (Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009; Heatherly, Lu, & Lee, 2016).

On the other hand, it has been discovered that utilising social media for informative purposes increases the likelihood of people becoming involved in politics (Östman, 2012; Vaccari et al., 2013; Tang & Lee, 2013). Alodat, Al-Qora'n, and Abu

According to Akeusola's (2023), active participation in digital advocacy has a positive effect on raising political consciousness among Nigeria's youth population. This study shows how access to a variety of online news sources affects the link between being politically aware and taking part in online activism. This study explored the importance of internet platforms in facilitating the distribution of political information and promoting political awareness. Additionally, Vaccari et al. (2013) claimed that "social media may be conducive to greater political engagement in various ways, by providing information about political issues, by offering social cues that motivate citizens to take action, and by reducing the costs of collective action" (p. 2). Booker (2023) contends that the utilisation of youth digital media initiatives can be viewed as a strategic approach to enhance youth engagement and facilitate the reevaluation of power dynamics.

Scholars have also researched the moderating effects of political interest, capacity and knowledge of the people (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995; Verba, Burns, & Schlozman, 1997; Mcleod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Carlisle & Patton, 2013). For instance, Carlisle & Patton (2013) argued that social media has little impact on interest-driven behaviours like political participation. Furthermore, according to Vaccari et al. (2013), social media platforms may inspire offline and online debate, which in turn mobilises a larger audience, including those who aren't active on the digital ones, thus, having an impact on political participation that goes beyond the mere broadcast of information. Academics may have doubts about the capacity of social media to increase civic and political participation among youths on its own, but they

can all agree that their effects are plausible when considered in concert with psychological factors such as individual traits, drive, interest, knowledge, and others (Nygård & Jakobsson, 2013; Hyun & Kim, 2015).

In an emerging democracy like Nigeria, where tech-savvy youth are fighting against political marginalization (Dode, 2010; Adebani & Obadare, 2010; Okafor, 2011; Oyebode, 2014; Adebayo, 2018), social media have become *battlegrounds*. As such, they serve a similar purpose as they do in many other nations: preparing the next generation to hold their government accountable through awareness, knowledge, and the free flow of ideas (Adaugo, Ovute, & Obochi, 2015).

### 4.3 Youth and Political Participation: Evidence from Nigeria

It should be noted that the social, political, and economic landscape in which Nigerian youths operate is fraught with gigantic difficulties. Since civil rule was restored in 1999, the ingrained political elites in Nigeria have exerted their dominance over the country's political arena, stifling the desires and hopes of the youth. In particular, Seiyefa (2020) highlights a remark attributed to Atiku Abubakar, a member of Nigeria's post-military political elite and the country's former Vice President, who argued that:

“Nigeria has experienced decades of military and authoritarian rule which has left deep imprints in our political culture. Consequently, our political elite have become used to centralization, concentration and personalization of political power the central defining elements of modern despotism.”

Elections in Nigeria are deemed flawed with malpractices and violence (Ewetan & Urhie, 2014; Onapajo, 2014; Aluaigba, 2016; Olakunle, Bamidele, Modupe, Oluwaseun, & Magdalene, 2019; Steve, Nwocha, & Igwe, 2019; Adedeji, 2023), and

some scholars like Agbaje & Adejumobi (2006) have even questioned if electoral votes still count when the political class undermines citizen participation through monopolisation and manipulation of the electoral process. Olutola (2022) noted that there is a persistent tendency to misinterpret the rights of youth and children in laws and policies pertaining to youth, which has led to a partial assurance, undermining, or denial of their rights to political participation on a global scale. Despite the presence of human rights frameworks that specifically guarantee political participation for youth, this conflation has persisted.

The author presents evidence to support the notion that although there may be a tendency to merge the concepts of youth and children's rights in other regions, it is undeniable that in Africa, children and youth are distinct demographic groups. Moreover, it can be argued that African society is primarily divided into adults and children, with youth falling under the category of adults rather than children. Politicians in Nigeria are not open to compromise and instead engage in a desperate and sometimes violent quest for power (Eme & Onyishi, 2011; cited by Ewetan & Urhie, 2014). In a similar vein, Nigeria's worsening economic condition not only encourages violence during election seasons but also makes it simple for politicians to mobilise the teeming jobless youngsters for their own objectives (Olabamiji, 2014). Moreover, the citizens of the country, and in particular the youths, have suffered under the tyranny of these inflexible leaders, who have kept their grip on power to the detriment of the nation (Nwagboso & Duke, 2012; Badmus, 2017). This has inevitably led youths to become apolitical since they *distrust their government* (Aboagye, Kipgen, & Nwuche, 2020); *believe that politicians exploit them to further their own agendas* (Ogu & Inyang, 2015; Olabamiji, 2014); and, above all, *believe their votes do not count* (Aboagye, Kipgen, & Nwuche, 2020). In addition, Olabamiji (2014) also claims that the exclusion

of youth from politics in Nigeria contributes to insurgency, crime, and violence in the country.

Likewise, the watched "watch dogs" (mainstream media) are also controlled by the government, and as such, Nigerians also distrust them (Hari, 2014; Uwalaka, 2016; Uwalaka & Watkins, 2017). Above all, these mainstream media do not even allow them to express their opinions or share their views (Okoro & Nwafor, 2013). After all, youth have always played an active role in shaping political institutions, power relations, and economic prospects throughout history (Uji, 2015; Amzat & Abdullahi, 2016). In the same vein, Okocha and Ademu-Eteh (2022) found a significant correlation between the emergence of new media and the rise of participatory politics among Nigeria's youth population. Based on the research findings, the study proposes that Nigerian youths should utilise new media platforms in a constructive manner to foster participatory politics in Nigeria. This can be achieved through the establishment of digital forums that facilitate political discourse and in-depth analysis, with the goal of enhancing the political awareness of the average youth and promoting democratic engagement. Additionally, the authors suggest the implementation of internship programmes within political parties and legislative bodies, which would contribute to a seamless transition of leadership from older generations to the youth, as they would have been groomed in the intricacies of the Nigerian political system. As such, they are angry at the incompetence of Nigeria's traditional media but have commended social media for acting as the "fifth estate." (Uwalaka & Watkins, 2017).

While the political disengagement of Nigerian youth is consistent with the political inclinations of their peers around the world today, several authors have theorised that the government's gerontocratic dominance over the people is to blame for the youth's lack of involvement in electoral politics and other forms of civic

engagement (Nwagboso & Duke, 2012; Okoro & Nwafor, 2013; Olabamiji, 2014; Uwalaka & Watkins, 2017). The transition from democracy to gerontocracy in Nigeria, coupled with an economic downturn that threatens youth's ability to survive and advance in society, is consistent with the grievance model of civic alienation and political apathy that has given rise to a new political ideology among youths (Nwagboso & Duke, 2012; Badmus, 2017; Nwokike & Chidolue, 2017). Hence, it can be inferred that the alternative political activities that Nigerian youths participated in are logically consistent with the evocative, educational, participatory, and captivating characteristics of social media, leading to its adoption as a method of political participation by Nigerian youths.

Nigerian youths are believed to make up more than half of the country's population and are the most active and prolific users of social media (Alabi, 2013; Adaja & Ayodele, 2013; Onah & Christian, 2014). As shown by studies conducted, the most popular social media platform used by Nigerian youths is Facebook (Dagona, Karick, & Abubakar, 2013; Oyesomi, Ahmadu, & Itsekor, 2014; Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020). It is then followed by WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, and Yahoo, in that order (Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020). These platforms are particularly used by Nigerian youths for political activities including campaigns, political debates, public consultations, joining interest groups, communicating with politicians, and writing letters to public officials. Above all, youths used these platforms to learn more about the political climate in Nigeria and make informed decisions (Dele, 2016; Ufuophu-Biri, 2020). After all, an educated populace is essential to democracy (Hochschild, 2010; Memoli, 2011; Hyun & Kim, 2015; Khan et al., 2019), and social media has also been shown to improve civic engagement, political knowledge, and political participation among Nigerian youths (Adesote & Abimbola, 2014; Biswas et al., 2014). In a recent

study by Sloam, Pickard, and Henn (2022), young people's involvement in environmental activism is having a significant impact on democratic politics and daily life in many nations around the world. This study ascertained the values and attitudes that contribute to the acquisition of knowledge and active involvement in the realm of environmental politics among younger cohorts. In another study, Willeck and Mendelberg (2022) investigate the relationship between educational attainment and political engagement among young adults while also exploring its wider ramifications. The association between formal education and political participation is consistently observed and holds great importance, as it is widely acknowledged as a contributing factor to individuals' involvement in political activities (Willeck & Mendelberg, 2022).

A study by Henn, Sloam, and Nunes (2021) showed that young people are very involved in politics and civic life, with a strong focus on female representation and a tendency to do well in school. Nevertheless, a significant disparity in educational achievement exists between individuals who actively participate in environmental politics and those who do not.

Balarabe, Kura, Shehu, and Ladan (2023) affirm that a significant proportion of individuals who refrained from participation due to these circumstances were found to possess tertiary education. This observation indicates a positive correlation between individuals' level of education and their likelihood of making independent logical decisions in order to mitigate potential risks. It has also offered new political perspectives among Nigerian youths and increased their interest in politics (Dunu, 2018; Akinyetun, 2021). Anyanwu and Onuoha (2022) submit that persuasive communication alone is insufficient to foster the active engagement of young individuals in political matters. The effect of this communication on involvement in politics is entirely mediated by the youth's experiences, political interpersonal

communication with peers, and social normative and cognitive processes. Both online political engagement and offline political debate have significant direct and indirect impacts on political participation. However, Akoja and Olayigbade (2023) investigated the impact of political cyber-activism on Twitter and Facebook on the voting intentions of young individuals during the 2023 general election. The statistical data provided by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) indicates a decrease in voter registration for the 2023 election compared to the previous general election held in 2019. Considering the demographic reality that the youth population represents a significant majority among registered voters, and in light of past research that has established the impact of political cyber activity on political engagement.

Facebook gives youth a voice, a community, and a window into identity creation, social collaboration, and peer-to-peer socialization. In Nigeria, the use of Facebook stands at 37 million, with over 80% of the users being youths (Sasu, 2022). It is believed that many young Nigerians are increasingly using Facebook for political purposes, viewing the site as a platform through which they may have their opinions heard (Okoro & Nwafor, 2013; Dagona, Karick, & Abubakar, 2013; Oyesomi, Ahmadu, & Itsekor, 2014; Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020). Olabamiji (2014) echoed this sentiment, stressing the role Facebook has played in levelling the playing field between those who have access to a wealth of political information and others who have none at all. Moreover, as youth interact with adults in positions of power, such as politicians and policymakers, they are exposed to and encouraged to develop their logical thinking skills. Besides, Facebook, unlike traditional media, does not need authorization from the medium's curators and proprietors in order to publish content, which makes it comparatively more credible than the conventional media vehicles (Gromping & Sinpeng, 2018).



Again, Okoro & Santas (2017) found out that Facebook has been a useful tool to mobilise Nigerian youths who might have been marginalised or discouraged from participating in any political activity. As ascertained by Theocharis & Quintelier (2014), the popular Facebook has become an ideal platform that gives unrestricted access to people and allows them to exercise their civic duties, especially as it concerns elections. Accordingly, social media sites have become widely used by Nigerian politicians as a means of reaching out to certain voter blocs, especially youths (Titus-Fannie, Akpan, & Tarnongo, 2013).

In 2011, for instance, Dagona, Karick, & Abubakar (2013) note that the elections saw an enviable use of social media at every facet of the electioneering process in Nigeria. Voters in Nigeria were inundated with emails, online requests, press releases, TV, radio, posters, and billboard advertisements as the 2011 general elections approached. However, Arede and Oji (2022) revealed that radio has been found to facilitate individuals in acquiring a comprehensive knowledge of politics and public affairs. The authors pushed forward to state that this can be achieved through their active participation in various political events, such as meetings, rallies, protests, and marches. These engagements enable individuals to gain insights into the importance of political party registration and the cultivation of political awareness.

Furthermore, candidates running for office at every level, from town council to the presidency, used strategies based mostly on human connection and avenues for voter engagement to rally support for themselves. Aleyomi & Ajakaiye (2012), through their study, found out that INEC used the social media platforms to respond to more than 4000 queries in the 2011 elections and the active involvement and interactivity that ensued between politicians, political parties, and other groups during the 2011 election. The study revealed that by December 2010, the running presidential

candidate, Goodluck Jonathan, had already won more than 300,000 fans on his Facebook page. Also, Ojo (2014) observed that INEC made good use of social media to disseminate information about the 2011 elections and solicit public comments. Subsequently, voters and members of civil society reported their experiences at the polls and shared results from their respective districts through social media platforms even before the official proclamation of winners.

Then again, during the 2015 election, a large number of young Nigerians were able to show their support for candidates and ultimately help bring about a new administration (Araba & Braimah, 2015). More importantly, the Commonwealth Observer Group discovered that youth political participation in the 2015 Nigerian Presidential and National Assembly Elections increased, and that the Elections were generally peaceful and transparent, demonstrating the will of the people of Nigeria (Araba & Braimah, 2015; Igbokwe-Ibeto, Osakede, Nkomah, & Kinge, 2016). In light of this, Onyechi (2018) declared a strong connection between youths' social media use and engagement in the 2015 election, especially with regards to campaigning and voting.

To that end, Okeke & Obi (2016), Ogbemudia, Clement, & Ajibola (2019), as well as Oyesomi et al. (2014), established that social media has evolved to become a sublime tool for youth mobilization, and has diminished the elite's influence and manipulations in political processes. It has emerged as a public forum and marketplace of ideas (Baran & Davis, 2012; Mustapha, Ahmad, & Abubakar, 2014), allowing for the expression and debate of ideas that ultimately help the general public make better choices (Obisesan, 2022). Accordingly, it influenced voters' choice of presidential candidate during the 2011 election in Nigeria (Okoro & Santas, 2017). Moreover, Onyechi (2018) found that youths made use of social media for politics in

order to satisfy cognitive, social, integrative, stress-relieving, or tension-free needs. Meanwhile, Omotayo & Folorunso (2020) found that when young Nigerians face intense peer or family pressure, they may be swayed to participate in political discussions online, thus improving their political knowledge. In the words of Malschinger, Valls, and Flecker (2023), the social and political participation of young individuals is influenced not only by socio-demographic criteria such as gender and socioeconomic class, but also by the resources available within their families. To that end, it is sufficient to argue that political representatives were not chosen based on personal biases or religion but were instead chosen based on information gathered out of the need to fulfil their cognitive needs. This is highly based on the youth's efficacy (Mande, Mustapha, Omar, Mustapha, & Ahmed, 2022) and is consistent with the theory of uses and gratifications, which postulates that the existence of an engaged media audience is influenced by the goal of meeting certain perceived requirements. Additionally, it's possible that their actions are consistent with "participatory politics," a term coined by Cohen, Kahne, Bowyer, Middaugh, & Rogowski (2012) to describe political engagement that is collaborative, peer-based, and not always directed by established political institutions like political parties. In fact, research by Dunu & Uzochukwu (2015), Okoro & Santas (2017), Okechukwu (2018), and Ayeni (2019) supports these findings, showing that social media facilitates rapid dissemination of election results, improves legitimacy, transparency, and accuracy in the political process, and allows for participatory democracy. Besides, social media use is extremely cheap, and since it is relatively free in nature, it has opened up the chance for unwilling citizens to rekindle their civic interests.

Yet, research has demonstrated that there are limits to these benefits. According to Onyechi (2018), the main challenges that Nigerian users constantly face

while attempting to use social media in Nigeria are technical (lack of network coverage) and infrastructural (inadequate electricity supply), along with financial and skill-set concerns. It was further discovered by Ogu & Inyang (2015) in their study that unemployment and a lack of political knowledge are two of the main reasons limiting student engagement in politics. Furthermore, social media has been found to be engulfed by selfish politicians seeking personal adulation via the use of false news, malicious information, and statements that do not clearly outline manifestos or strategies to solve modern challenges (Onyechi, 2018).

Even more discouraging, Okoro & Nwafor (2013) stated that political participation via social media during the 2011 Nigerian election was riddled with online tribal wars, online opposing party wars, false rumours, hate speech, inciting messages promoted by both politicians and citizens alike, and their study showed these contributed to the violence that transpired during the election. Akubor (2020) lamented that during the 2015 election, campaign messages mostly centred on attacks on individuals, defamation of reputation, physical threats, and incitement to bigotry. This incident exemplifies the calibre of political players that shape the political system in Nigeria.

During the 2019 elections, Mustapha & Omar (2020) observed that youths preferred to partake in online modes of participation rather than offline ones. Stanojević, Vukelić, and Tomašević (2023) explored the extent of political activism among young individuals, both in conventional and unconventional forms. The researchers analysed the various factors that contribute to the development of such activism, thereby shedding light on the ongoing discussions surrounding the evolution of political engagement in the twenty-first century. Notably, the study placed particular emphasis on the practices of young individuals within the post-socialist context. In this

respect, Daniel (2019), as cited by Obisesan (2022), saw not only the evolution of youths' political participation through social media platforms, but also intense debates and propaganda messages on Facebook pages and Twitter handles. However, Imhonopi & Urim (2021) believe that there is no correlation between social media use and actually casting a vote. In their words, "social media use by Nigerian youths has not delivered the dividends of democracy to the people" (p. 113). As such, they argue that the biggest successes of social media usage in political communication in Nigeria have been the transmission of political information to the young and the freedom for individuals to effectively express their opinions on political developments in the nation, as well as fight against political injustice.

While this may be the case, Erubami's (2020) research shows that social media is a useful predictor of protest action. Campaigns like Occupy Nigeria, #BBOG (Bring Back Our Girls), and most recently the #EndSars campaign have been born, gathered momentum, and thrived via social media. Some of them have also achieved some results as government policies have been changed. Also as reported by Erubami (2020), youths used social media as a means to check the transparency of the results being reported by the electoral bodies by taking pictures of polling units, recording result collation, counting and announcing results, and posting these events on social media.

Ultimately, these studies have shown that youth are seeking refuge in alternative, online political involvement, suggesting that the current downward trend in youth political participation is unlikely to persist (Bennett, 2008; Cohen & Kahne, 2012; Sloam, 2012). It makes up for the disenfranchisement of youths in the conventional political system, which is hierarchical, resource-intensive, power-based, and has been controlled by established political elites (Gil de Zúñiga, Molyneux, & Zheng, 2014;

Kahne, Middaugh, & Allen, 2015; Yu, 2016; Skoric et al., 2016). Given Nigeria's outsized influence on other African countries (Omede & Ojibara, 2017; Badmus, 2017; Adebayo, 2018), this pattern will also be explored for other African democracies in the next section.

## 4.4 Youth and Political Participation: Evidence from Africa

Despite the many positive political and social developments on the African continent, patriarchy and gerontocracy continue to pervade governmental institutions, to the detriment of the youth (Muyambwa, 2018; Van Gyampo & Anyidoho, 2019). Youth are on the margins of power even when they are "voting activists," "party members," "foot soldiers," or party apparatchiks because they lack the social and political capital of their elders (Gyampo, 2011; Honwana, 2012; Bob-Milliar, 2014; Van Gyampo & Anyidoho, 2019).

In scholarly and policy texts, youth in Africa are both hailed as "the hope for the future" and decried as "a disadvantaged and vulnerable group" (Van Gyampo & Anyidoho, 2019 p. 1). Even though their participation in politics at all levels—local, state, and federal—is crucial, political parties, governments, and other leaders frequently exploit their political actions and finally shut them out of the political process (Sommers, 2010; Resnick, 2015; Van Gyampo & Anyidoho, 2019). Furthermore, according to Ndlela & Mano (2020), the majority of African media in the 1970s and 1980s were owned by the government, limiting freedom of information and political communication. Mutsvairo & Karam (2018) also claim that in the past, the relationship between the media and the ruling class in Africa was that the media could not criticise the ruling party. As such, one of the major barriers to youth political participation in Africa became indisputably the issue of inadequate access to knowledge, which would

enable informed political decisions (Chatora, 2012). Even now, many African countries still have federal and state-owned news stations that must do the bidding for the government (Conroy-Krutz, 2020). Countries like Uganda, Angola, and Zimbabwe with repressive regimes provide prominent examples. In these nations, every form of media (TV, newspapers, radio, and even the Internet) is severely censored and controlled by the government (Chatora, 2012). When reporting in such settings, journalists tend to focus on topics that are less likely to provoke strong reactions from the public, leaving the authorities unchecked.

Apart from the aforementioned crisis in Africa, financial and socioeconomic constraints faced by African youths prevent them from engaging in traditional political activities since they require financial investments (Resnick & Casale, 2011). In such contexts, Chatora (2012) argues that time becomes a key component in determining whether youth will participate in politics or other personal interests. This leads many to conclude that youth would rather spend their time on activities that ensure their survival than on political engagement that offers no such guarantees (Stoker & Jennings, 1995; Highton & Wolfinger, 2001; Bob-Milliar, 2012). Besides, in Ghana, youths were observed to join political parties because of the incentives offered by these groups (Bob-Milliar, 2012).

Generally, African youths are increasingly turning to social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter to learn about and engage in political discourse. This trend may be attributable to the government's tight grip on traditional news outlets as well as the continent's ongoing socioeconomic problems (Kperogi, 2011). As a result, people in authoritarian countries like Egypt and Libya have started using social media to get their messages across (Bhuiyan, 2011; Alqudsi-Ghabra, 2012). De Donk, Dahlgren, & Al. (2004) explain that this is because social media creates online communities where

people can easily find and share information, express their views, and unite to perform collective action. Hence, information that was once only available to those who walked the corridors of power is now easily accessible to the average citizen and can inform political discourse (Wasserman, 2011; Mutsvairo, 2013; Oinas, Onodera, & Leena, 2018).

On the other hand, some youth seemed to completely disconnect from the political system after becoming frustrated with official politics (Honwana, 2012; Booysen, 2015). This prompted some countries to decrease the voting age for elections, including Botswana and Senegal (Molomo 2000; Villalón 2004). According to Olutola (2022), the age restriction laws prevalent in many African nations, which prevent a significant portion of young individuals from engaging in political participation by running as candidates in elections, are deemed to be in violation of their human rights. These laws are seen to be in contradiction to the human rights obligations of the respective states and are also seen as conflicting with the traditional values and principles of African societies. In spite of this, Honwana (2012) maintains that "what may appear to be apathy and depoliticization represents a conscious move away from traditional arenas of party politics towards other forms of engagement with society and the global world" (p. 136). This fits well into Vigh's (2007) idea of "social navigation," in which youth seek to build meaningful lives within an uncertain and ever-shifting socio-political landscape. The African Youth Charter possesses the inherent capacity to guarantee the acknowledgment, safeguarding, and advancement of the rights of young individuals, specifically their entitlement to engage in political activities within African nations (Olutola, 2022). With so many barriers in their way, it's no surprise that young Africans today act in specific ways to achieve their goals.



Reportedly, a study by Kirigha, Mukhongo, & Masinde (2016) showed that youths in Kenya were more likely to become involved in politics when they utilised social media since it was a place where they could voice their political opinions freely and without fear of reprisal. This was also found to be true in other African countries like South Africa (Mbenga, 2012; Badaru & Adu, 2020); Egypt (Sika, 2012); Ethiopia (Muluye, 2019; Adamu, 2020; Mijana Sabu, 2020); Ghana (Ugochukwu & Nwogwugwu, 2022); Zambia (Phiri, 2019; Chaangwa, 2020); Uganda (Kasirye, 2021); and so on. This has led to an increase in the use of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and blogs by African political players during election processes (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010; Chatora, 2012; Ndlela, 2020) to win over young voters (Resnick & Casale, 2011; Wani, 2016).

In Zambia, social media was used by a wide range of interest groups and civil organisations to keep tabs on what happened during the presidential election in 2011 (Rakner, 2011; Oginni & Moitui, 2015; Tsegyu, 2016). For example, Bantu Watch, a website run by a civil society in Zambia, used Facebook and Twitter to urge registered voters and competing parties to report any incidents of corruption, hate speech, or electoral violence (Nwafor, Odoemelam, Orji-Egwu, Nwankwo, & Nweze, 2013; Oginni & Moitui, 2015; Green, 2017; Ndlela & Mano, 2020). This initiative encouraged people to take part in monitoring the voting process and was an unprecedented effort to use social media and strengthen public participation in the political process. Similarly, the Mzalendo initiative in Kenya acts as a watchdog and monitors the operations of the Kenyan parliament (Goldstein & Rotich, 2009; Charlton & Kubayi, 2013; Burkhardt, Nazemi, Klamm, Kohlhammer, & Kuijper, 2014). In addition, youth were able to weigh in on legislative proceedings with their own questions, opinions, and debates thanks to the platform.

Furthermore, social media has been crucial in bridging the generation gap between youth and their elected officials. This is because it creates opportunities for politicians and youth to engage in conversation with one another (Walton & Donner, 2011; Chatora, 2012). The South African government, for instance, has embraced different types of social media as avenues of information and engagement between youth and their political leaders at all levels (Chatora, 2012). Most importantly, youth were allowed to express their opinions and ask questions about policies directly to the president and other ministries via these channels.

Young Africans have also found success in using social media to mobilise and amplify their views, particularly through demonstrations. As demonstrators in Tunisia protested against the corrupt government and high unemployment rates, the "Jasmine Revolution" was primarily organised, promoted, and propelled via the usage of social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter (Bohler-Muller & Van der Merwe, 2011; El-Khawas, 2012; Breuer, Landman, & Farquhar, 2014). For the most part, these platforms were used for grassroots mobilisation and disseminating counterinformation to that spread by official government channels (Bohler-Muller & Van der Merwe, 2011; Breuer, 2012; Wulf, Misaki, Atam, Randall, & Rohde, 2013; Breuer, Landman, & Farquhar, 2014).

Similar to the Tunisian uprising, the Egyptian demonstrations against Mubarak and his regime were fuelled by the youths' access to and usage of social media (Sohail & Chebib, 2011; Bhuiyan, 2011; Khamis & Vaughn, 2013; Kharroub & Bas, 2016). Similarly, Ugandans took to social media to organise demonstrations against President Museveni and his administration, which has been blamed for a rise in prices and a decline in living conditions for the general populace (Chatora, 2012; Selnes & Orgeret, 2020). In many other African nations, too, social media played an important

role in organising protests. Expert political bloggers and activists participated in discussions with youth on these social media platforms to educate them about the problems at the heart of the demonstrations.

However, there seems to be an increasing phenomenon of social media fear or mistrust in Africa, with African governments attempting to restrict or control social media. For instance, as cited in a study by Ojok & Acol (2017), during protests in Uganda, the government shut down all internet connections in the country for up to 72 hours to stifle the spread of information and neutralise the protesters. Bosch (2013) cites another incident where the Egyptian government interfered with the internet, which led to civilians resorting to the usage of third-party applications in order to continue using Twitter and Facebook. Chad has also experienced the internet being shut down by the government for extended periods, sometimes up to a year (Boateng, 2022). Gabon, Mali, Congo, Ethiopia, Angola, Cameroon, and Nigeria have also experienced this use of internet withdrawal by their governments before or during elections (Ndlela & Mano, 2020). Zimbabwe hasn't explicitly prohibited or regulated the use of social media sites, but it is clear that the administration has mistrust for these channels of communication, making the political climate in Zimbabwe not suitable for free and open participation from the general public (Chatora, 2012; Mapuva, 2015; Masvaure, 2016). There are severe restrictions on people's rights to freedom of thought, conscience, and expression, as well as their right to peacefully assemble and protest. People who openly express political beliefs that are critical of the administration are often arrested and harassed (Chatora, 2012; Masvaure, 2016).

Even more discouraging, ethnicity and fake news seem to be features unique to the African continent when it comes to political participation on social media. After the 2007 Kenyan elections, for instance, ethnic animosity was promoted through social

media (Makinen & Kuira, 2008; Njoroge, Kimani, & Kikech, 2011). It has also been used in several nations to spread politically motivated ethnocentrism (Egbunike, 2017). In addition, it has been a powerful instrument for spreading false information and fake news in Uganda (Kakumba & Sanny, 2021), Nigeria (Apuke & Omar, 2020), as well as Kenya and South Africa (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2019).

At the end of the day, authors in Africa recognise that social media played a significant role in encouraging youth to take part in political processes. However, unfettered access to social media is hampered by restrictions on other fundamental rights, such as the right to speech and a free press. This will have a detrimental effect on the youths' capacity to engage in the democratic process, and it may even push them farther to the periphery of it.

## 4.5 Youth and Political Participation: Evidence from the rest of the World

In most democratic regimes, the education system is intended to facilitate the creation of participatory democracy. Ushie, Yusufu, and Zoaka (2022) argue that the implementation of empowerment projects targeting young individuals should prioritise aspects such as access to education, employment possibilities, and the promotion of religious tolerance. These initiatives are crucial in supporting the ongoing progress towards increased political engagement among the youth population. It is believed that by teaching students how the political system works in the classroom, they would later on learn and internalise democratic ideas and norms, which will motivate them to participate in a variety of forms of active citizenship as adults (Youniss & Levine, 2009, as cited by Quintelier & Hooghe, 2013). In certain nations, however, maybe as a result of certain internal issues, this has not always been the case. According to research by Cammaerts, Bruter, Banaji, Harrison, & Anstead (2013), the major reason why youths

don't become involved in politics is because of the way political institutions and discourse are set up in countries like the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Austria, Finland, and Hungary. Timmerman's (2009) study on Dutch and British towns revealed that there aren't enough opportunities for youth to engage in discussions or the democratic process in general, leading to a decline in their interest in politics. In light of this, scholars like Diemer & Rapa (2016) conclude that feeling marginalised seems to discourage people from voting and encourage them to become involved in politics in other ways, like protesting. For instance, youth in the United States of Latino descent have become more politically active in an effort to combat the marginalisation they perceive as a result of Trump's immigration policies (Wray-Lake et al., 2018).

Given the global fall in civic participation, nations and educational institutions have increased their efforts to promote civic education and political indoctrination (Youniss, 2011; Dassonneville, Quintelier, Hooghe, & Claes, 2012). It is often assumed in the literature that students who are exposed to a more open, democratic, and participatory educational environment are more likely to develop liberal and tolerant political perspectives (Gimpel, Lay, & Schuknecht, 2003; Campbell, 2006; Flanagan, Cumsille, Gill, & Gallay, 2007; Torney-Purta et al., 2007; Gniewosz, Noack, & Buhl, 2009). Still, not much of an impact was made since few youth continued to exhibit low levels of political interest (Pap, Ham, & Bilandi, 2018) and political knowledge (Pavlović 2012; McAllister, 2016). Meanwhile, nations like Greece, Spain, and Portugal, which have been hard impacted by the financial crisis and have high rates of youth unemployment (Tosun, Hörisch, & Marques, 2019), tend to have youth who are not engaged in politics because they are busy trying to survive the challenging economic circumstances and do not have time to engage in politics (Pacheco & Plutzer, 2008).

Nevertheless, as a driving force for progress and a vibrant wellspring of creativity, youths chose non-institutionalized forms of political participation, which are perceived as less expensive and more easily accessible than institutionalised forms. This was found to be true for Germany, France, and the UK (Hooghe & Stolle, 2003); Belgium (Hooghe, Stolle, & Stouthuysen, 2004; Quintelier & Hooghe, 2011); Austria (Zeglovits & Zandonella, 2013); and many other countries. Social media as a non-institutionalized form of political participation has significantly increased youth interest in politics (Pap, Ham, & Bilandi, 2018). However, a youth's political interest was also shown to be influenced by other factors such as one's (a) social network, especially parents, and then friends and teachers (Dostie-Goulet, 2009; Zeglovits & Zandonella, 2013; Quintelier, 2015); (b) gender: males are found to be more interested than their female counterparts (Pavlović, 2012); and (c) culture (Attar-Schwartz & Ben-Arieh, 2012). Meanwhile, studies by Russo & Stattin (2016) as well as McAllister (2016) show that a youth's level of political interest and knowledge steadily increases with age. It has been suggested by Levy, Solomon, and Collet-Gildard (2016) that youths are generally interested in politics when elections are around the corner. Besides, it was discovered that decreasing the voting age in several nations, such as Austria, Brazil, and Norway, to 16 increased youth participation in politics (Zeglovits & Zandonella, 2013). A recent analysis of Austrian studies found that newly eligible 16- and 17-year-olds were more likely to vote at age 18, were more engaged in politics, and used their newfound right to vote responsibly (Hart & Youniss, 2017). Comparatively, Balarabe Kura, Shehu, and Ladan (2023) identify that young adults (those between the ages of 17 and 30) are disproportionately underrepresented in political participation due to fear of violence.

In contrast to other research findings, Malschinger et al., (2023) reveals a decline in the significance that individuals in the adolescent age group place on social and political involvement during the period spanning from 15 to 19 years of age. Furthermore, the greatest impacts were shown to occur when reducing the voting age was combined with civic education to get youth ready to vote.

Social media has also been shown to improve political knowledge and boost the possibility that youth will go out and vote (Baumgartner & Morris, 2009; Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010; Vitak et al., 2011; McAllister, 2016). Furthermore, research by Pavlović (2012) demonstrated that learning about politics is contingent not just on the nature of their informational context and access to relevant resources but also on an individual's intrinsic drive and skill. Meanwhile, other studies suggest that youth's political literacy can be predicted by factors such as their interest in politics, their level of education, their gender, and their social circle (Dostie-Goulet, 2009; Pavlović 2012; Attar-Schwartz & Ben-Arieh, 2012; Zeglovits & Zandonella, 2013; Quintelier, 2015; McAllister, 2016). Ultimately, these authors believe that political literacy is a robust predictor of voter turnout.

The use of social media has also been associated with increased offline political participation (Conroy, Feezell, & Guerrero, 2012; Gibson & Cantijoch, 2013; Vissers & Stolle, 2013; Kim, Russo, & Amnå, 2016). It's clear from this connection that engaging in political activities on social media may inspire offline acts as well. In fact, a study by Gibson & Cantijoch (2013) showed that the internet and social media are just duplicating and expanding the repertoire of offline participatory acts. For instance, protesting, contacting, and donating during elections can now be done online. Also, instead of reading newspapers (an offline activity), youths now view E-videos, E-news, and partake in E-discussions (online activities). To reach representatives, youths now

use social media instead of person to person meetings. However, Vissers & Stolle (2013) point out that participating in a march or other forms of protest action, as well as boycotting, are the only offline activities that surpass their online equivalents. Another researcher, Kim, Russo, & Amnå (2016), found that for adolescents (16–18), engaging in activities online may lead to similar engagement in real life, but for young adults (22–24), offline activities often extend into online activities. This once again demonstrates how the developmental stages (age) of people influence how they perceive or engage in politics.

According to Keating & Melis (2017), social media is unable to pique the attention of young individuals who have already given up on politics. However, several other authors believe that it can reengage youths who may have lost interest in politics (Baumgartner & Morris, 2009; McAlister, 2016). After all, the contribution made by social media to politics has given rise to ideas such as "online participation" (Gibson & Cantijoch, 2013; Vincente & Novo, 2014; Gronlund & Wakabi 2015); "cyber democracy" (Chun & Cho, 2012; Barth & Schlegelmilch, 2014); "digital democracy" (Hyun, 2012; Poster, 2013); and "netizens" (Lei, 2011; Chao, Yuan, Li, & Yao, 2017), making it a potent tool to improve political engagement among youth throughout the globe.

The urban-rural divide is another issue that has been brought up in discussions about youth's involvement in politics in different regions of the globe. Specifically, Kenny and Luca's (2021) research looked at 30 European nations to see whether there is a widespread gap between urban and rural Europeans with regards to political and economic views. They showed that there is a significant gap between the political views of Europeans in urban areas and those living in rural areas. In addition, their research showed that people who live in suburban, town, and rural regions are



noticeably more inclined to engage in the political system, notably by voting, despite being more conservative in their orientation, dissatisfied with the functioning of democracy in their nation, and less likely to trust the political system. Overall, they concluded that there is a larger scope of political and socioeconomic difficulties that might be linked to one's location of residency, which in turn might affect one's impression of politics, their political behaviour, and their faith in political institutions.

Research has also been conducted on the topic in the United States by researchers such as Cramer (2016) as well as Scala and Johnson (2017). Their results are also consistent with Kenny and Luca's (2021) study and have shown rising residential inequality and segregation between urban areas and rural areas in numerous European countries (Musterd, Marcińczak, van Ham, & Tammaru, 2017). Given this, one could reasonably wonder whether this divide also exists among youth in Nigeria. That's a question this study aims to answer, too. In the following chapter, the theoretical premises that serve as the study's foundation will be discussed.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## THEORIES

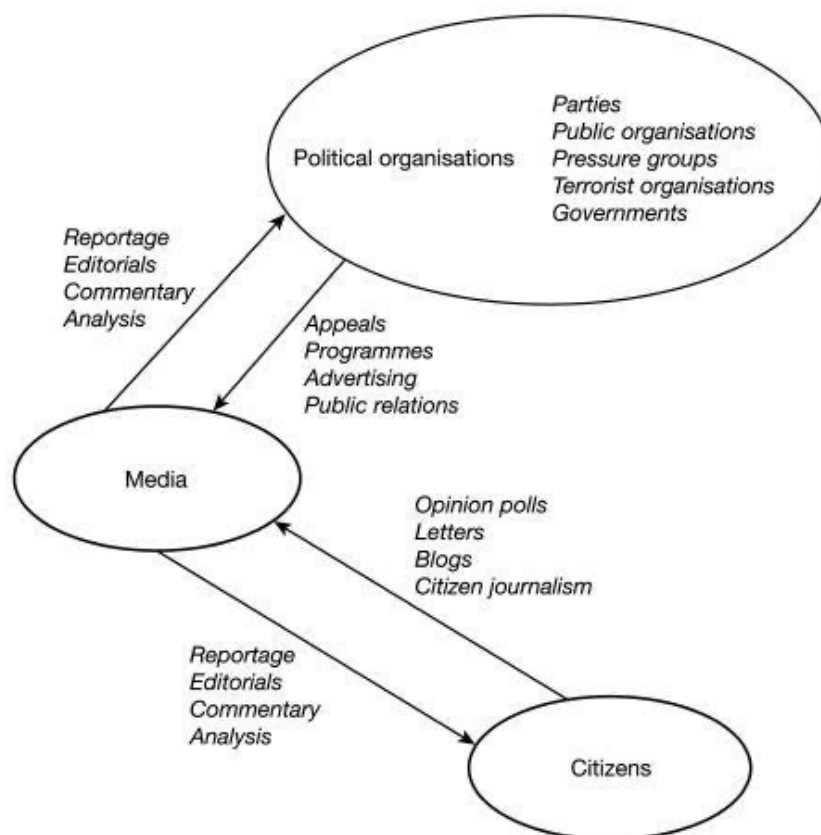
### 5.0 Introduction

As highlighted in chapter one, this thesis sets itself apart by looking into the broad spectrum of tools used for political participation available to Nigerian youths in the era of the internet and social media, pinpointing the ways the Nigerian youths choose to engage in politics. As such, it's important to examine pertinent existing theories that may be utilised to explain the emergence, evolution, and justification of political social media. These theories would shed light on the major factors that drive teenagers to engage in political activity via social media and emphasise the need of examining how those key factors could change and under what conditions they might do so. At the end of the chapter, two theories would be selected to serve as the theoretical basis of this study.

### 5.1 Political Communication: Cyber Optimists vs Cyber Pessimists

A few years ago, researchers like McNair (2011) claimed that the term "political communication" is difficult to define as the two words "*political*" and "*communication*" have vast meanings and have evolved as the world has. In earlier years, researchers like Denton & Woodward (1990) limited political communication to deliberations on some topics like national budgets, leadership, and national remunerations or retributions, but this was highly critiqued amongst academia as it did not include non-vocal, symbolic forms of communication and was also very restrictive on topics that could be discussed. McNair (2011) defined political communication as "any purposeful

communication about politics" (p. 4). He proposes that political communication encompasses all communication involving political discourse. It could be carried out by a politician or political actor (e.g., a campaign manifesto); it could be addressed to a politician (e.g., a letter addressed to a politician from a constituent member); it could be a statement put out by political players (e.g., campaign managers); or it could be a discussion via the media. Furthermore, McNair (2011) also explains that political communication can take the form of non-verbal, non-written modes of communication. The Figure below shows all the elements of political communication, according to McNair (2011).



**Figure 3- Brian McNair's (2011) three-element model of political communication**

Throughout the election cycle and beyond, political communication occurs in a variety of formats and via a wide range of channels, as shown in McNair's (2011) three-part model of political communication. In fact, McNair (2011) asserts that political

advertising and political marketing are acceptable and valid forms of political communication, given the media's significant weight as a channel through which political messages may be delivered. In agreement, Mutsvairo & Karam (2018, p. 3), quoting Norris (2004, p. 1), defined political communication as "an interactive process concerning the transmission of information among politicians, the news media, and the public." Moreover, Howard, Woolley, & Calo (2018, p. 81) in a nutshell defined political communication as "the process of putting information, technology, and media in the service of power." A more recent definition by Inobemhe, Nwafor, Aminu, & Saint Udeh (2022) even showcases political communication as "the exchange of symbols and messages between political actors, institutions, and the general public with the aim of influencing the political system in operation at any given time" (p. 55).

As shown, the field of political communication has evolved. The study of political communication has expanded beyond its original concentration on formal political discourse like national budgets, leadership, voting, and elections to now include a more comprehensive examination of the communication practises of political groups, politicians, the media, and ordinary individuals. This includes communication at the national, international, state, and local government levels, communication within political parastatals, and dissemination of information from parastatals to the citizens using available mass mediums—radio, television, newspapers, and most recently the internet via social media (Okigbo & Onoja, 2017).

This evolution has also sparked debates about how the rise of ICT has altered political communication. In this regard, it is generally believed that the debate about the impact of ICTs on political communication is championed by two major schools of thought: cyber optimists and cyber pessimists. With regards to the consequences of ICT on politics and society, several scholars – dubbed the cyber-optimists and

exemplified by Barber (1984); Dahl (1989); Etzioni (1993); Fidler (1997); Hill & Hughes (1998); Benkler (2006); Shirky (2009); Papacharissi (2010); Schmidt & Cohen (2013); and Taylor (2014) – anticipated that new media (i.e. social media and mobile communication technologies), would prove transformative in that they would help to widen and deepen the public sphere, erode the power of elites and, in turn, emancipate and empower the masses. These scholars believed that the new media has facilitated, indeed precipitated, a transition from hierarchical power structures to decentralized ‘multi-dimensional mosaic forms of networks’ and, consequently, whether this enables ‘direct connections between dispersed users without the need for mediating bodies’ (i.e. disintermediation) (Freedman, 2014: 104).

Cyber optimists believe that ICTs have had and will continue to have positive effects on society (Soriano, 2013; Salma, 2019). According to Soriano (2013, p. 332), "cyber optimists" are "individuals who believe that this technology has some features that promote the spread of democracy around the world." Soriano (2013) demonstrates that former US Vice President Al Gore allegedly alludes to this school of thought and is reported to have said in the mid-1990s that technologies not only have the ability to create stronger democracies but can also promote economic growth and stronger, closer-knit communities. Manuel Castells, a Spanish researcher and a strong voice for cyber optimism, holds that the internet provides an outlet for citizens of countries to individually speak up for, and most often against, the governments of their countries in a bid to push for better governance, fully utilising democracy (Castells, 2009). He believes it has produced a distinct form of communication, labelled mass self-communication, which operates alongside mass communication and interpersonal communication. In agreement, Salma (2019) holds that countries like Indonesia have benefited from the use of digital media to encourage citizens'

engagement in civic issues. In the words of Zhao (2014, p. 1), "new media has an effect, for instance, on the shifting of relationships between parties and voters, typically including the voices of citizens in party decision-making."

Following this, Jenkins (2006) argued that the advent of ICT gave rise to a participatory culture, where people were "empowered by these new technologies, occupying a space at the intersection between old and new media," demanding "the right to participate within the culture" (p. 24). In light of this viewpoint, one of the most important roles that ICT plays in activism is the facilitation of mass attention to various social and political concerns. Scholars have claimed that ICT serves as a tool for framing political dissent by bringing together disparate groups with similar goals at little or no cost (Freelon, McIlwain, & Clark, 2016; Byrd et al., 2017; Myles, 2019). In fact, the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia give early indications of how digital technology may be used to kick-start these demonstrations by transforming discontent that is fragmented, localised, and personalised into a coherent community (Howard & Hussain, 2011; Kidd & McIntosh, 2016). In a similar vein, academics have discovered evidence that ICT serves as a vehicle for reporting news during times of political crises (Lotan et al., 2011; Bruns & Highfield, 2012; Barnard, 2018). During the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, the mainstream media often used Twitter to get a better understanding of the situation on the ground as it was reported by common citizens (Lotan et al., 2011; Smidi & Shahin, 2017). The tweets, postings, and hashtags that Egyptian and Tunisian demonstrators provided to mainstream media were very helpful in delivering the information that mainstream media outlets subsequently distributed via official channels. During times of social and political instability, traditional journalists as well as mainstream journalists today regularly resort to social media as a way of reporting news.

As argued by cyber-optimists, the use of ICT as a tool for activism helps to draw external attention and expands the area of impact to offline acts (Aday et al., 2010; Freelon et al., 2016; Mundt, Ross, & Burnett, 2018). Dissent spoken online is heard by a far larger audience than dissent voiced offline alone. International audiences, major media outlets, and politicians all have the ability, thanks to ICT, to learn about and report on social movements taking place all over the globe (Kidd & McIntosh, 2016). Accordingly, the use of ICT has the potential to raise awareness of political concerns, which in turn may place discontent on the political and discursive agendas of other nations (Aday et al., 2010; Bennett & Pfetsch, 2018).

Besides, cyber optimists have the conviction that the unrestricted exchange of ideas on the internet will result in a population that is more informed and democracies that are more robust (Garimella, Weber, & De Choudhury, 2016). They believe that the internet will play a pivotal role in the establishment and consolidation of democratic institutions (Soriano, 2013). Even tiny groups with a highly motivated activist base are able to give their endeavours a mass dimension. Moreover, as Michaelsen (2016) points out, the capacity of political regimes to exert effective control over the flows of information that pass across their borders is hampered by the proliferation of Internet use. Accordingly, local activists are now able to enlighten worldwide public opinion and get active in the internal affairs of their nations thanks to the new technologies, which make it feasible to circumvent censorship imposed by governments and make such circumvention possible in the first place (Soriano, 2013, Michaelsen, 2016). Furthermore, users of the internet, in contrast to journalists and other members of the conventional mass media, are able to move around more anonymously and be present at events and in settings that government censorship prohibits certified professionals from accessing (el-Nawawy & Khamis, 2016; Michaelsen, 2016; Davis, 2020).

Similarly, MohdKamil and Nordin's (2023) findings obtained through multiple linear regression analysis indicate that both the social environment and mass media exert a significant impact on political engagement. This study has practical implications for enhancing youth engagement in political activities.

Cyber pessimists, on the other hand, believe that the increased use of the internet will harm society and government. These second wave of scholars – referred to as cyber-pessimists or cyber-realists, many working within a critical political economy framework and exemplified by Davis (1999); Schiller, 1999; Wilhelm (2000); Sunstein (2001, 2017); Fuchs (2008, 2014, 2020); Hindman (2009); Fenton (2010); Morozov (2011, 2013, 2014); Curran (2012); McChesney (2013); Freedman (2014); McGuigan & Manzerolle (2014) and Davis (2019, 2020) – acknowledged the transformative potential of new media but warned that the reality of capitalism, the associated unequal power relations and ongoing corporate colonization, effectively conspired to limit the emancipatory possibilities envisaged by the cyber-optimists. To that end, Van Aelst et al. (2017) go into greater detail, listing six major concerns that the marriage of ICT and political communication brings to democracy. They are: "declining supply of political information, declining quality of news, increasing media concentration, declining diversity of news, increasing fragmentation and polarization, increasing relativism, and increasing inequality in political knowledge" (p. 3).

Some cyber-pessimists argue that the digital revolution has only served to amplify or, at the very least, reflect the same power inequities that have long plagued activist and broadcast models in the analogue world. Jenkins (2014) emphasises, in an updated conception of participatory culture, that knowledge and access barriers prevent certain individuals from participating in networked cultures. As a direct result of this, academics have discovered that only a select few voices have the potential to



be genuinely powerful in online forums. For instance, Stier et al. (2018) discovered, after conducting an analysis of tweets containing the hashtags #ClimateChange and #NetNeurality, that traditional actors such as regulatory agencies and politicians predominately control online policy discussions concerning issues related to climate change and network neurology, rather than public voices. According to the study's findings, digital technologies and user-provided content are not as revolutionary or egalitarian as previously thought.

The Internet, according to Sunstein (2001), presents a landscape of dispersed information. People are now able to communicate directly with the information providers in which they are most interested. On the other hand, this enables individuals to avoid using other sources of information or to approach problems from other points of view, both of which have the potential to increase their knowledge of and insight into the subject matter. According to Sunstein (2001), this phenomenon is referred to as the "cyberbalkanization" of information. On the other hand, traditional mainstream media try to cater to the requirements of an audience that is as large as possible, and as a result, they disseminate a larger variety of easily accessible information. When consumers use conventional forms of media that are only available offline, they are compelled to take in information even if they are not actively seeking it (Sunstein, 2001). Sunstein (2001) contends, via the use of the term "cyberbalkanization," that the Internet has the effect of reducing the number of available information sources. This hypothesis might explain why blog readers are more polarised than television viewers, as Lawrence, Sides, and Farrell's (2010) research had empirically demonstrated.

Cyber-pessimists, in contrast to cyber-optimists, argue that the accessibility of new media will always be a limiting factor in the democratic potential of the internet. Scholars like Hague and Loader (2005) are concerned that "economic position,

geographic location, and educational achievement" are preventing people from participating in political communication using new media technologies. Green (2010) also showed that in much of the globe, only "the wealthier, more educated, younger men in the society" had Internet access. The severe restriction of the internet that is practised by major parties in certain countries, such as China, has led some cyber-pessimists to further oppose the use of new media for political engagement. The Chinese Communist Party has created a complex information censorship system called the "Great Firewall of China" to monitor and manage online speech inside the country (Wang, 2019; Griffiths, 2021; Durrani, 2022). The Golden Shield's filtering system prevents access to social media and search engines like Facebook, YouTube, and Google, among others. Therefore, while a large number of Internet users have begun to engage in blogging activities, they restrict their output to casual lifestyle-related articles rather than producing political information (Griffiths, 2021).

In contrast to the theoretical debate, the empirical evidence is much more equivocal. Castells (2012), Mason (2012) and Howard & Hussein (2013), for example, argued that new media played a pivotal role in the post-1999 anti-globalization movement; the 2008 US Presidential Election; the 2009 Green Revolution in Iran; and the 2011 Arab Spring and Occupy movements. Morozov (2011, 2013, 2014), Freedman (2014) and Fuchs (2014), however, questioned the empirical basis of such claims and contended that, while new media were important, their role in these cases was far from decisive. Furthermore, Chadwick (2013) insisted that the 2008 US Presidential Election reflected the development of a hybrid media system, entailing the integration of old (e.g. mainstream newspapers and television) and new media (e.g. social media), while Rosen (2013) claimed that the emergence of networked communication involved an increase, rather than a decrease, in the discretionary

power of intermediaries (i.e. gatekeepers) – a process Morozov (2012) termed hyper-intermediation. This demonstrates that there is much more disparity between these two perspectives to be found and it cannot just be exhausted here. Nevertheless, few writers have made an effort to critically Examine both of these schools of thought.

Margolis and Resnick (2000), for instance, are two scholars who have written extensively on the social and ethical implications of technology, considering cyber optimism and cyber pessimism. Margolis and Resnick argue that cyber-pessimists often exaggerate the negative effects of technology and overlook the positive effects. Similarly, they argue that cyber-optimists often exaggerate the positive effects of technology and overlook the negative effects. They claim that the internet and other forms of technology can have both positive and negative effects on society, and that it is important to consider both when evaluating the impact of technology. They view that cyber-pessimists often focus on the negative effects of technology, such as the spread of misinformation, the erosion of privacy, and the negative impact on mental health, while overlooking the positive effects, such as increased access to information, greater connectivity, and the potential for social and political empowerment. This also applies to cyber-optimists. Moreover, they argue that it is important to consider the impact of technology on different groups in society and to take into account the potential for technology to be used for both good and bad purposes. They stress the need for responsible use and for critical thinking when evaluating the impact of technology on society instead of falling into the trap of cyber-pessimism. Ultimately, Margolis and Resnick view that cyber-pessimism and cyber-optimism are not balanced perspectives as they overlook the positive effects of technology and exaggerate the negative and positive effects, respectively. As a result, they believe that it is important

to consider both the positive and negative effects of technology and to take into account the potential for technology to be used for both good and bad purposes.

In a similar vein, after discussing the differences in belief between the cyber optimists and pessimists, Kalsnes (2016) writes, "My empirical studies demonstrate that neither "politics as usual" nor "equalization" are accurate descriptors for the influence new communication technology has had on political communication" (p. 23). The author asserts that to be able to fully grasp the influence of social media on political communication and countries, we should be willing to accept that there might be a third option—a "middle ground" between cyber optimists and cyber pessimists. She elaborates that the "middle ground" would include acknowledging the importance of social media and technology in the modern world and utilising these tools, along with others in the realms of politics and culture, to effect positive social change. Based on Chilwa's (2022) research findings, women's advocacy groups have a stronger voice on social media, where they may challenge patriarchal norms and speak out for equal representation in politics. The author stresses that the advocacy groups are able to reach a wider audience and more individuals across the country and the world through their internet activity, including the most marginalised members of society like rural women and the poor. Women's participation in online activism is largely confined to urban and suburban areas because only a tiny minority of women in rural communities have access to the Internet (Chilwa, 2022).

Nevertheless, it's important to note that there are three primary drivers of the cyber-optimism and cyber-pessimism debates. First, the emergence of new forms of media in the past two decades has provided a platform for citizens from a wide range of political perspectives to engage in spirited discussion (Skoric & Zhu, 2015). This has eroded the distinction between mass and new media audiences, while the

proliferation of information and the increasing complexity of its dissemination have resulted from the corresponding growth of communication channels (one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many). Secondly, in the realm of political communication, interactions between social actors (media, people, and political organisations) "are typically marked by tensions and disruptions, but equally by the compromises and collaboration that are necessary to preserve the connection" (Vltmer, 2006; Negrine & Stanyer, 2007). For example, the influence of new media may be seen in the changing of connections between political parties and voters. These new relationships often include the participation of people in the decision-making process of political parties, despite the fact that there is an ongoing debate over whether or not this is really taking place (Negrine & Stanyer, 2007).

Thirdly, as pointed out by Zhao (2014), researchers have interpreted the dialectical connections between technology and society in vastly divergent ways, from cyberlibertarians' dream of a digital paradise of the future to dystopian nightmares that technology would lead to pervasive monitoring. To put it another way, individuals are now looking at the effects of new media on politics and weighing the advantages and disadvantages of it from quite diverse points of view. This simply serves to fuel the ongoing debate between cyber optimists and pessimists.

## 5.2 Digital Divide Theories

In the book titled, "The German Ideology," Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels opine that most societies are composed of two main classes: the capitalists (also known as the bourgeois), who are most often the smaller population but also the wealthiest and most highly placed in the society; and the proletariat (also known as the working or labour class), who make up the workforce of the community and earn wages for jobs done (Servaes & Oyedemi, 2016). This disparity of classes set the foundation for

the study of inequality. According to Kerbo (2006, p.11 cited by Ragnedda (2020, p.12) inequality "is the condition where people have unequal access to valued resources, services, and positions in the society". Individuals on the lower rung of the equality scale are unable to access education, income, and prestigious resources as quickly as those higher up on the equality scale. Ragnedda (2020) explains that this is so because these equality scales accounted for factors including beauty, knowledge, courage, and wealth.

Suffice to say, the media has been described as the "fourth estate of the realm" since the early 80s. This title, originally used by Edmund Burke in 1787, became popular and has been used to describe the alleged power the media wields in societal and governmental transformation (Cooke, 2019). Traditional media, such as newspapers, radio, and television, were purported to have created some balance in society by empowering the proletariat and giving them a voice where they could vocalise their needs as citizens (Alper, 2017). Accordingly, people took advantage of this opportunity by writing into the newspapers to share their grievances against the government, having columns where they shared their political opinions, and calling into radio stations to participate in political discourse. However, several researchers hold that the traditional media is not as powerful as assumed as it is vastly controlled by the government, especially in developing countries (Johnson, 2003; Dumitrescu & Mughan, 2010; Kuebler, 2011; Schroeder, 2018; Scherr, 2018).

Nevertheless, the invention and proliferation of internet usage beginning in the 1990s came with a renewed and widespread belief that ICTs would bridge the inequality gap, mainly because ICTs offered an unrestricted public sphere. While traditional media was guarded by gatekeepers who were sometimes controlled by the government, ICTs and social media usage effectively eradicated the gatekeeper, and

personal opinions could be shared with a vast population almost immediately with very minimal constraints from the government (Dutton, 2004; Norris, 2010; Kuebler, 2011; Schroeder, 2018; Scherr, 2018; Zhong, 2022). Unfortunately, it was noticed in the 1990s that the inequality and divide flowed into technological access and usage as well (O'Hara & Stevens, 2006). Although ICTs have the potential to improve the lives of older people in many ways, there are substantial inequalities in terms of who has access to, uses, and benefits from them (Atkinson, Black, & Curtis, 2008; Casado-Muoz, Lezcano, & Rodriguez-Conde, 2015; Graham, 2010). According to Sajna (2013), this is why having an internet connection and owning technological equipment have quickly become status symbols in the same way that owning a car once signified financial status.

Mwim & Kritzinger (2016) assert that the term "digital divide" was first used in the mid-1990s and has since become popular among researchers. This corroborates Yu's (2006) claim that the idea of the digital divide became widespread following the publication of the 1995 study "Falling Through the Net," which examined inequalities in the availability of new forms of ICT both within and between nations. In fact, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has defined the term "digital divide" as the "gap between individuals, households, businesses, and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels with regard both to their opportunities to access ICTs and to their use of the Internet for a wide variety of activities" (Pick and Sarkar, 2016, p. 3888). In other contexts, the term refers to differences in Internet and computer use by age group, gender, and ethnicity (van Dijk, 2006; Enoch & Soker, 2006; Mesch & Talmud, 2011; van Dijk, 2017).

Scholars in the fields of communication and the media have raised concerns about issues "beyond access," including: skills needed for users (Hargittai, 2002;

Oyedemi, 2014; Chetty et al., 2018); multiple internet applications (Cho, Gil, Rojas, & Shah, 2003; van Deursen & Helsper, 2015); and to reframe the issue of access as one involving the complete and total adoption of technology beyond mere physical means (Van Dijk & Hacker, 2003; Valadez & Duran, 2007; Lythreatis, El-Kassar, & Singh, 2021). Hargittai (2002) first used the phrase "second-level divide" to describe this shift. People require the ability to command and utilise digital material after they have secured the physical access necessary to do so. Others refer to these competencies as digital skills, while others refer to them as digital or media literacy. Therefore, there are medium-related (i.e., operational) skills necessary to master digital media and content-related skills (i.e., research, communication, action, and creation) (van Deursen & van Dijk, 2014; van Deursen & van Dijk, 2015; Grošelj, van Deursen, Dolničar, Burnik, & Petrovčič, 2021). Since having "access" is a prerequisite for being able to use a computer and traverse the Internet, medium-related abilities are often held to be the most important, both in public opinion and in many academic concepts (van Dijk & van Deursen, 2014). However, all the most recent scholars of digital skills or media literacy have come to the conclusion that being able to retrieve information, communicate effectively, and create content are, in fact, more crucial when utilising digital media (van Dijk & van Deursen, 2014; Liubinienė & Thunqvist, 2015; van Deursen, 2017).

There has been a very limited amount of academic study conducted on the real degree of digital abilities possessed by individuals. Regrettably, it is highly difficult to ascertain this true level because the majority of digital abilities are not the product of attending computer classes but rather of learning via practise in specific social user contexts (van Deursen, Courtois, & van Dijk, 2010; van Deursen & van Dijk, 2014). There have only been a few different estimations of skill level, with the results of



several large-scale studies showing startling disparities in levels of expertise amongst populations, even those of people living in nations with widespread access to computers and the internet (van Deursen, Helsper, & Eynon, 2014; Grošelj, van Deursen, Dolničar, Burnik, & Petrovčič, 2021). However, these studies evaluated respondents' digital competence by having them self-evaluate their own proficiency. This kind of assessment, according to Verbeij, Pouwels, Beyens, and Valkenburg (2021), could lead to concerns about the reliability of the assessment. As such, the method that is more reliable, is to actually measure skill performance while the subject is subjected to experimental settings, which might be time-consuming.

Several distinct schools of thought may be discerned when attempting to make sense of the nature and scope of the digital divide (Yu, 2006). One school of thought maintains that the present gaps in information and communication technology (ICT) access and use are the natural and inevitable results of the spread of innovations and are perpetuated by market forces. This group of scholars (e.g., Lei, Gibbs, Chang, & Lee, 2008; Ragnedda & Muschert, 2015) argue that the gap will close on its own as ICT manufacturers will surely work towards expanding their markets and ultimately develop new avenues to provide ICT goods and services to everyone. To back up their claim, they cite research showing how formerly "have nots" in the realm of ICT (or IT) are rapidly becoming "haves" (Selwyn, 2003; Gebremichael & Jackson, 2006; Qiu, 2009; Raveesh, 2013). Besides, this group does not consider it urgent or necessary for the public or the government to intervene in this process. Another school of thought (e.g., Nguyen, Mosadeghi, & Almario, 2017; Rückert, Veugelers, & Weiss, 2020) contends that the digital divide is both real and pervasive and is one of the most severe forms of socioeconomic inequality that may exist across and within nations. They agree with the first group that market forces are essential in closing the digital divide,

but they advocate for more direct government involvement by encouraging healthy ICT competitions, administering intellectual property rights, providing tax and tariff incentives, establishing technology parks, and providing foreign assistance. They believe that the digital divide is an ongoing issue and point to evidence showing that certain disparities have been widening while others have remained consistent (Sparks, 2013; Grishchenko, 2020; Beard, Ford, & Stern, 2022).

Another school of thought is heavily influenced by questions of ethics, sociology, and political economics. They have a negative view of the concept of having a discourse on digital opportunity without addressing the more fundamental problems of social, political, and cultural inequalities. These authors contend, in versions of their work that are somewhat moderate, that the gap is social in character rather than technical (e.g., van Dijk, 2020). In its most severe form, this school of thought is opposed to efforts to raise awareness of the digital divide, arguing that doing so wastes government resources, makes people more reliant on technology, and diverts focus from real problems. This group is concerned that the unequal global playing field created by the development of ICTs may result in a digital legacy that prioritises economic imperatives above cultural traditions and expertise (Yu, 2006). If there were no major upsides to IT use or major downsides to non-use, then the discussion would boil down to minor variations in access and utilisation rates over time. There is still significant disagreement about whether uneven access to information technology (IT) leads to "structured social inequality," as defined by Willis & Tranter (2002: 2). This, they say, is why those at the top of society's power structure are involved in so many more decisions than those at the bottom. They worry that these differences may harden into institutionalised forms of society and pose a "real threat to democracy" (van Dijk 1999: 236).

Numerous ideas have been adopted from social and economic vantage points trying to comprehend the digital divide. This study will examine about four of these theories: the theory of innovation diffusion, the theory of public and private spheres (Chalita & Erik, 2011), van Dijk's theory of digital technology access and social effects, and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Pick & Sarkar, 2016).

### 5.2.1 The Innovation Diffusion Theory

The Innovation Diffusion Theory, first proposed in 1962 and refined by Rogers (1995), seeks to explain why certain ideas and technologies spread more quickly than others in each social system and what factors contribute to this phenomenon. According to the notion of diffusion, when new types of technology become available, people do not immediately start using them "en masse" (Rogers, 1995). Instead, the invention spreads as its early adopters gain notoriety and financial resources. van Dijk (2020) in his research article also emphasised that the course of the "physical access gap" may follow the S-curve of innovation diffusion. Meanwhile, Dearing and Cox (2018) note that diffusion is often effectively described by three main sets of variables: each innovation's collection of benefits and drawbacks, or qualities; adopters' traits, particularly prospective adopters' assessments of opinion leaders' responses, or social influence; and the wider social and political environment, including the importance of problems associated with the innovation and how proponents and opponents interpret the meaning of an innovation.

Garca-Avilés (2020) describes five types of adopters who embrace technology or innovation as it spreads throughout society in his research article. On the basis of the time dimension, these five sorts of people are set apart from one another. They consist of innovators, early adopters, the early majority, the late majority, and laggards.

People who are considered innovators are open to trying new things, whereas those who are considered laggards are more likely to be sceptical of new developments in the marketplace. According to Wani and Ali (2015), to make an informed decision about whether or not to adopt a new technology, a potential adopter must gather relevant information about the technology in question, evaluate that information, and then decide whether or not the benefits of adopting the technology are worth the effort and time required to learn it. This led Garca-Avilés (2020) to define early adopters as "opinion leaders" who are the first to adopt within their group and are eager to retain their position by reviewing innovations for the rest. Early adopters, in contrast to innovators, tend to operate within the limits of the existing social order (Ismail Sahin, 2006; Vargo, Akaka, & Wieland, 2020). Wani and Ali (2015), however, point out that the view of this group is crucial to the success or failure of the spread and the pace of additional dispersion.

On the other hand, the early majority consists of people who are more cautious and tentative in adopting a new technology (Garca-Avilés, 2020). People often look to the experiences of the first people to try out a new technology or breakthrough for guidance on whether to invest in the endeavour themselves. When considering how to implement a new technology, they take their time yet ultimately don't want to be the last to do so (Wani & Ali, 2015). People who fall into the late majority and laggard categories are those who are more resistant to change and need peer pressure to embrace new products. According to Wani and Ali's (2015) study, innovations that perform well with early adopters and pioneers may not do as well with the early majority and late majority if they lack features that appeal to these demographics. If an innovation is to find widespread acceptance, Wani and Ali (2015) argue that it must satisfy both the needs of the early majority and those of the early adopters.

## 5.2.2 Theory of public spheres

According to Leukes (2012), public spheres, which may be broken down into three levels (micro-, meso-, and macro-spheres), serve as a platform for the discussions that make up society. These spheres can be classified as either micro-, meso-, or macro-levels. Citizens are now able to go beyond the conventional conception of the public sphere and establish new public spheres without the limitations of location, time, or political interest, thanks to advances in information and communications technology (ICT). In this manner, they renegotiate the norms, positions, and meanings of society in order to reconstruct its structure (Dahlgren, 2005; Rasmussen, 2014). Furthermore, it provides opportunities to people who are not currently connected to any other citizens via any network. This theory explains how information and communication technologies have an effect on power, focusing specifically on how the Internet has changed society (Fuchs, 2015; Schafer, 2016; Kruse, Norris, & Flinchum, 2017). It also makes it clear, although in a more subtle way, that an institutional viewpoint may serve as a prism through which phenomena related to the digital divide can be understood on an individual, national, and global scale (Blank & Grosej, 2015; Massimo Ragnedda, 2017). Several studies provide credence to this idea by examining the taxonomy of the institutions that wield power over the rules, regulations, and market mechanisms pertaining to information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Srinuan, 2011).

## 5.2.3 van Dijk's Theory of Digital Technology Access and Societal Impacts

At its foundation, this theory posits that the disparities in personality and background result in disparities in individual resources, which in turn result in access

disparities and, ultimately, disparities in people's engagement in a society van Dijk (2005) introduced the phrase "deepening gap" to underline that this issue of digital inequality does not cease after physical access has been achieved but rather begins when the usage of digital media is integrated into day-to-day life. He argued that this is because the problem of digital inequality does not end once physical access has been attained. In this case, he found that demographic factors such as income, education, age, gender, and ethnicity were correlated with physical access. However, it was not possible to determine the reasons for access based just on correlations with access, let alone its consequences, which were disregarded. In this area as well, multiple studies have discovered what is known as a "usage gap" in the variety of apps used by individuals of varying ages, levels of education, and genders (Ghobadi & Ghobadi, 2015; Tsetsi & Rains, 2017; van Dijk, 2019).

Meanwhile, Van Deursen & Van Dijk (2013) noted that the "usage gap" between older and younger users of certain apps is now greater than the educational divide. However, they believe that as younger generations replace older ones, this gap will narrow. Already, there is not much of a gender disparity in utilisation (Helsper, 2010). The disparity in educational use will probably be the one that lasts the longest. This is because people with higher levels of education are significantly more likely to use the sophisticated applications of digital media for capital-enhancing goals related to their work, careers, and academic pursuits. On the other hand, people with lower levels of education are more likely to use the straightforward applications of digital media for entertainment, commerce, and messaging (Bonfadelli, 2002; Cho et al., 2003; Van Dijk, 2005; Zillien & Hargittai, 2009; Van Deursen & Van Dijk, 2013).

## Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)

Venkatesh et al. (2003) constructed a unified theory of technology acceptance by combining important factors that predicted behavioural intention and usage. This was done in order to give a comprehensive explanation of how people adopt new technologies. The purpose of this is to explain how individuals adopt new technologies. According to Ayaz and Yanartaş (2020), the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) examines the influence of performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions on their desire to embrace new technologies. The level of interest an individual has in adopting a technology for use in their own pursuits (their "behavioural intention," or "BI") is influenced by the model's fundamental elements, including anticipated performance, perceived effort, and social factors. The final usage behaviour of a person is dependent not just on BI but also on the factors that promote it. UTAUT's fundamental concepts are related to behavioural intention, with gender, age, voluntariness, and experience acting as moderators. According to Scheerder, van Deursen, and van Dijk (2017), gender and age are important demographic characteristics that have often been highlighted as crucial predictors of ICT access in the research that has been conducted on the topic of the digital divide.

### 5.2.4 Digital Divide and Political Participation

Among the many topics studied in relation to the "digital divide," the advantages to politics that Internet access providers have offered have been one of the most intensively investigated (Min, 2010; Calderaro, 2014; van Deursen & Helsper, 2015). Individuals who regularly use ICT are more likely to take part in civic life than those who don't (Bikson & Panis, 1995; Hawkins, 2005). As a matter of fact, those who are

marginalised politically and/or socially are more likely to take on leadership positions and participate actively in online discussions as compared to their offline counterparts (Bikson & Panis 1995). It is established that people can learn about politics and stay updated on current events by using the internet. Although the precise nature of the Internet's influence on politics has yet to be demonstrated, there are signs that IT and Internet use have numerous beneficial effects on politics. These benefits extend well beyond the simple convenience of storing and retrieving documents. Johnson's (2003: p. 3) statement that "the Internet can give power to the less powerful, and it can increase the power of the already powerful" exemplifies the digital divide implications of utilising IT and the Internet for politics. It simply all depends on who uses the Internet and how (Johnson, 2003).

Today, a number of nations are working to close the digital divide in an effort to realise their vision of a society in which all individuals have access to and are able to freely exchange information. For instance, the e-rate programme in the United States, which is run by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), has been very helpful in bridging the digital gap in the educational institutions of the United States of America (Jakayar, 2004). This initiative intends to provide a discount on telecommunications and Internet access services to the majority of schools and libraries in the United States in order to make these services more affordable. In 2006, the European Commission established the concept of "e-inclusion" as the third pillar of the i2010 policy initiative, which aimed to reduce the digital gap in the EU by half by 2010. (EIU, 2008). Countless other programmes like this have also been launched.

### 5.3 Youth Participation Theories

Research on youth political participation have been supported by several theories. With the exception of ideas about the digital divide, these hypotheses have



been shown to be commonly used by the many other authors who have conducted studies similar to this one. This was ascertained after the literature review.

### 5.3.1 Technology Determinism Theory

Before the 1980s, a significant number of academics in the field of technology were of the opinion that the progression of technology may, in some way, be a history-shaping process that was out of control. The idea that technology has a significant impact on our lives is known as technological determinism (TD), and it may be summarised as the notion that technology plays a major role in our daily lives. This is a theory that is supported by those who call themselves "hyperglobalists," and they assert that rapid globalisation and social transformation are unavoidable outcomes that are caused by the widespread availability of technology (Opara, 2022; Wagbara & Otomiewo, 2022). As a result, the growth of technology and the introduction of new ideas have become the primary agents of social, economic, or political transformation (de la Cruz & Lin, 2016). When these researchers looked at the big picture, they concluded that technological progress appeared to occur naturally, in accordance with some kind of underlying technical logic, and that it had far-reaching, unanticipated effects on society (Dafoe, 2015). This concept is important in both cultural and political discourse because it is widely assumed that the Internet is causing revolutionary changes in both the economy and society.

The term "technological determinism," as Ronald Kline (2001) points out, is presently employed to criticise the extreme position that (1) technology develops according to an "internal logic independent of social influence" and that (2) "technological change determines social change in a prescribed manner" (p. 15495). Technical determinists hold that technological impact is not proportional to the extent to which a technology is or may be employed (Wyatt, 2008). In technical determinism,

technology is seen as the foundation of all human endeavours, as opposed to being viewed as a component of a broader spectrum of human activities.

Technological determinism has been summarised as "the belief in technology as a key governing force in society" (Merritt Roe Smith cited in Koniakou, 2019). It changes the way people think and how they interact with others and can be described as a three-word logical proposition: "Technology determines history" (Williams, 2007). It is the belief that social progress is driven by technological innovation, which in turn follows an "inevitable" course (Marx & Merritt Roe Smith, 1994). This "idea of progress" or "doctrine of progress" is centred on the belief that social issues can be handled by technical innovation and that this is the method by which society advances (Wyatt, 2008; Dafoe, 2015; Hauer, 2017).

"Technological determinism" has been described as a theory that places emphasis on technical progress as the driving force behind societal transformation (Croteau & Hoynes, 2019). When a technology matures and becomes more stable, its design has a greater propensity to dictate the actions of its users, which in turn reduces the amount of human agency available. For those who take a technical determinist stance, "the uses made of technology are largely determined by the structure of the technology itself, that is, that its functions follow from its form," rather than recognising that societies and cultures interact with and even create the technologies that are utilised (Neil Postman, as cited by Shinkafi, 2016).

Technological determinism is no longer seen as providing a particularly realistic picture of the manner in which people engage with modern technology by contemporary theorists who study the intersection of technology and society. They emphasise that "the relationship between technology and society cannot be reduced to a simplistic cause-and-effect formula." It is, rather, an "intertwining," whereby

technology does not determine but "operates and is operated upon in a complex social field" (Murphie & Potts, 2017, p. 22). Moreover, technological determinists have critics among those who hold to social determinism and postmodernist theories. Since social determinists believe that societal conditions alone determine which technologies are accepted, they assert that no technology can be deemed "inevitable" based only on the qualities of the technology itself (Lule, 2018). When information is added to the mix, the technological apparatus gets embedded in the social processes that it is meant to facilitate. The knowledge of how to use technology, as well as the knowledge of how to produce and improve technology, are both examples of socially constrained knowledge. Postmodernists have a different point of view, which suggests that what is considered right or wrong is contingent on the context (Harvey, 2008). They think that changes in technology might have repercussions not just in the past but also in the present and the future. While they acknowledge that shifts in legislation, society, and culture all have a role in how technologies evolve, they find the whole concept of change paradoxical.

No wonder authors like Dafoe (2015) offer moderate definitions of technological determinism as a theory that emphasises (1) "the autonomy of technological change" and (2) "the technological shaping of society" (p. 1052), as a means of rebutting detractors and demonstrating the theory's continued applicability. Besides, it's important to recognise the relevance of this theory to the research at hand, since it postulates that technology may affect society, and as shown, both youth and society at large have been shaped by social media.

### 5.3.2 The Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT)

First proposed by Blumler & Katz (1974), the Uses and Gratifications theory may be summarised by its five key postulates. These include (a) active media

selection by users (audiences), (b) media selection by users based on their own fulfillment, (c) competition among various media, (d) individual, social, and contextual factors, and (e) the relationship between media usage and its effects. Therefore, the theory explores the satisfaction of social and psychological wants, as well as other types of needs, via the use of media and technology (Blumler & Katz, 1974; Lin, 1999; Leung & Wei, 2000; Chen, 2011). In its early stages of development (1950s to the 1980s), researchers concentrated on conventional media like television (Lin, 1999), newspapers (Katz, Gurevitch, & Haas, 1973), the Internet (Chigona, Kamkwenda, & Manjoo, 2008; La Ferle & Edwards, 2009), and smart phones (La Ferle & Edwards, 2009; Matanhelia, 2010). In the past five to ten years, however, a change in the way people use social media has given the theory fresh life and relevance in the Internet age (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008, p. 169). Specifically, the Uses and Gratifications theory has been used to analyse why people use social networking sites like Facebook (Smock, Ellison, Lampe, & Wohn, 2011) and microblogging platforms like Twitter (Chen, 2011).

Theorists believe that uses and gratifications may be organised into the following five categories, which correspond to the following five groupings of human wants (Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas, 1973, as cited in Tan, 1985: 235-236): (a) Cognitive needs: obtaining information, knowledge, understanding our social environment, curiosity, and exploration; (b) Affective needs: aesthetic and emotional experiences, pleasure; (c) Personal identity: the need for self-confidence, personal stability, integrity, social status, and the need for self-respect; (d) Integration and social interaction: family relationships, connection with the outside world, the need for affiliation; and (e) Escapism: the need to escape, tens of thousands of hours spent.

According to another categorization that was proposed by Rubin (1981: 147), there are eight distinct reasons why people watch television programs. These reasons include practically every imaginable reason for utilising any kind of media (Rubin, 1981). They include: (a) To pass the time (for example, watching television in a waiting room); (b) Companionship (for example, gathering with friends to watch football); (c) Escape (for example, watching television to escape from the pressure created by a deadline for submitting an essay); (d) Enjoyment (for some people, watching television is enough to bring them pleasure); (e) Social interaction (for example, discussing the content of television shows can give us the feeling that we are connected with others); (f) Relief (e.g. watching a crime movie in which the conflict and violence create a sense of excitement).

Moreover, Rubin (2002) observes that research in the theories of uses and gratification has often concentrated on one of six primary thematic areas. These areas include (a) examining the different social and psychological circumstances of media use; (b) comparing motivations across different forms of media; (c) evaluating the link or difference between gratifications sought (GS) and gratifications obtained (GO); (d) determining whether variations in backgrounds have an effect on behaviour and characteristics; and finally, (e) taking into consideration the methods, reliability, and validity of measuring media use motivations (Rubin, 2002).

At a later point in the development of the theory, which occurred sometime around the middle of the 1980s, a differentiation between gratification sought and gratification obtained was established. In the event that the receiver does not experience the desired level of gratification, they may decide to discontinue their use of a certain medium or their consumption of a specific kind of media material. On the

other hand, the receiver can end up getting satisfaction that he or she hadn't planned on looking for in the first place.

Meanwhile, it's important to note that the uses and gratifications theory has had its fair share of criticism as well. Concerns have been raised, for example, about how much emphasis is placed on respondents' self-reporting in order to obtain data in studies on uses and gratification (Severin & Tankard, 1988). It's also worth noting that O'Donohoe (1994) admits that the uses-and-gratifications theory has been criticised on the grounds that it is frequently reduced to generating lists of reasons why audiences interact with media. Another argument against it is that it presumes an engaged audience that is paying close attention at all times, which is not always the case (Lometti, Reeves, & Bybee, 1977). When it comes to distinguishing between gratification sought and gratification obtained, uses and gratifications research tends to blur the lines (Palmgreen, Wenner, & Rayburn, 1981; Ruggiero, 2000). Despite these concerns, scholars such as Rubin (2002) and Ruggiero (2000) point out that the emergence of new media forms, and the internet in particular, may have revitalised the uses and gratifications theory. As a result, this theory still plays an active role in this study and is of great significance.

## 5.4 Theoretical Framework

After careful consideration, it is believed that focusing this research on theories of the "digital divide" would be the best approach to answering the proposed research questions. This decision was influenced by the preceding analysis of relevant theories and studies that have been conducted.

## Significance of the Theory of Digital Divide to this Study

Hilbert (2015) in his research article asserted that inequality in the spread of digital technologies and ICT is significant because these tools are paradigm-shifting "general purpose technologies" with far-reaching effects on many spheres of society, from the economy to politics to culture. The concept of the "digital divide" has expanded to include discussions of the generational gap in ICT adoption and use (Salajan, Schönwetter, & Cleghorn, 2010; Hwang & Nam, 2017; Zhou, He, & Lin, 2022). In other words, youth today are not only comfortable with and adept at using modern ICT tools, but they also have a natural affinity for and interest in technology. As an explanation, one may point to the widespread availability and widespread usage of technology in today's generation, which has altered the way people see many aspects of their lives (Herring, 2008). As previously said, this feature of the digital divide can contribute to increased political involvement among youth more than any other demographic group. The prevalence of social media and the internet in general has been largely responsible for this. The disputes between cyber pessimists and cyber optimists have even led to an agreement on what is known as the democratic divide (Norris, 2000; Nam & Stromer-Galley, 2012; Martin, 2015) and now digital divide has turned to democratic divide (Min, 2010; Nam, 2011). Having said that, this theory is so important to the investigation at hand because it provides the theoretical groundwork and premises that further explain why and how youth actively engage in politics through social media. While many studies reveal that youth are less politically engaged than older people are, this might be explained by the fact that youth today are turning to technology for quicker and simpler solutions. So although they may not be as physically present at voting places or during campaigns as the older generation, they are actively engaged in politics through political dialogues and the creation of

social media postings and online material concerning political and social topics. They are, after all, technological natives.

The “digital divide” theory was applied in the data analysis of the study to examine the potential impact of this inequality on the results. Besides, it was used to refine the study's research questions. In this context, when designing the study, it adopted sampling techniques that ensure individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds are included in the sample to account for any potential impact of the digital divide. In these cases, however, variables such as income and education level would not be taken into account when considering the impact of the digital divide on the results. When it comes to data collection, the study used a combination of online and offline data collection methods to ensure that individuals without internet access are not excluded from the study. In addition, data analysis was done separately for individuals with and without internet access to identify any differences in results and to understand how the digital divide may impact the findings. Finally, the findings were interpreted using the digital divide theory to account for the potential impact of the digital divide on the findings.

## 5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have conducted an in-depth analysis of the many schools of thought and arguments that have surfaced in relation with the use of ICT in political settings. Several theories that attempt to explain the widespread use of ICT among youth, the preferences of certain youth for particular ICT tools like social media, the disproportionate prevalence of specific demographics among ICT users and the ways in which youth use ICT have also been examined. This was done in regard to the research that is now being conducted, and in the end, two theories were chosen to serve as the theoretical framework for this investigation. To better understand why and



how certain youths are so involved in politics via social media, the idea of digital divide was adopted.

# CHAPTER SIX

## METHODOLOGY

### 6.0 Introduction

This chapter will provide a detailed account of the research methods used in order to arrive at the results of this investigation. It includes the design of the study, the population for the study, the sample and sampling technique, the instrument for data collection, the validation of the instrument, the reliability of the instrument, the method of data collection, and the method of data analysis. This chapter will end with a critical analysis of the ethical concerns that arose throughout the planning and execution of the research, highlighting the interdependence of methodology and ethics.

### 6.1 Research Design

The study employed a survey research design. The use of a survey research design simply involves "the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions" (Check & Schutt, 2012, p. 160). This type of study permits the use of several techniques for selecting youth, data collection, and equipment. As a result, it was used in this research to extract the views and interests of Nigerian youths toward political participation. In fact, as once pointed out by Isaac & Michael (1995), this survey research was used to "answer questions that have been raised, to solve problems that have been posed or observed, to assess needs and set goals, to determine whether or not specific objectives have been met, to establish baselines against which future comparisons can be made, to analyse trends across

time, and generally, to describe what exists, in what amount, and in what context" (p. 136).

In conducting a survey, one may use either quantitative or qualitative approaches, or even a combination of the two (i.e., mixed methods). In any case, the theoretical foundation behind this study led the researcher to settle for the quantitative approach in an effort to gather responses on political participation of youths in rural and urban areas. After all, as Bloomfield and Fisher (2019) explain, quantitative research relies heavily on the identification and examination of causal links between variables. Hence, Nigerian youths can be easily and accurately surveyed using a predetermined set of questions and answers, making the quantitative survey research design adequate for this study. Bearing in mind that the study is focused on assessing youth political participation in rural and urban areas, the online and offline approach were adopted as it relates to youth engagement in the areas under study. The urban youth were reached through social media platforms while the youths in rural areas were reached by physical contacts. This decision is due to higher online presence of youths in urban areas compared to their counterparts in rural areas.

## 6.2 Population of the study

This study focused on Nigerian youths between the ages of 16 and 35 who come from either an urban or rural area. Currently, over 33.6 million (16.8 percent) Nigerians are regarded as "youths" (aged between 15 and 35) (Farquharson, 2019 as cited by Ossai, 2022). In fact, as highlighted by Omoju and Abraham (2014), the country also faces a youth bulge. Nevertheless, they are literally at the centre of our inquiry given the indispensable role they inevitably play in elections and politics.

## 6.3 Sample of the study

A sample of 1,000 youths was selected for this study. This sample size was chosen based on Comrey and Lee's (1992) advice in determining the adequacy of the sample size: 100 = poor, 200 = fair, 300 = good, 500 = very good, and 1,000 or more = excellent. Moreover, it was established that out of the total sample of 1000 youths, 500 youths represented youths in urban areas, while the remaining 500 youths represented youths in rural regions. For convenience, youths in urban areas were asked to fill out online questionnaire and were mostly contacted through social media platforms, while youths in rural areas were reached through trained research assistants and asked to fill out hardcopies of the questionnaire. This is because youth living in urban areas have a higher rate of online presence than those living in rural regions. This brings this study once again to the theory of the digital divide.

## 6.4 Sampling technique

It is generally agreed that sampling is a vital part of research since it assists in confirming the validity and reliability of the study as well as providing insight into the quality of the research (Gibbs et al., 2007; Tokdar & Kass, 2009; Thompson, 2012). Therefore, it was unavoidable that the practise of sampling would also be used in this investigation. Specifically, the multistage sampling method was used to recruit youths for this study. This sampling method is "needed when the population is heterogenous but widely spread" (Pace, 2021, p.9). This included clustering the population into subsets and then randomly choosing from each subset using the appropriate sample method.

### **First stage**

At this stage, the researcher simply used cluster sampling to split the study population (Nigerian youths) into subsets. Given the geographically distributed nature of Nigerian youths, they were divided into groups (or "clusters") that corresponded to the country's six geopolitical zones. This is consistent with Daniel's (2012) claim, which argues that cluster sampling is very helpful in situations in which the population is dispersed in many different locations. As a result, the youths of Nigeria were divided into smaller groups, namely: North Central, Northwest, Northeast, South-South, Southwest, and Southeast.

### **Second stage**

In this stage, Quota sampling was used to select 168 youths from the first five clusters (North Central, Northwest, Northeast, South-South, and Southwest). On the other hand, 160 youths were selected from the last cluster (Southeast). This was done because the last cluster had the fewest number of states and the lowest population when compared to the other clusters. Besides, quota sampling was considered appropriate for this phase since it allows a researcher to choose a sample group to reflect certain demographic features (Taherdoost, 2016). Such features in this regard would be the number of states and population size, as stated earlier, which served as the rationale for sampling the youth population this way.

### **Third Stage**

Finally, youths representing urban or rural areas were chosen at random from each cluster. Thus, it follows that the 168 youths chosen from the first five clusters (North Central, Northwest, Northeast, South-South, and Southwest) were split evenly to represent rural and urban areas (84 each). Also, the 160 youths selected from the last cluster (Southeast) were split evenly to represent rural and urban areas (80 each).

Overall, 500 youths represented the country's urban areas, while 500 youths represented its rural areas. Youths from urban and rural areas were chosen as study participants so that comparative data with regards to their political participation rates could be collected and analysed.

## 6.5 Research Instrument

The youths were surveyed using a questionnaire designed to extract their opinions and motivations for becoming involved in politics. Youths were requested to fill out a questionnaire that has a series of questions and provide answers that are free of bias and reflect their objective opinions (see Appendix II). In addition, the questionnaire included questions that specifically sought the youths' subjective perspectives. Moreover, it's worth noting that these questions were asked in line with the objectives and general purpose of the study as well as the theoretical framework of the study. After all, as pointed out by Pranee Liamputtong (2013) as well as Nhan (2020), the research questions and topics central to the study are heavily influenced by the broader theoretical framework, which in turn strongly influences the methods used to conduct the research.

In addition, the questions asked in the survey explored youths' demographics, levels of political interest and knowledge, and exposure to and understanding of political and media communication. As a result, the questionnaire is divided into four sections. Part 1 solicited information on the personal data of the youths, such as name, age, gender, and region. Part 2 dealt with the knowledge level and interest of youths in politics. Part 3 solicited information surrounding their participation in politics. Part 4 concluded the questionnaire by examining if, where, when, and why youth access the media for politics.

### 6.5.1 Validity of Research Instrument

To check the instrument's validity for this investigation, a few measures were taken. Using the ideas and questions gleaned from the literature review, the researcher created the first version of the research instrument. This draft was validated in person by the supervisor, who also reviewed it, to make sure that all the items in the instrument were in line with the aims of the research and theoretical framework. He also evaluated the questionnaire's readability, content accuracy, breadth of coverage, and appropriateness of questions in light of the data collection goals. The supervisor's suggestions were effectively incorporated, and the final questionnaire was approved.

### 6.5.2 Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was established using test-retest wherein 15 copies of the questionnaire were administered to a sample of 15 youths. This was repeated after a period of two weeks. The reason for the trial testing was to determine the internal consistency of the questionnaire.

## 6.6 Method of Data Collection

The questionnaire was made with both online and offline options in mind. The online questionnaire was administered using an e-survey site (SmartSurvey, [smartsurvey.co.uk](https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk)) to youths from urban areas. Additionally, these youths were reached through social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp. The researcher created a questionnaire link on Smart Survey with the link <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Chidubem/>. This link was immediately sent to friends on the 27th of April 2022, shared on the researcher's WhatsApp status, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Facebook. The researcher monitored the site for two weeks and reviewed the responses and seeing respondents clearly understood the questions

continued sharing the links. To gain more responses, the researcher beckoned on friends and family members to share the research link with their social network. More youth were made aware of the study because individuals who were familiar with the issue and had many social networks shared it via various platforms- whatsapp church groups, facebook closed groups and Instagram stories amongst others, were used in recruiting respondents. Overall, these online participants were recruited through social media sites and their geographic details were collected- with their knowledge and permission- to ensure a diverse group. The researcher had budgeted three months to run the survey online hoping to have achieved 500 responses in that timescale, but eventually closed the survey link to more responses on the 12th of July 2022 after receiving 626 responses. Not all of these were usable as some were blank, and some filled halfway so the researcher stuck to using the first 500 fully completed responses.

Meanwhile, youths living in rural regions were given the option to fill out hardcopies of the questionnaire, which were delivered by trained research assistants. To distribute the questionnaire, study assistants visited remote areas of the nation. That way a diverse sample of rural youths were ensured since they were not selected from just one rural area. The youths were recruited through in-person workshops on the topic delivered by the research assistants. Moreover, the research assistants were chosen because of their expertise with the study area and to help with the distribution and collection of the questionnaire.

After several conversations with the internal supervisory team, it was agreed the best way to collect data from Nigerian youths who dwell in rural areas would be through hard copy versions as most of these people would lack internet connection to access the online version of the questionnaire. Considering financial and time constraints, it was decided the best way to collect the data from rural dwellers was by



using research assistants. The researcher broke down the country into four main geopolitical zones and reaching out to friends and family, including trusted lecturers in Nigeria; was able to find 4 tested, trusted, and trained research assistants to aid collect data from the geopolitical zones. Four were recruited to cover the North, South, East and West and the environs (Abeokuta for West, Kaduna for North, Nsukka for East and Delta for South). These research assistants were at the time resident in these zones and had basic knowledge of how best to recruit respondents in their zones. To ensure they gave their best to this study, the researcher provided a little stipend of 50,000 Naira to each research assistant, and another 20,000 Naira to cover the printing of materials and transportation. The researcher had a brief training session with each research assistant prior to beginning field work and provided them with the informed consent form and questionnaire. The research assistants understood the need for excellence in collecting data and after mobilising them financially, they printed off the questionnaire and shared it amongst willing participants. They travelled to villages, and I provided the finances to cover these trips and they took pictures of the responses and mailed to me. The data collection ran from the 1st of May till the 30th of July and each geopolitical zone submitted 125 responses.

## 6.7 Data analysis

A comparative analysis of youths in urban and rural areas with regards to political participation would involve comparing the level of political engagement and participation among youth in urban and rural areas. This analysis could include factors such as voter turnout, political knowledge, and involvement in civic or political organizations. In this case, the study used tables, simple percentages, frequencies, and the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to assess the quantitative data obtained in order to identify any differences or similarities in the level of political

engagement and participation among youth in urban or rural areas (Ong and Puteh, 2017). Meanwhile, questions on digital media and technology availability and usage were added to the survey to examine whether or not the digital divide affects the degree to which youth in urban and rural areas participate in politics. Similar considerations apply to the uses-and-gratification theory, in which questions about how and why people use certain digital technologies were asked, and the results were analysed to determine whether or not this factor influenced the study's outcome. This method allows the study to present a more accurate and precise understanding of the level of political participation of youth in urban and rural areas by using numerical data to make comparisons. It also allows the researcher to generalise the findings of the study to a larger population of youth in urban and rural areas since the sample is representative of the population. Still, the research dug further by analysing subsets of the data based on factors like age, gender, socioeconomic status, and geographic location to see whether these factors influence people's likelihood of participating in politics.

## 6.8 Ethical considerations

Lofman, Pelkonen, & Pietila (2004) emphasized the need of being aware of and prepared for any ethical concerns that may develop throughout the course of doing research. Prior to conducting this study, ethical approval was obtained from the University Research Ethics Committee, Media and Communication Design, Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences for the first version of this thesis titled 'The Role of social media in Fostering Youth Voting in the 2019 Nigerian Presidential Elections'. Following a failed Viva, this version of the thesis is a more improved version from an earlier thesis titled 'The Role of social media in Fostering Youth Voting in the 2019 Nigerian Presidential Elections'. While the topic was changed and the research focus

more defined, the study still centered around researching on young adults in Nigeria and how they participated in politics. The supervisory team believed the ethical approval gotten for the previous research carried out covered the data collection for this survey as the questions were highly similar. The research questions and the survey questions were carefully scrutinized as well to ensure there were no questions asking respondents questions not covered by the previously received ethical approval. Also, this decision is backed by Shaw (2003), who cautions against putting too much value on the ethics review phase of a study, since ethical concerns can also be resolved during the study. Consequently, the research was conducted with several ethical considerations in mind.

### **Informed consent**

Prior to conducting the survey, all youths were required to submit written informed consent (See Appendix 1). For a person to provide informed consent to take part in a research project, Blackmer (2003) argues that three conditions must be met: capacity (capability to understand the study's context, including potential risks and benefits); voluntariness (independence from any kind of force, intentional or otherwise); and disclosure (providing every piece of data needed to aid in decision making). In addition to this, youths were given the chance to pose questions and offer feedback at various points during the study.

### **Confidentiality**

There was also careful attention paid to ensuring that sensitive data was secure from prying eyes and would not be misused, leaked, altered, lost, or stolen. Therefore, all paper records amassed for this investigation were safely filed away in a locked cabinet. The researcher checked for proper coding and anonymization of the acquired data to verify its accuracy. Confidentiality must be maintained for the sake of both the

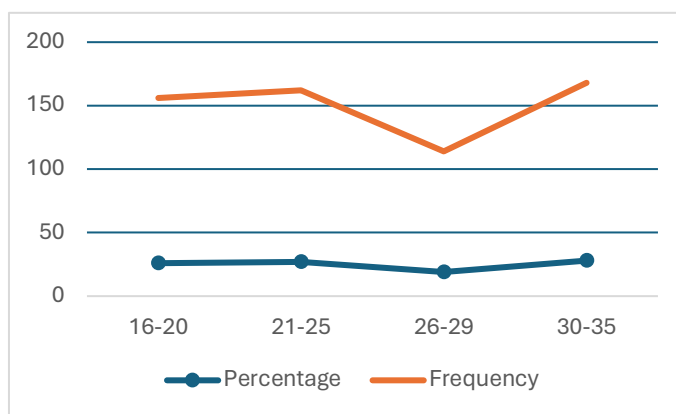
researcher-participant relationship and the scientific validity of the study (Kaiser, 2019).

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

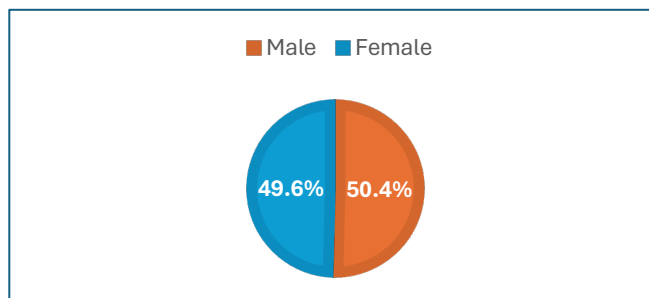
#### 7.1 PRESENTATION OF DATA GATHERED FROM RURAL RESPONDENTS

**Figure 4: Age of Rural Respondents**



The result of the study as presented in Figure 4 show that 130 (26.0%) of the respondent were within the range of 16-20 years old, 135 (27.0%) were within the range of 21-25 years old, 95 (19.0%) were within the range of 26-29 years old, and 140 (28.0%) were within the range of 30-35 years old.

**Figure 5: Gender of Rural Respondents**



The result of the study as presented in Figure 5 show that 252 of the respondents representing (50.4%) are male while 248 of the respondents representing 49.6% are female.

**Figure 6: Rural Respondents State of Origin**

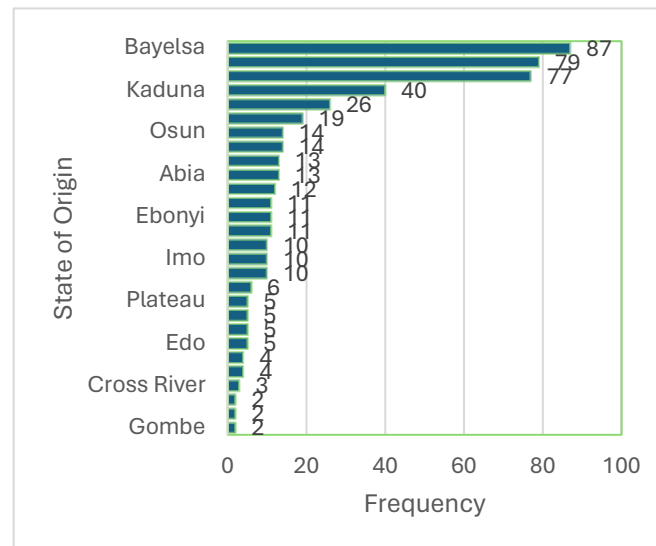


Figure 6 shows the state of origin of the respondents. The result show that 13 (2.6%) of the respondent from Abia state, 4 (0.8%) are from Adamawa state, 11(2.2%) are from Akwa-Ibom state, 19(3.8%) are from Anambra state, 87(17.4%) are from Bayelsa state, 13, (2.6%) are from Benue state, 3(0.6%) are from Cross River State, 10(10.0%) are from Delta state, 11(2.2%) of the respondents are from Ebonyi state, 5(1.0%) of the respondents are from Edo State, 77(15.4%) of the respondents are from Ekiti state, 79(15.8%) of the respondents are from Enugu state, 2(0.4%) are from Gombe state, 10(2.0%) of the respondents are from Imo state, among others.

**Figure 7: Rural Respondents' Place of Residence**

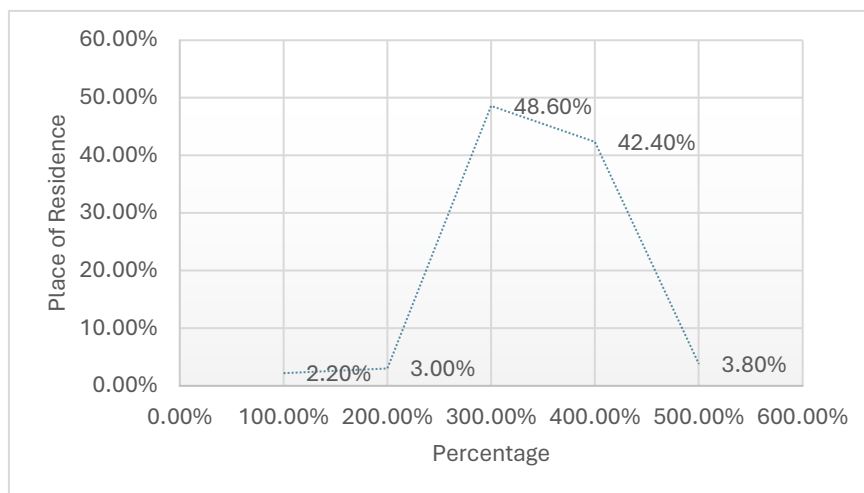
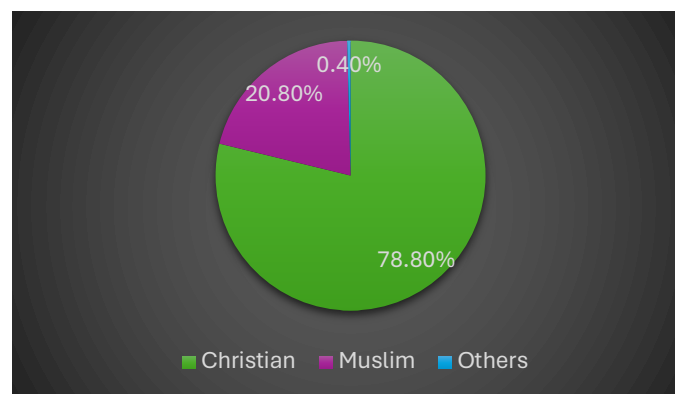


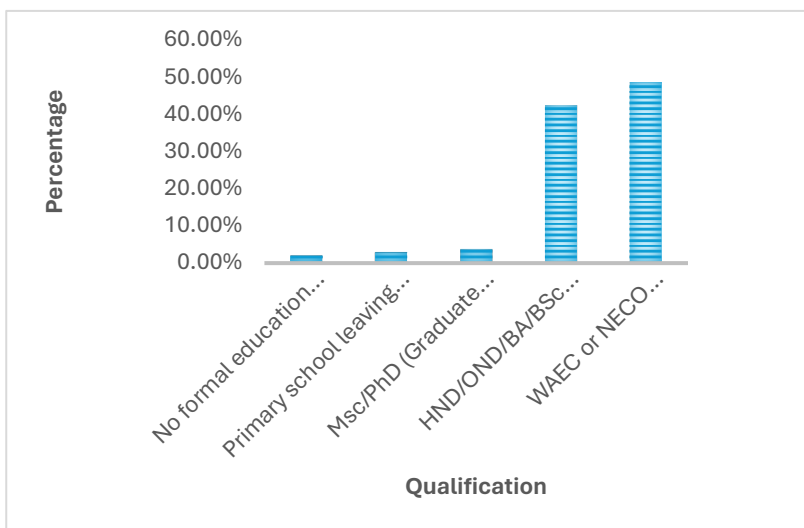
Figure 7 shows the respondents' place of residence. The result show that 107 (21.4%) of the respondent from Bayelsa state, 120 (24.0%) are from Ekiti state, 115(23%) are from Enugu state, 123(24.6%) are from Kaduna state, 11(2.2%) are from River state, among others.

**Figure 8: Religion of Rural Respondents'**



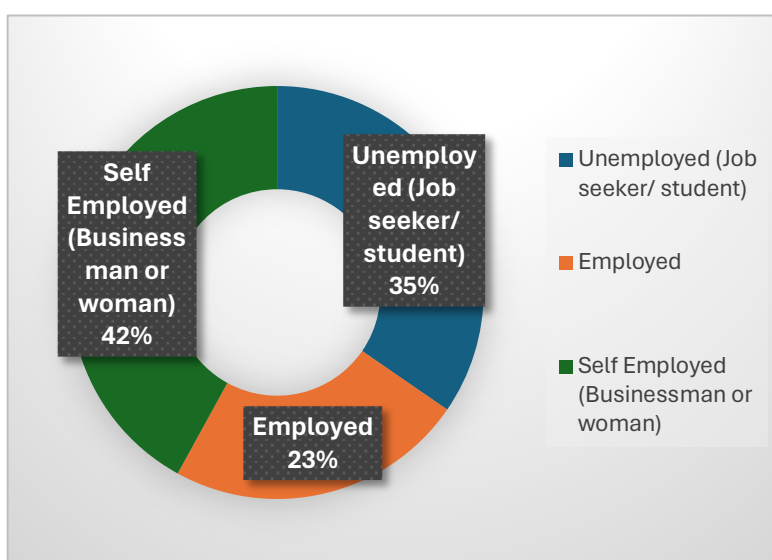
The finding of the study as presented in Figure 8 shows the religion of the respondents. The result show that 394 of the respondents representing 78.8% are Christians, 104 of the respondents representing 20.8% are Muslims while only 2 of the respondents representing 0.4% practice other religion. This result shows that majority of the respondents were Christians.

**Figure 9: Rural Respondents' Highest Educational Qualification**



The finding of the study as presented in Figure 9 shows the highest education qualification of the respondents. The result show that 11(2.2%) of the respondents had no formal education (never been to school), 15(3.0%) had primary school leaving certificate, 243(48.6%) had WAEC or NECO (i.e. secondary school), 212(42.4%) had HND/OND/BA/BSc (University level) while 19(3.8%) had Msc/PhD (Graduate School). This result shows that majority of the respondents were secondary school leavers.

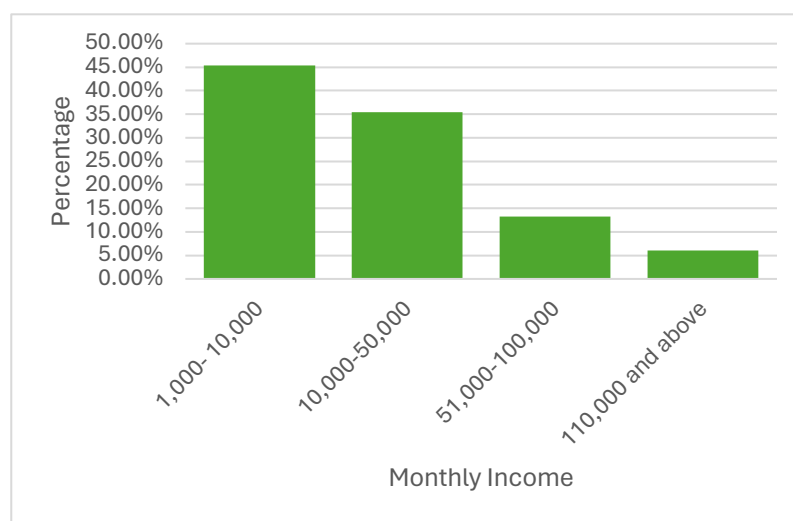
**Figure 10: Rural Respondents' Current Job Status**





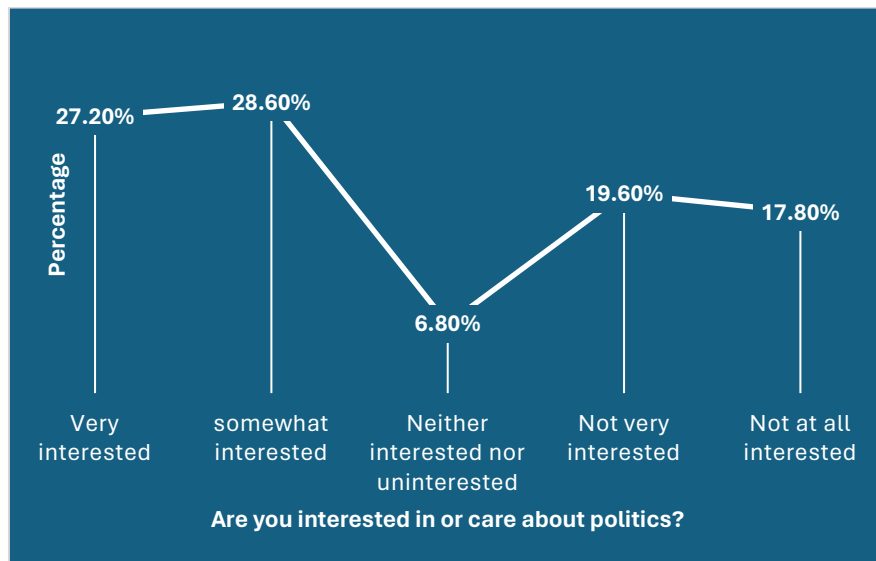
The finding of the study as presented in Figure 10 shows the respondents' current job status. Result shows that 173 of the respondents representing 34.6% were unemployed or job seekers, 117 of the respondents representing 23.4% were employed or with a job while 210 of the respondents representing 42.0% were self-employed, they were businessmen and women. This result shows that majority of the respondents were self-employed.

**Figure 11: Rural Respondents' Monthly Income**



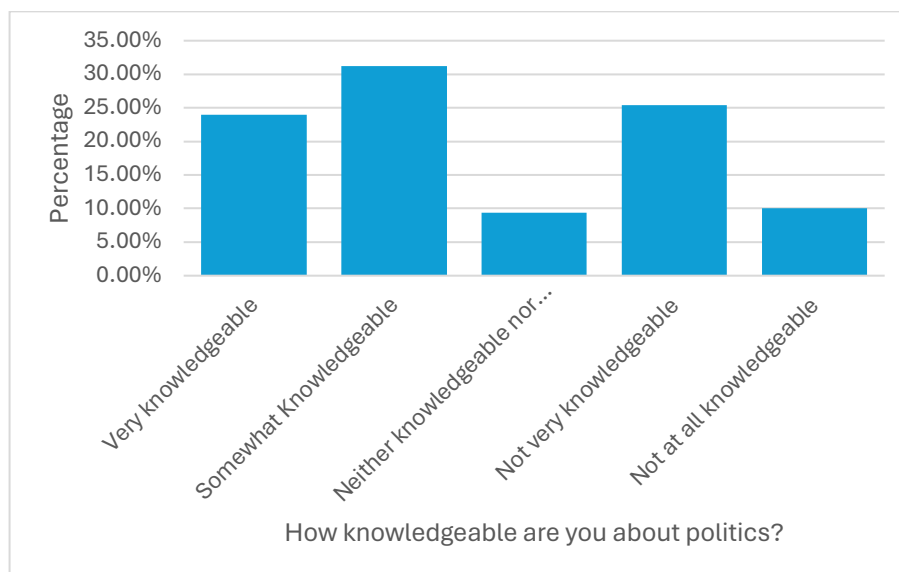
The finding of the study as presented in Figure 11 shows the respondents' income per month. Result shows that 227 of the respondents representing 45.4% earn between 1,000 to 10,000 naira a month, 177 of the respondents representing 35.4% earn between 10,000 – 50,000 naira a month, 66 of the respondents representing 13.2% earn between 51,000-100,000 naira a month, while 30(6.0%) of the respondents earn 110, 000 naira and above. This result shows that majority of the respondents are low-income earners.

**Figure 12: Rural Respondents' Level of Interest in Politics**



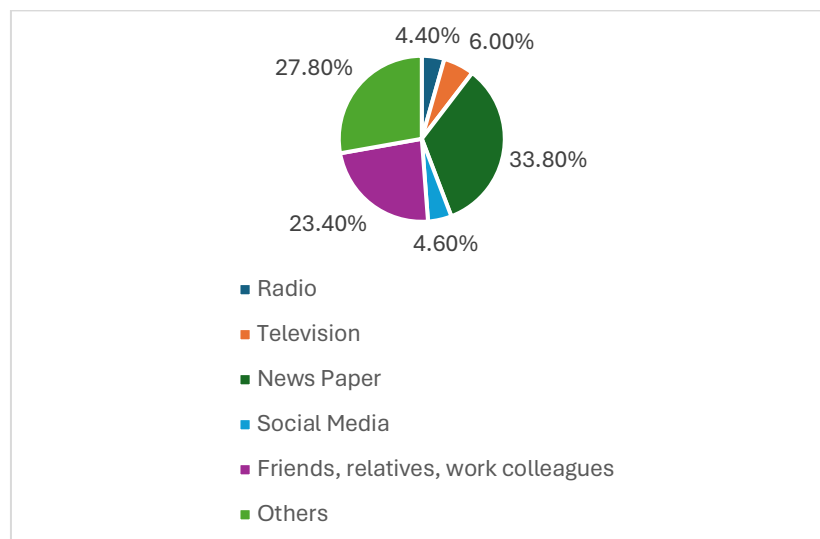
The result of the study in Figure 12 shows the level of interest Nigerian youths have in politics. Result shows that 136(27.2%) of the Nigerian youths are very interested in Politics, 143(28.6%) of the Youths are somewhat interested in politics, 34(6.8%) are neither interested nor uninterested in politics, 98(19.6%) of the youths are Not very interested in politics, while 89(17.8%) of the Nigeria youths are not at all interested in politics. Result shows that majority of the Nigerian youths are interested in politics.

**Figure 13: Rural Respondents' Knowledge about Politics**



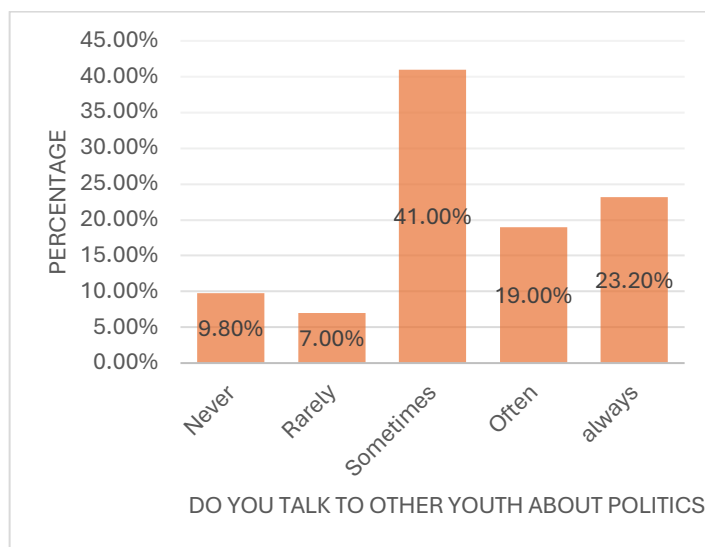
The result of the study in Figure 13 shows the knowledge level of Nigerian youths in politics. Result shows that 120(24.0%) of the Nigerian youths are very knowledgeable about Politics, 156(31.2%) of the Youths are somewhat knowledgeable about politics, 47(9.4%) are neither knowledgeable nor ignorant about politics, 127(25.4%) of the youths are Not very knowledgeable about politics, while 50(10.0%) of the Nigeria youths are not at all knowledgeable about politics. Result shows that majority of the Nigerian youths are knowledgeable about politics.

**Figure 14: Rural Respondents Most Often Used Sources of Political Information**



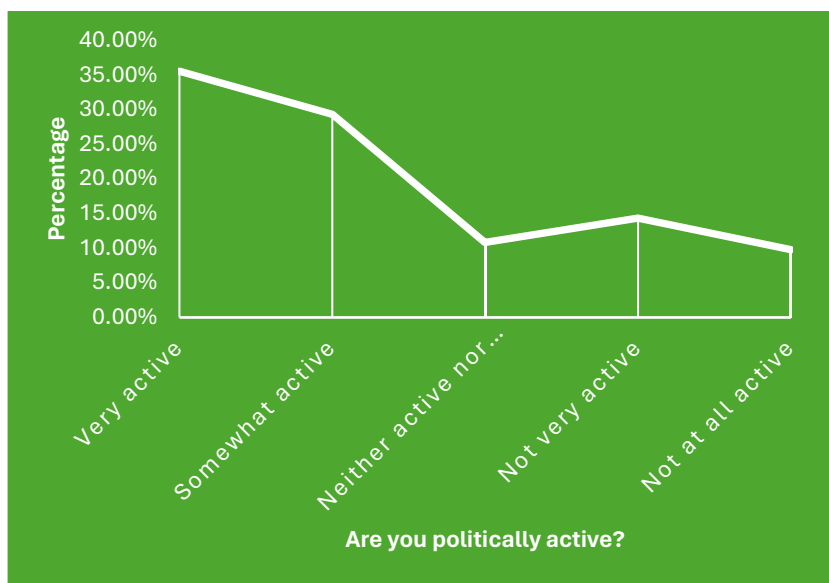
The result of the study in Figure 14 shows the respondents source of information about politics. Result shows that 22(4.4%) of the Nigerian youths use radio to find out information about Politics, 30(6.0%) of the Youths use television to find out information about politics, 169(33.8%) of the youths use newspaper as source of information about politics, 23(4.6%) of the youths use social media as source of information about politics, 117(23.4%) of the youths use friends, relatives, work colleagues to find out information about politics, while 139(27.8%) of the Nigeria youths use other sources to find out information about politics. Result shows majority of the youths use newspaper as source of information about politics.

**Figure 15: Talking to Other Youths About Politics (Rural Respondents)**



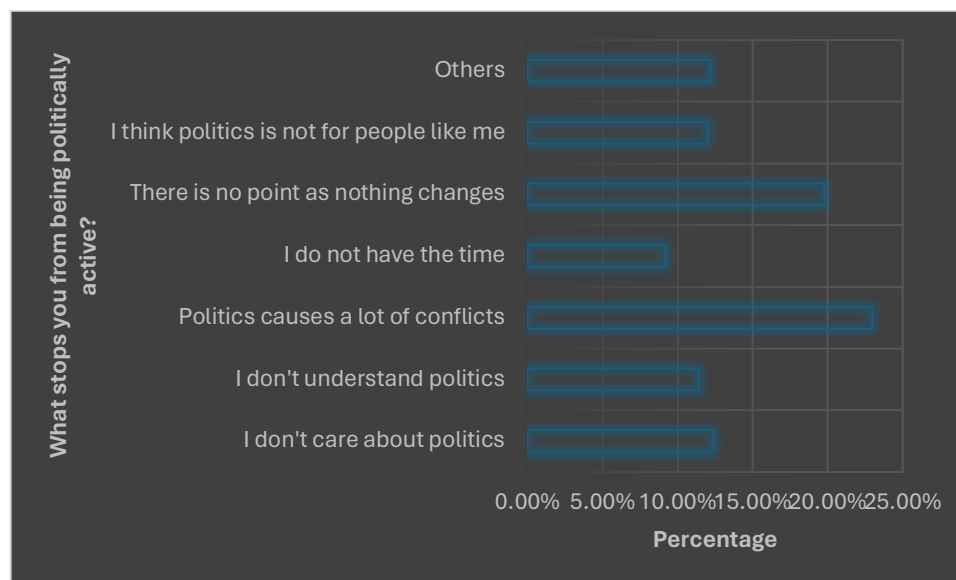
The result of the study in Figure 15 shows whether the respondents talk to people about politics. Result shows that 49(9.8%) of the Nigerian youths never talk to people about Politics, 35(7.0%) of the Youths rarely talk to people about politics, 205(41.0%) of the youths sometimes talk to people about politics, 95(19.0%) of the youths often talk to people about politics, while 116(23.2%) of the youths always talk to people about politics. Result therefore shows that majority of the Nigeria youths talk to people about politics.

**Figure 16: Rural Respondents' level of Activeness in Politics**



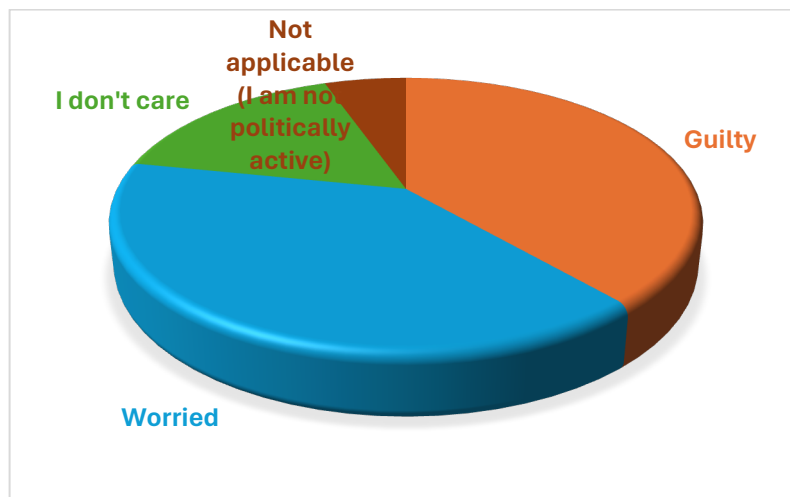
The result of the study in Figure 16 shows the respondents' level of activeness in politics. Result shows that 178(35.6%) of the Nigerian youths are very active in Politics, 147(29.4%) of the Youths are somewhat active in politics, 54(10.8%) of the youths neither active nor inactive in politics, 72(14.4%) of the youths are not very active in politics, while 49(9.8%) of the youths are not at all active in politics. Result therefore shows that majority of the Nigeria youths are active in politics.

**Figure 17: Why Rural Respondents are not Active in Politics**



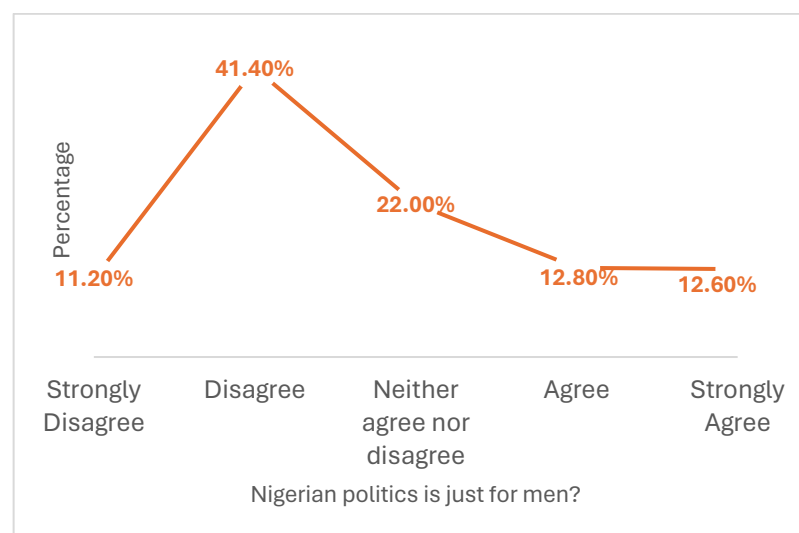
The result in Figure 17 shows why the respondents are not active in politics. Result shows that 62(12.4%) of the Nigerian youths are don't care about Politics, 57(11.4%) of the Youths are don't understand politics, 115(23.0%) of the youths are not active in politics because they believe politics causes a lot of conflicts, 46(9.2%) of the youths don't have time to do politics, 99(19.8%) of the youths are of the view that there is not point as nothing changes if they are active in politics, 60(12.0) of the youths think politics is not for people like them, while 61(12.2%) of the Nigerian youths gave other reasons why they are not active in politics.

**Figure 18: Rural Respondents Feelings of not Participating in Politics**



The result in Figure 18 shows how respondents feel for not being politically active. Result shows that 193 (38.6%) of the Nigerian youths feel guilty for not participating in Politics, 198 (39.6%) of the Youths are worried for not being politically active, 82 (16.4%) of the youths don't care about being politically active. It evident from the result therefore that most Nigerian youths are not happy for being politically inactive.

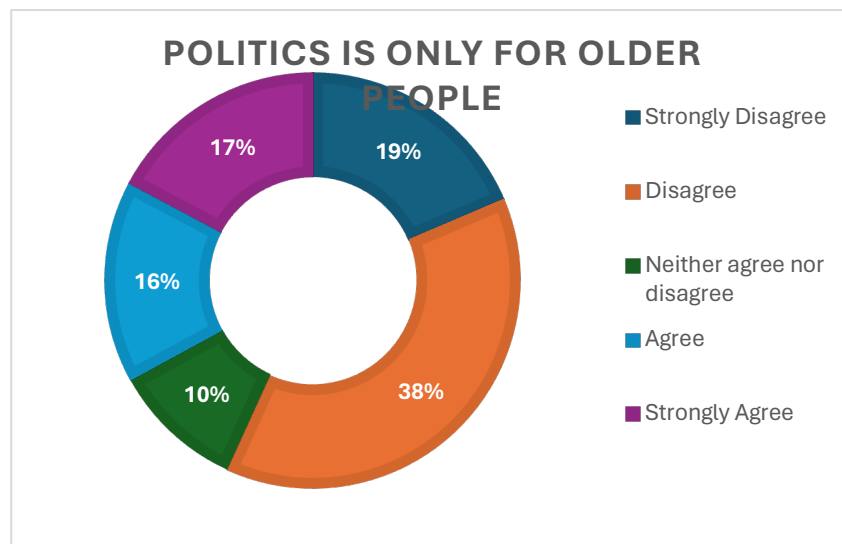
**Figure 19: Rural Respondents Perception about Politics**



The result in Figure 19 shows respondents' perception or opinion about politics. Result shows that 56(11.2%) of Nigerian youths strongly disagree that politics is just for men, 207(41.1%) of the Youths disagree that politics is just for men, 110(22.0%)

of the youths neither agree nor disagree that politics is just for men, 64(12.8%) of the respondents agreed that politics is just for men, while 63(12.6%) strongly agreed that politics is just for men. It clearly seen from the result therefore that politics is not just for men. This implies that women can also participate actively in politics.

**Figure 20: Rural Respondents Perception about Politics**



The result in Figure 20 shows respondents' perception or opinion about politics. Result shows that 93(18.6%) of Nigerian youths strongly disagree that politics is only for older people, 191(38.2%) of the Youths disagree that politics is for older people, 51(10.2%) of the youths neither agree nor disagree that politics is for older people, 79(15.8%) of the respondents agreed that politics is for older people, while 86(17.2%) strongly agreed that politics is for older people. It is evident from the result therefore that politics is not just for older people. This implies that even younger people can also participate actively in politics.

**Figure 21: Rural Respondents Perception about Politics**

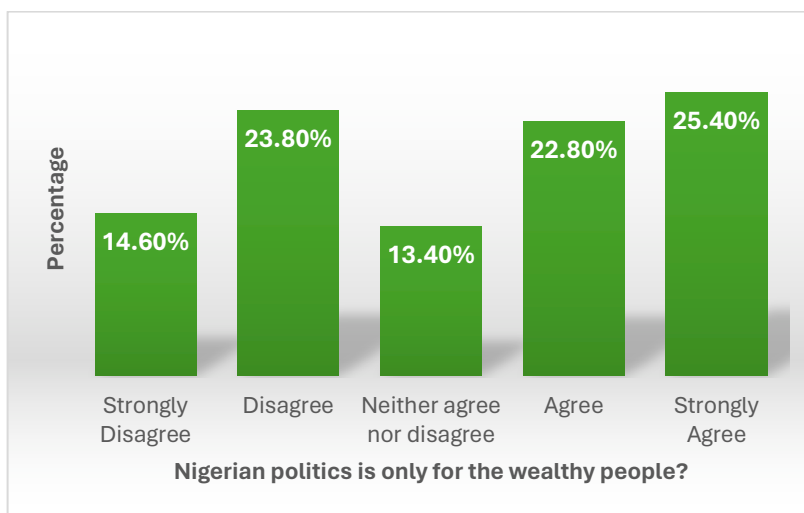
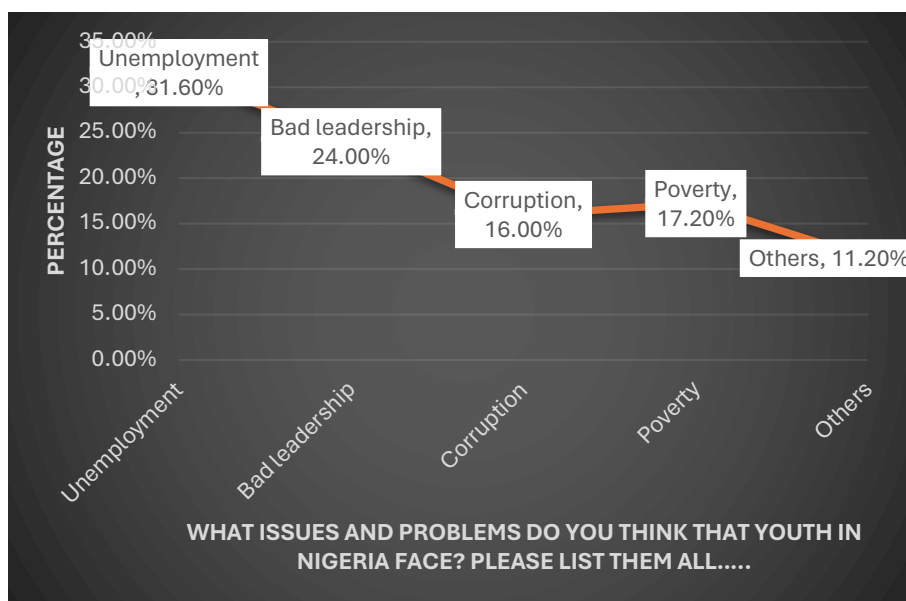


Figure 21 shows what respondents think about politics. Result shows that 73(4.6%) of Nigerian youths strongly disagree that politics is only for wealthy people, 119(23.8%) of the Youths disagree that politics is for wealthy people, 67(13.4%) of the youths neither agree nor disagree that politics is for wealthy people, 114(22.8%) of the respondents agreed that politics is for wealthy people, while 127(25.4%) of the youths strongly agreed that politics is for wealthy people. It is evident from the result therefore that politics is not just for wealthy people. This implies that even poor people can participate actively in politics.

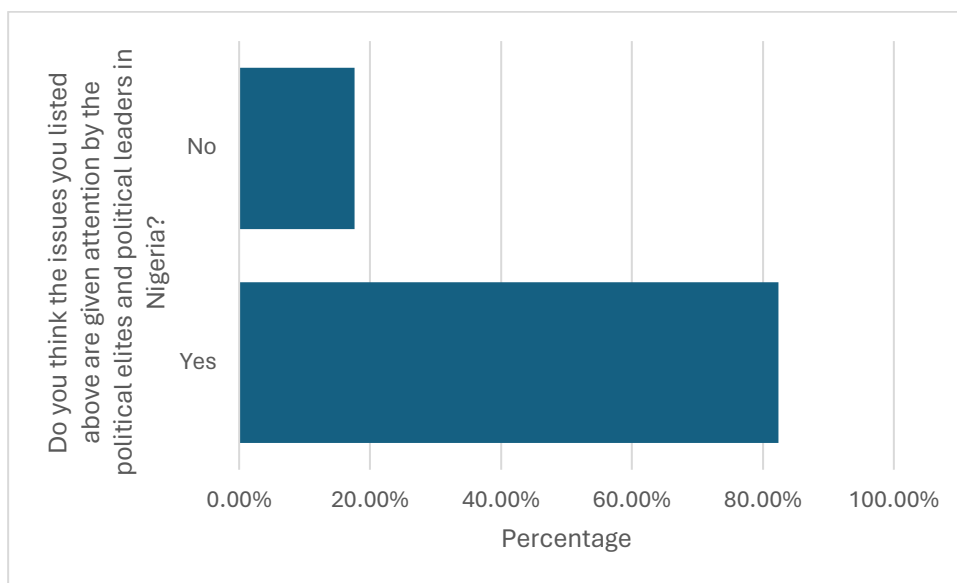
**Figure 22: Problems Youth Face in Nigeria (Rural Respondent)**





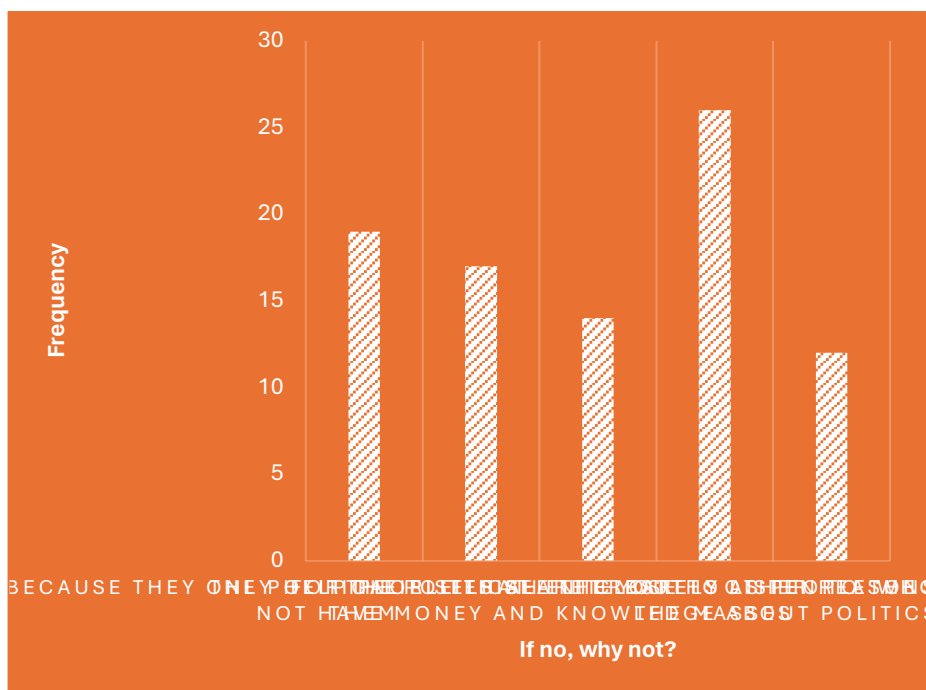
The result of the study as presented in Figure 22 shows the problems and issues Nigerian youth face. Result shows that 158(31.6%) of the youth face unemployment problem, 120(24.0%) face bad leadership problem, 80(16.0%) face corruption problem, 86(17.2%) of Nigerian youth face poverty problem, while 56(11.2%) of the respondents face other challenges.

**Figure 23: Rural Respondents Perception about Problems in Politics**



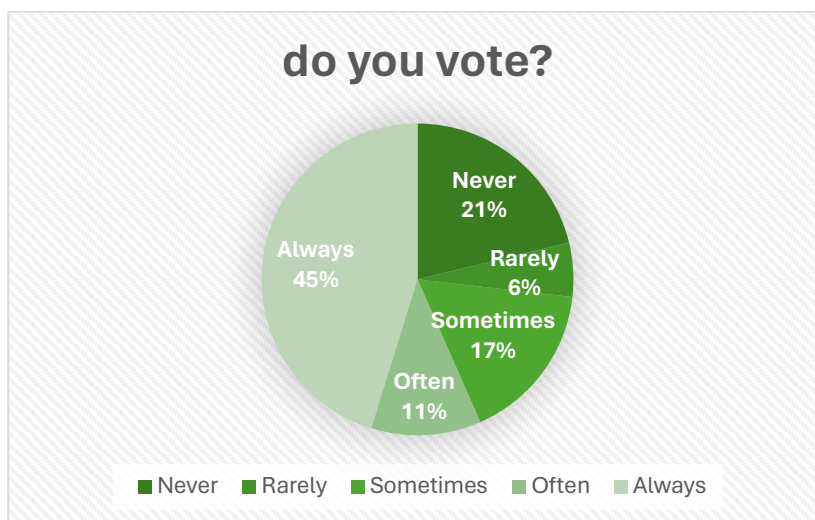
The result of the study as presented in Figure 23 shows the respondents' views on whether their problems are given attention by the political elites and political leaders in Nigeria. Result shows that 412(82.4%) of the youth agreed that their problems are given attention by political elites, while 88(17.6%) of the youths disagreed that political elites pay attention to their problems.

**Figure 24: Rural Respondents Perception about problems in Politics**



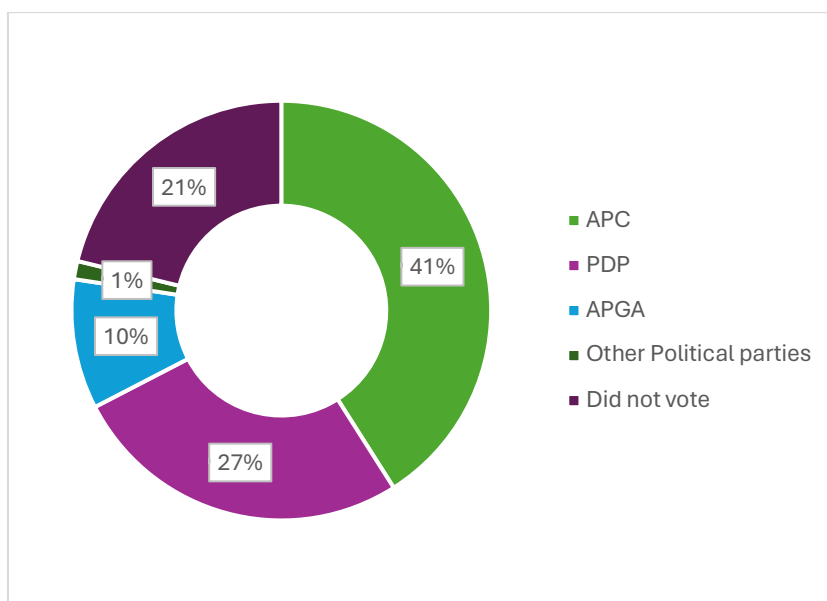
The result of the study as presented in Figure 24 shows the reasons why political elites don't pay attention to the problems of Nigerian youths. Result shows that 19(3.8%) of the youth are of the view that political elites only help people that are close to them, 17(3.4%) said the political elites don't pay attention to the problems of the youth because of selfish interest, 14(2.8%) said the political elites see the youths as people who do not have money and knowledge about politics, 26(5.2%) stated that the political elite barely listen to the opinion of the masses.

**Figure 25: Rural Respondents' Voting Frequency**



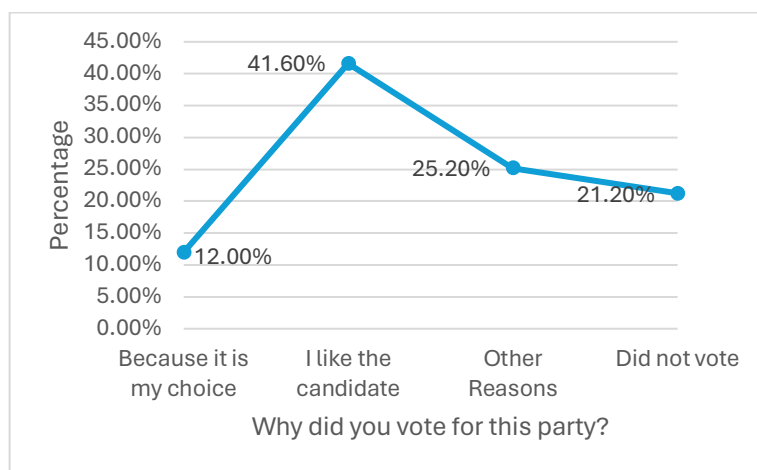
The result of the study as presented in Figure 25 shows the number of Nigerian youths that vote in an election. Result shows that 106(21.2%) of the youth never voted in any election, 28(5.6%) rarely vote in an election, 83(16.6%) sometimes vote in an election, 57(11.4%) often vote in an election, while 226(45.2%) always vote in any given election. This implies majority of the Nigeria youths vote during election.

**Figure 26: Rural Respondents Choice of Political Party**



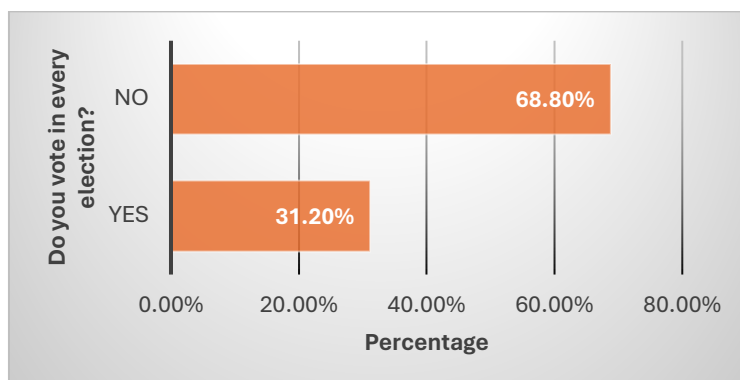
The result of the study as presented in Figure 26 shows the respondents choice of a political party in the last presidential election. Result shows that 205(41.0%) voted for APC, 132(26.4%) voted for PDP, 50(10.0%) voted for APGA, 7(1.4%) voted for other political parties, while 106(21.2%) did not vote in the last presidential election.

**Figure 27: Rural Respondents Reason for Voting their Party in the last Election.**



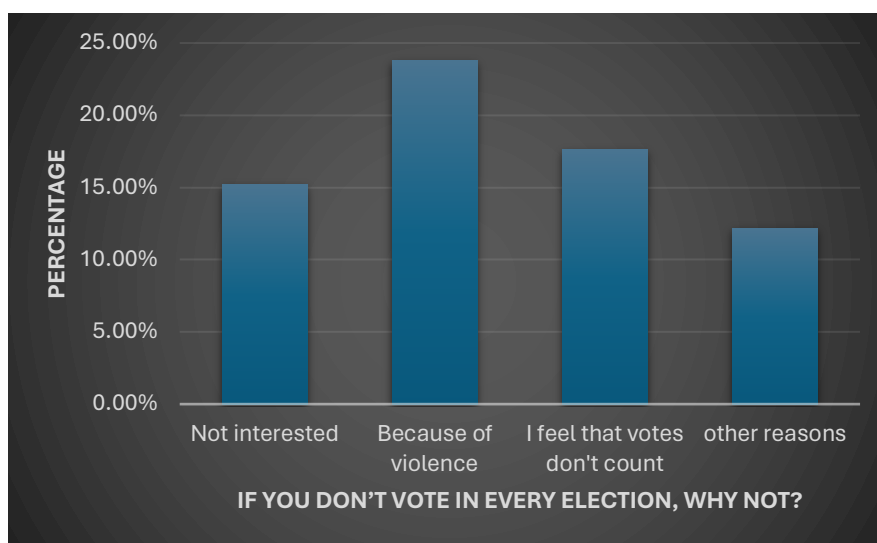
The result in Figure 27 shows the reasons why the respondents voted a particular political party in the last presidential election. Result shows that 60(12.0%) voted because of choice, 208(41.6%) voted because they like the candidate, 126(25.2%) voted for other reasons best known to them. This result clearly shows that majority of the youths voted in the last presidential election because of the candidate.

**Figure 28: Rural Respondents' Consistency in Voting in every Election**



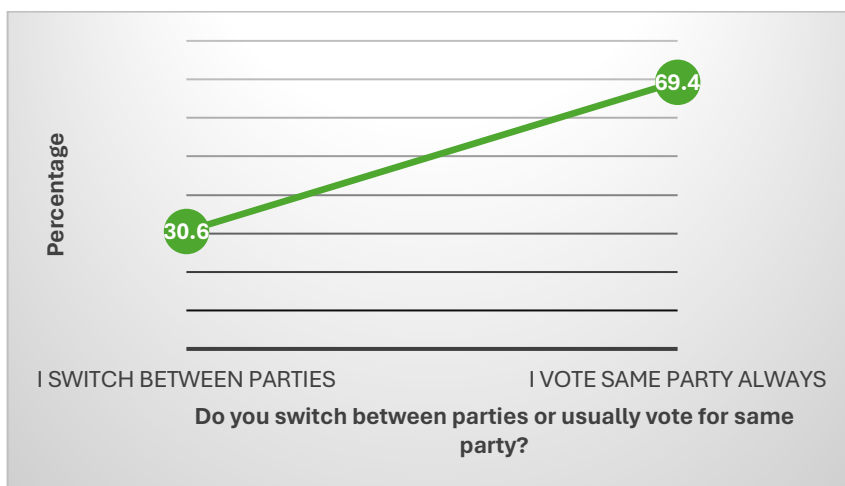
The result in Figure 28 shows the respondents' consistency in voting in every election. Result shows that 156(31.2%) of the respondents agreed that they vote in every election, while 344(68.8%) of the respondents disagreed that they vote in every election. This implies that majority of the Nigerian youths don't vote in every election.

**Figure 29: Rural Respondents Reason for not Voting in Every Election**



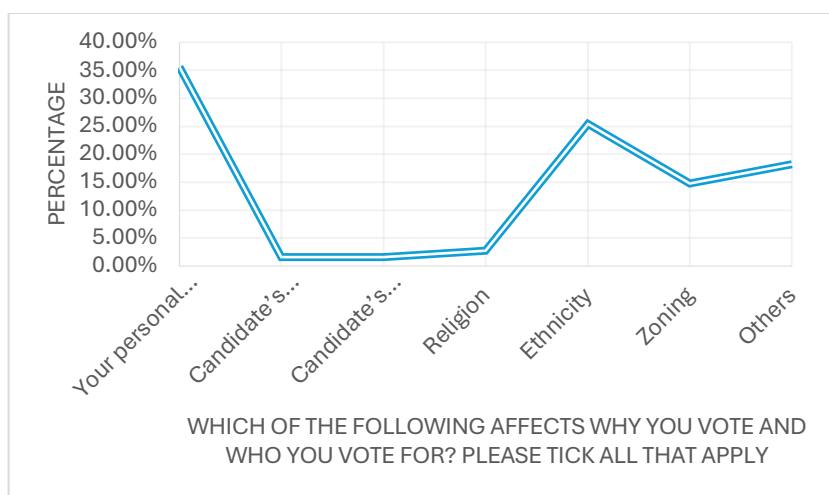
The result of the study as presented in Figure 29 shows why the respondents don't vote in every election. Result shows that 76(15.2%) of the respondents don't vote in every election because they are not interested, 119(23.8%) of the respondents don't always vote because of violence during election, 88(17.6%) don't vote because they feel that their votes don't count, while 61(12.2%) of the respondents don't vote because of other reasons.

**Figure 30: Rural Respondents Consistency in Party choice**



The result of the study as presented in Figure 30 shows the respondents' consistency in making choice of a political party. Result shows that 153(30.6%) of the respondents switch between parties, while 347(69.4%) of the respondents always vote the same political party. This implies that majority of the Nigerian youths are consistent in voting the same political party.

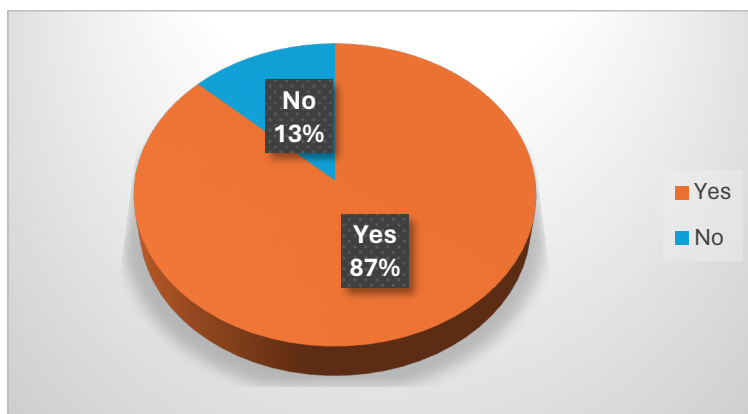
**Figure 31: Determiners of Rural Respondents' Voting Choice**



The result of the study as presented in Figure 31 shows what influenced Nigeria youths to vote and why they vote for the candidate of their choice. Result shows that 178(35.6%) of the youths vote because of personal ideologies, 8(1.6%) of Nigerian

youth vote because of the candidate's' policies and manifestoes, 8(1.6%) vote for a candidate because of their character and personality, 14(2.8%) vote because of religion, 127(25.4%) vote because of ethnicity, 74(14.8%) vote because of zoning, while 91(18.2%) of Nigerian youths vote because of other reasons best known to them.

**Figure 32: Rural Respondents Membership of a Political Party**



The result of the study as presented in Figure 32 shows whether respondents are members of a political party. Result shows that 435(87.0%) of the respondents are members of a political party, while 65(13.0%) of the respondents are not members of a political party. This implies that majority of the Nigerian youths are members of a political party.

**Figure 33: Rural Respondents Membership of a Political Party**

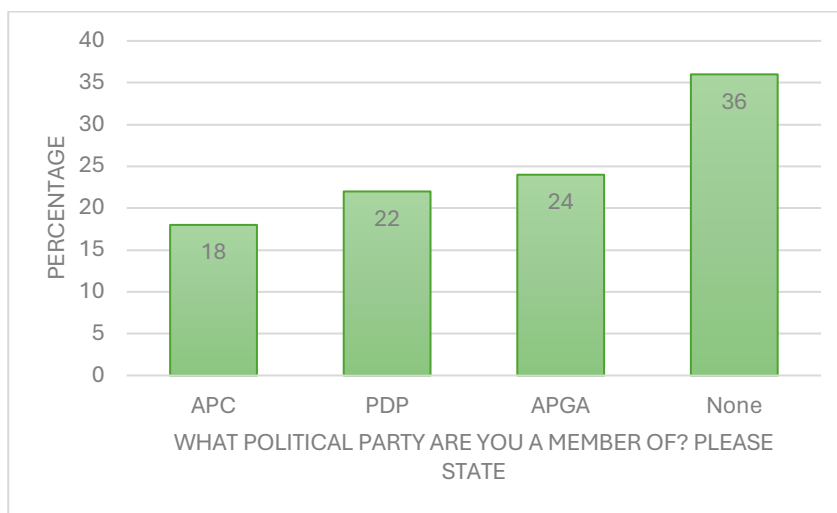


Figure 33 shows the political party membership of the respondents. The result show that 90 (18.0%) of the respondents were members of APC, 110 (22.0%) were members of PDP, 120 (24.0%) were members of APGA, while 180 (36.0%) of the respondents belonged to none of the political parties. Observably, it can be deduced that majority of the respondents are members of a political party.

**Figure 34: Rural Respondents Level of Activeness in their Chosen Political Party**

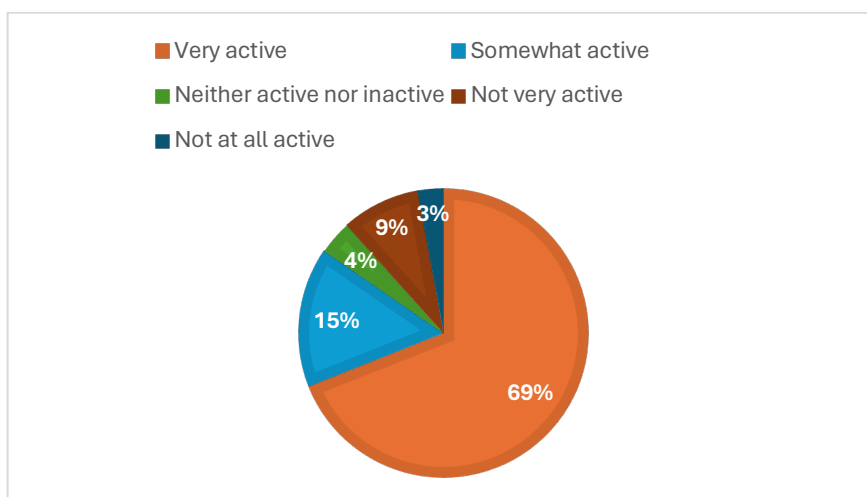


Figure 34 shows the respondents' activeness as member of a political party. The result show that 345 (69.0%) of the respondents were very active, 78 (15.6%)



were somewhat active, 19 (3.8%) were neither active nor inactive, 44 (8.8%) were not very active, while 14 (2.8%) of the respondents were not at all active. A cursory look at the result shows that majority of the respondents were very active members a political party.

**Figure 35: Rural Respondents' Volunteer to help during Election Campaigns**

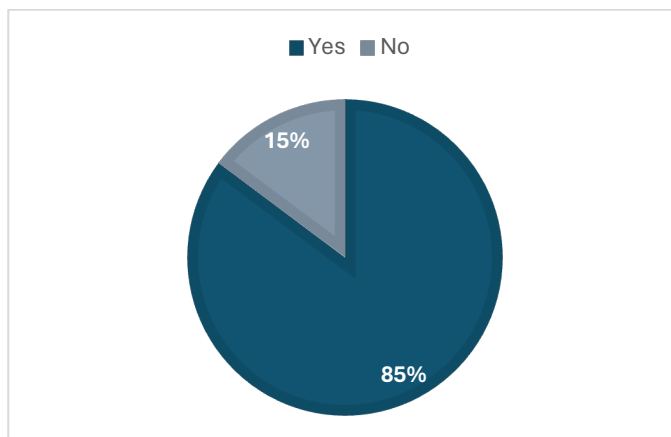


Figure 35 shows the respondents' volunteering to help during election campaigns. The result show that 426 (85.2%) of the respondents said yes, that they can volunteer to help during election campaigns, while 74 (14.8%) of the respondents said no, meaning that they cannot volunteer to help during election campaigns. From the result, it can be construed that majority of the respondents can volunteer to help during election campaigns.

**Figure 36: Rural Respondents' Contribution During Campaign**

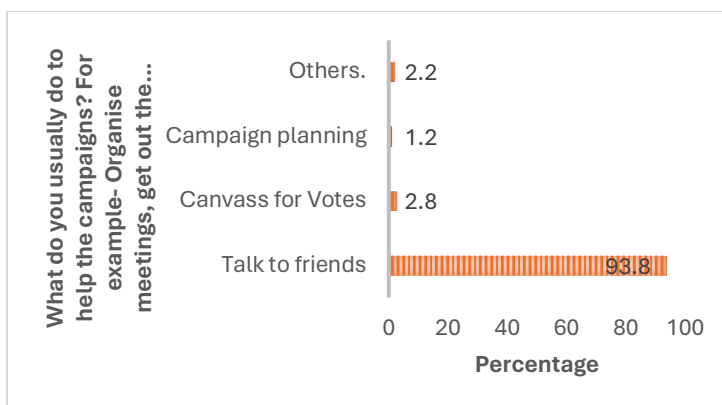


Figure 36 shows the respondents' contribution during campaign. The result show that 469 (93.8%) of the respondents talk to friends as their contribution during campaign, 14 (2.8%) canvass for votes, 6 (1.2%) participate in campaign planning, while 11 (2.2%) of the respondents contribute in others during campaign. This result can be interpreted that majority of the respondents talk to friends as their contribution during campaign.

**Figure 37: Rural Respondents' Voluntary Contribution During Campaign**

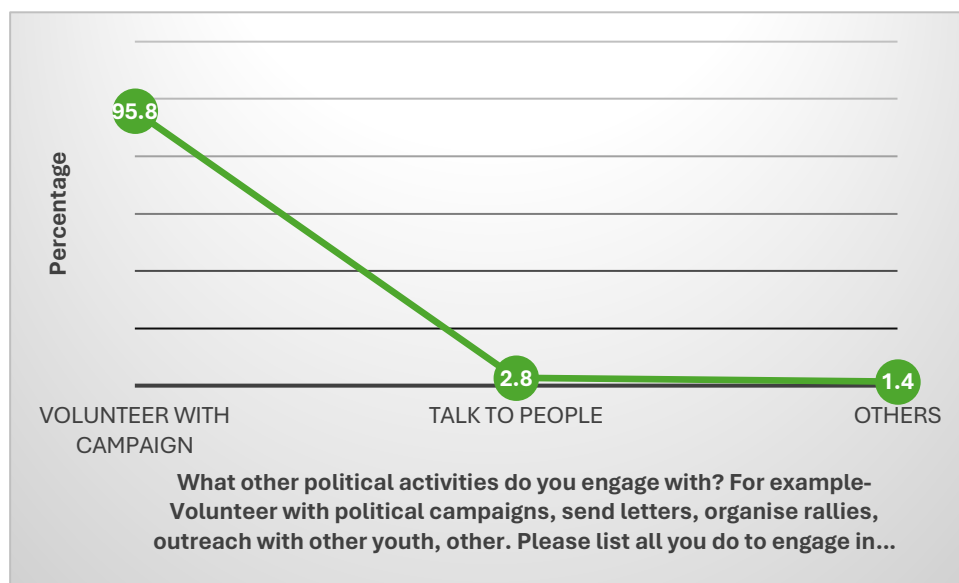


Figure 37 shows the respondents' voluntary contribution during campaign. The result show that 479 (95.8%) of the respondents' volunteer with campaign during campaign, 14 (2.8%) talk to people, while 7 (1.4%) of the respondents contribute in others during campaign. Apparently, it can be deduced that majority of the respondents volunteer with campaign as their contribution during electioneering campaign.

**Figure 38: Rural Respondents’ Place of Undertaking Political Activities**

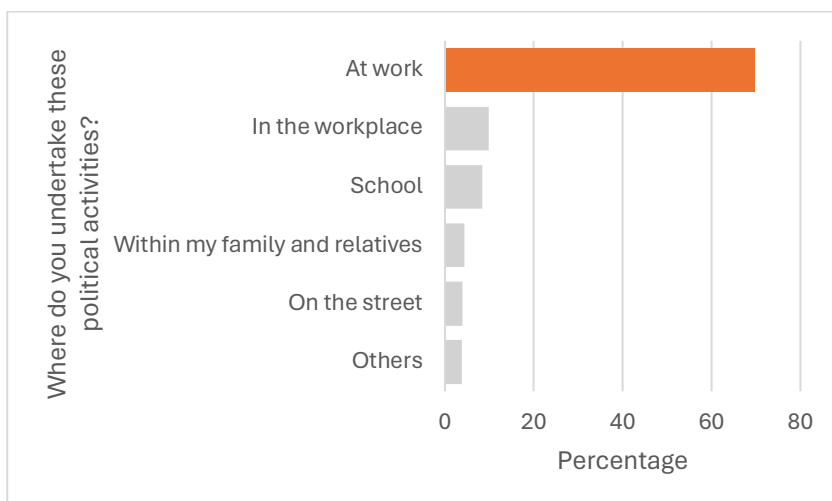


Figure 38 shows the respondents’ place of undertaking political activities. The result show that 348 (69.6%) of the respondents undertake political activities at work, 42 (8.4%) undertake the activities at school, 49 (9.8%) undertake the activities in the workplace, 20 (4.0%) undertake the activities on the street, 22 (4.4%) undertake the activities within my family and relatives, while 19 (3.8%) of the respondents undertake political activities in others. A cursory look at the result shows that majority of the respondents undertake political activities at work.

**Figure 39: Time Per Week Rural Respondents Spent on Political Activities**

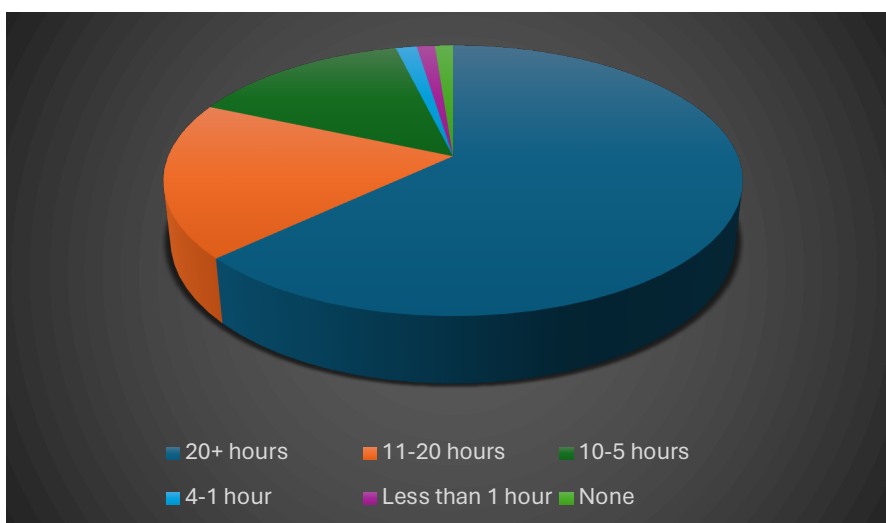


Figure 39 shows the time per week that respondents spent on political activities. The result show that 315 (63.0%) of the respondents spent 20+ hours in political activities, 93 (18.6%) spent 11-20 hours, 73 (14.6%) spent 10-5 hours, 7(1.4%) spent 4-1 hour, 6 (1.2%) spent less than 1 hour, while 6 (1.2%) of the respondents spent none in political activities. Notably, the result shows that majority of the respondents spent 20+ hours in political activities.

**Figure 40: Whether Rural Respondents' Have Been Contacted by Political Campaigns**

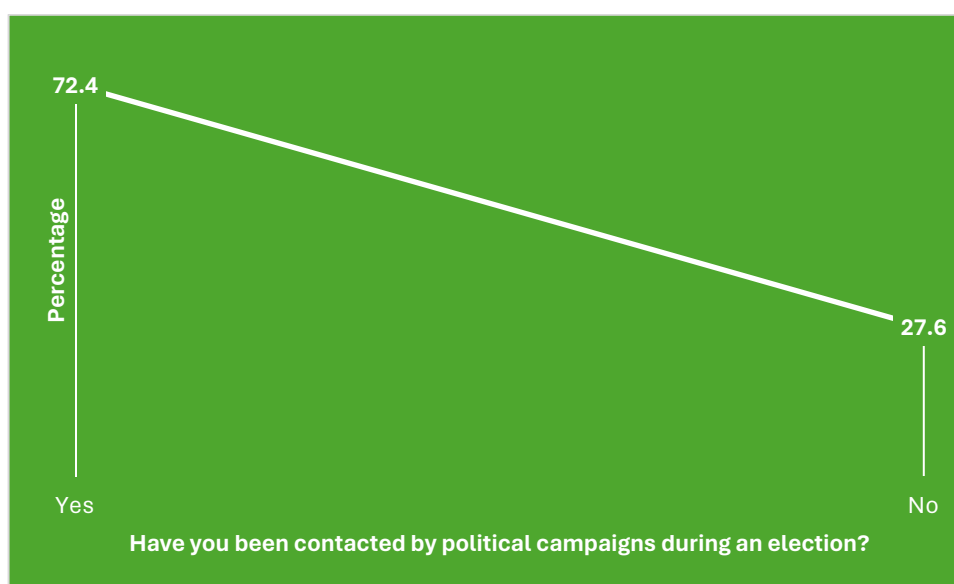


Figure 40 shows whether respondents' have been contacted by political campaigns. The result show that 362 (72.4%) of the respondents said yes, that they have been contacted by political campaigns, while 138 (27.6%) of the respondents said no, meaning that they have not been contacted by political campaigns. From the result, one can conclude that majority of the respondents have been contacted during political campaigns.

**Figure 41: How Rural Respondents Were Contacted by Political Campaigns During An Election**

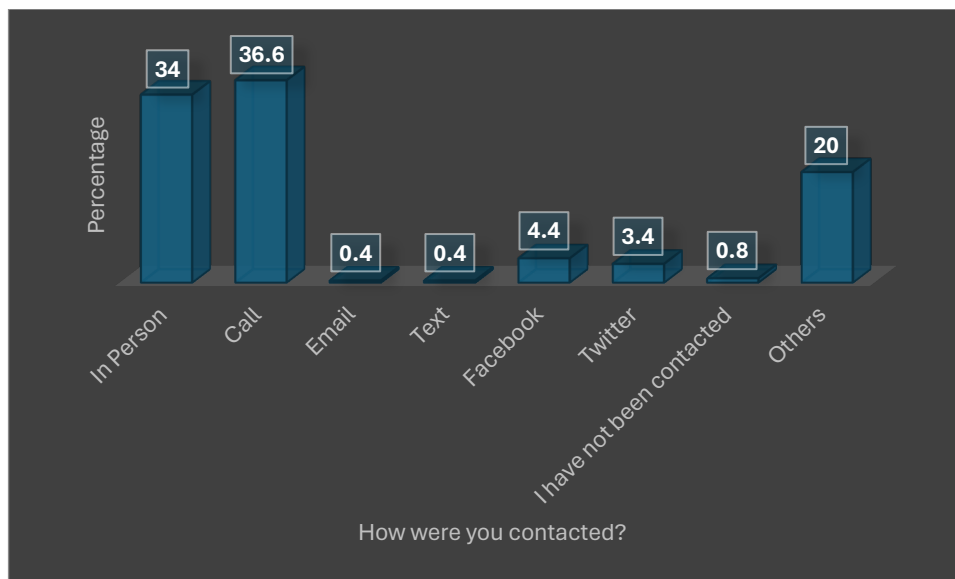


Figure 41 shows how respondents were contacted by political campaigns during an election. The result show that 170 (34.0%) of the respondents were contacted in person, 183 (36.6%) were contacted through call, 2 (.4%) were contacted via email, 2 (.4%) were contacted through text message, 22 (4.4%) were contacted through Facebook, 17 (3.4%) were contacted via Twitter, 4 (.8%) have not been contacted, while 100 (20.0%) of the respondents were contacted via others. From this result, one can say that majority of the respondents were contacted by political campaigns during an election through call.

**Figure 42: Type of Elections Rural Respondents' Were Contacted For**

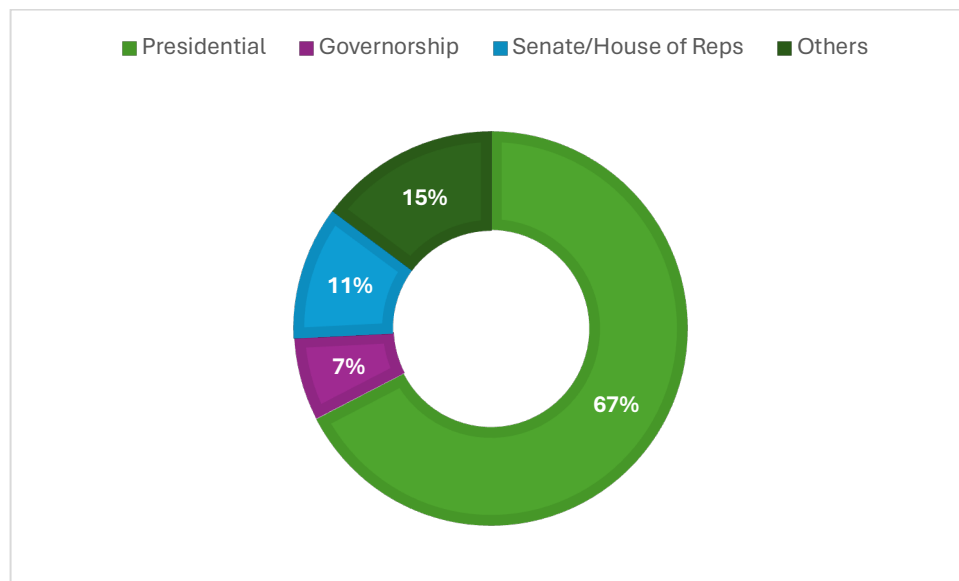


Figure 42 shows the category of elections the rural respondents were contacted for. The result show that 337 (67.4%) of the urban respondents were contacted by political parties while crusading for votes for the Presidential election, 34 (6.8%) reached by political parties during Governorship elections, 55 (11.0%) were lobbied by political parties to vote for hem during Senate/house of Reps elections, while 74 (14.8%) of the respondents were contacted to vote in other kinds of elections. This result implies that the focus of poliical parties is the Presidential election.

**Figure 43: Rural Respondents' Perception of Political Messaging**

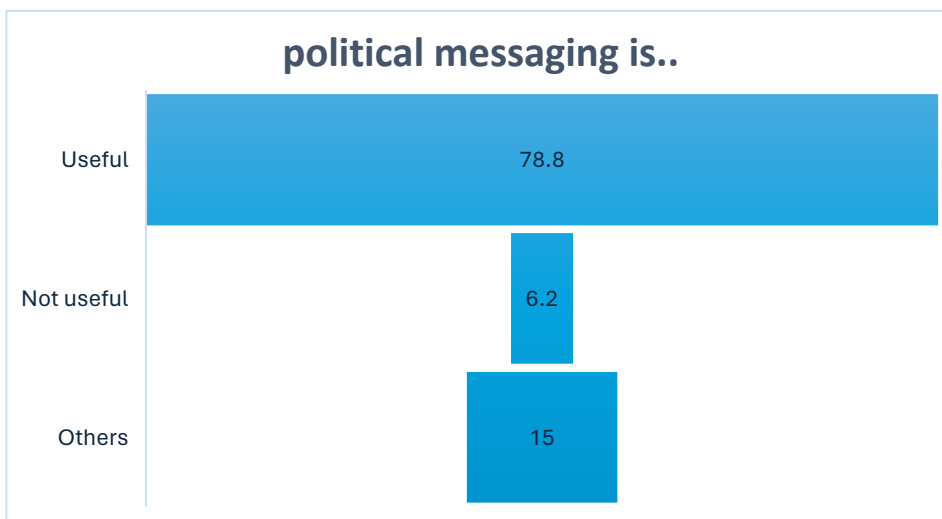


Figure 43 shows the respondents' perception of political messaging. The result show that 394 (78.8%) of the respondents believed political messaging is useful, 31 (6.2%) opined that political messaging is not useful, while 75 (15.0%) of the respondents' perceptions focused on others. Summarily, the result can be interpreted that majority of the respondents opined that political messaging is useful.

**Figure 44: Rural Respondents' Frequency of Reading Newspapers**

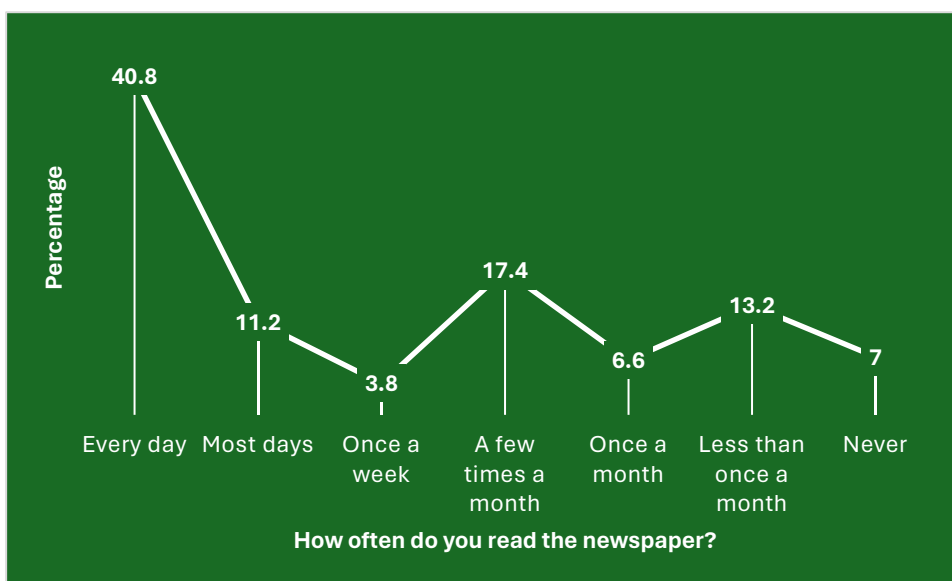


Figure 44 shows how often the respondents' read the newspaper. The result show that 203 (40.8%) of the respondents read the newspaper every day, 56 (11.2%) read the newspaper most days, 19 (3.8%) read the newspaper once a week, 87 (17.4%) read the newspaper a few times a month, 33 (6.6%) read the newspaper once a month, 66 (13.2%) read the newspaper less than once a month, while 35 (7.0%) of the respondents indicated that they never read the newspaper. From the result, one can say that majority of the respondents read the newspaper every day.

**Figure 45: Rural Respondents' Newspaper Preferences**

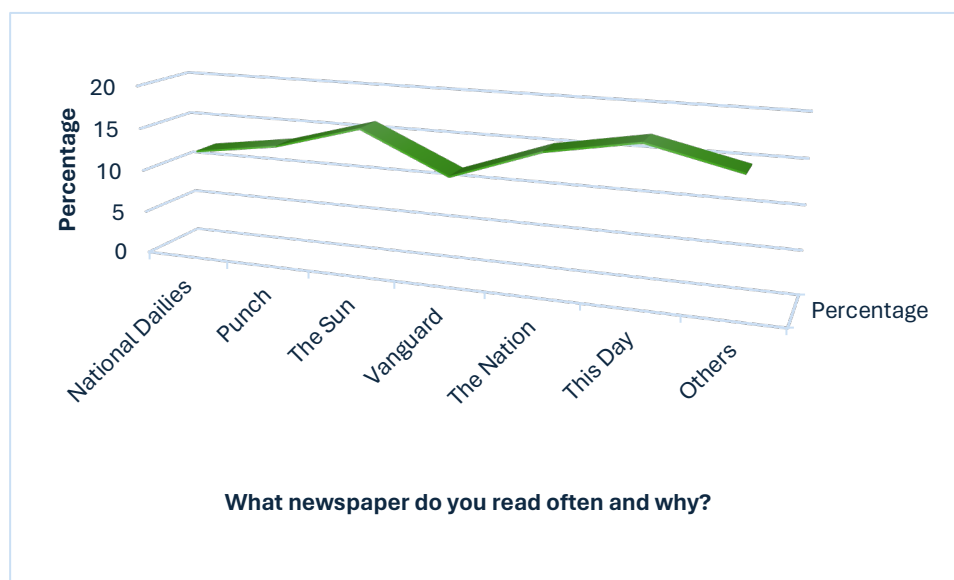


Figure 45 shows the respondents' choice of newspaper. The result show that 60 (12.0%) of the respondents' choice of newspaper is National Dailies, 67 (13.4%) of the respondents prefer the Punch newspaper, 81 (16.2%) prefer The Sun newspaper, 58 (11.6%) prefer Vanguard newspaper, 76 (15.2%) prefer The Nation newspaper, 85 (17.0%) prefer This Day newspaper, while 73 (14.6%) of the respondents preferred others. From this result, it can be concluded that majority of the respondents prefer the This Day newspaper.



**Figure 46: Rural Respondents' Frequency of Watching Television Programmes**

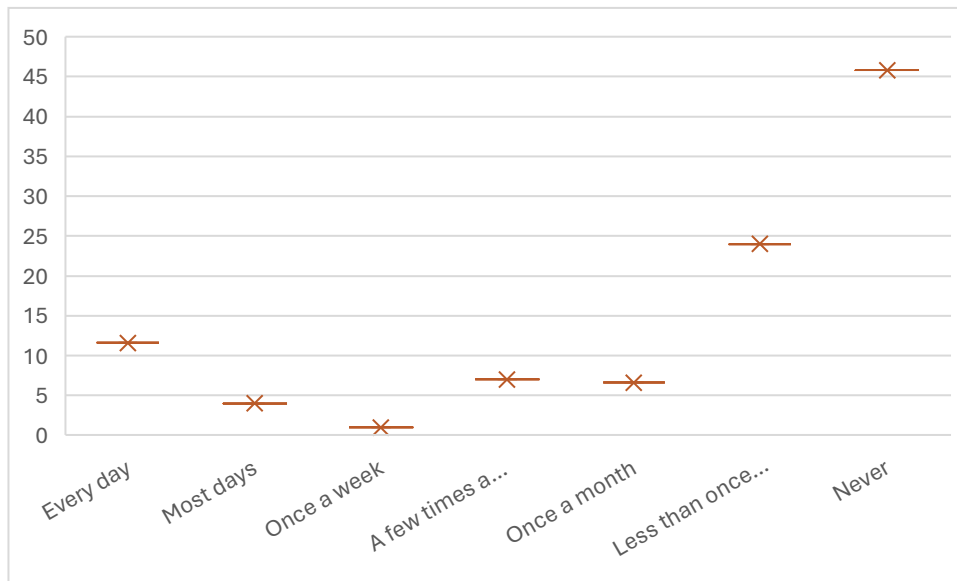


Figure 46 shows the respondents' consistency in watching television. The result show that 58 (11.6%) of the respondents watch television every day, 20 (4.0%) watch most days, 5 (1.0%) watch once a week, 35 (7.0%) watch a few times a month, 33 (6.6%) watch once a month, 120 (24.0%) watch less than once a month, while 229 (14.6%) of the respondents noted that they never watched television. From this result, it can be concluded that majority of the respondents have never watched television.

**Figure 47: Rural Respondents Preferred Television Programmes**

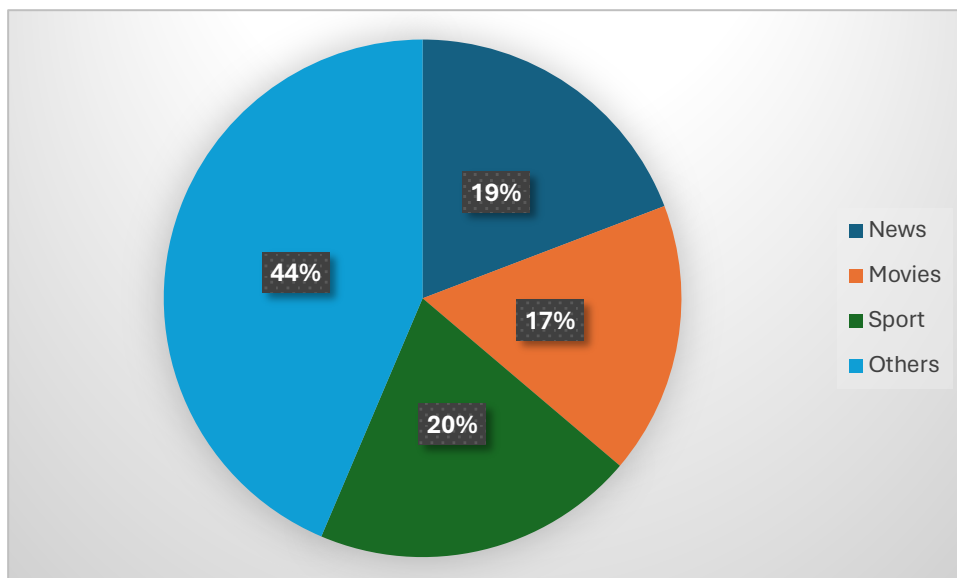


Figure 47 shows the respondents' choice of television program. The result show that 96 (19.2%) of the respondents watch news, 85 (17.0%) watch movies, 101 (20.2%) watch sports, while 218 (43.6%) of the respondents watch others. Thus, it can be concluded that majority of the respondents watch other television programs than news, movies, and sports.

**Figure 48: Rural Respondents' Frequency of Listening to Radio**

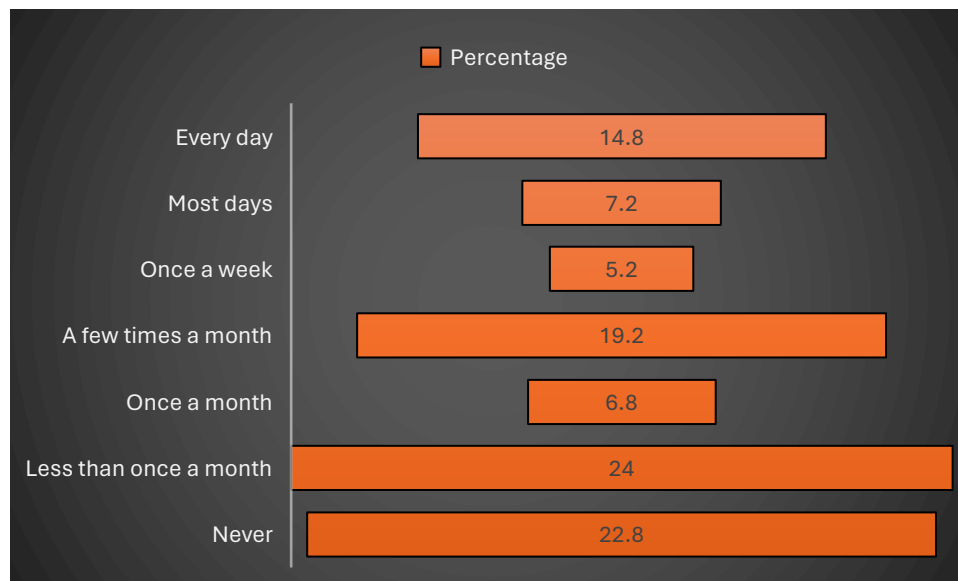


Figure 48 shows the respondents' consistency in listening to radio program. The result show that 74 (14.8%) of the respondents listen to the radio every day, 36 (7.2%) listen to radio most days, 26 (5.2%) listen to radio once a week, 96 (19.2%) listen to radio a few times a month, 34 (6.8%) listen to radio once a month, 120 (24.0%) listen to radio less than once a month, while 114 (22.8%) of the respondents noted that they never listened to the radio. From this result, it can be concluded that majority of the respondents listen to the radio less than once a month.

**Figure 49: Rural Respondents Preferred Radio Stations**

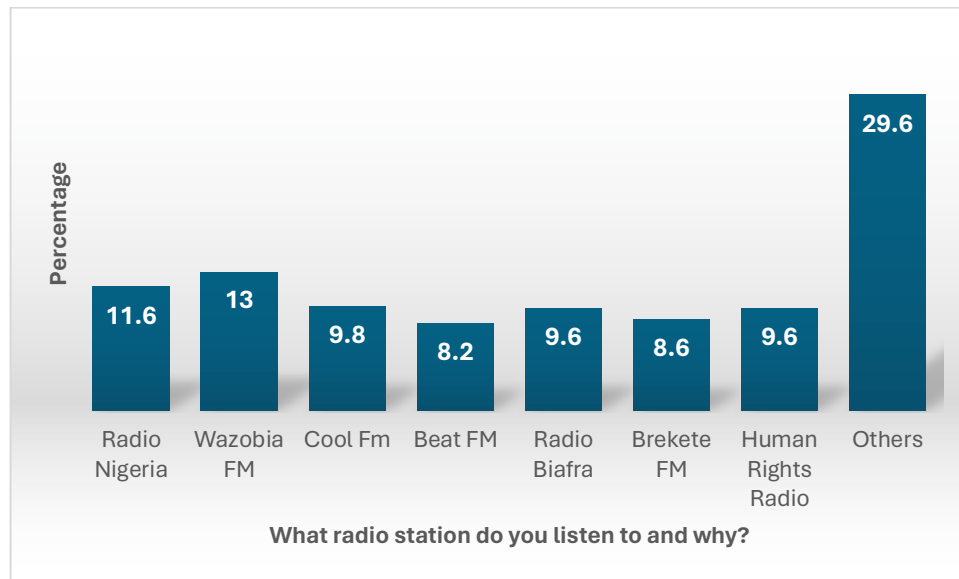


Figure 49 shows the respondents' choice of radio station. The result show that 58 (11.6%) of the respondents listen to Radio Nigeria, 65 (13.0%) listen to Wazobia FM, 49 (9.8%) listen to Cool FM, 41 (8.2%) listen to Beat FM, 48 (9.6%) listen to Radio Biafra, 43 (8.6%) listen to Brekete FM, 48 (9.6%) listen to Human Right FM while 148 (22.8%) of the respondents noted that they listen to others. From this result, it can be concluded that apart from many of the respondents that listen to Wazobia FM, majority of other respondents listen to other radio stations.

**Figure 50: Rural Respondents' View About the News They Hear from The Media**

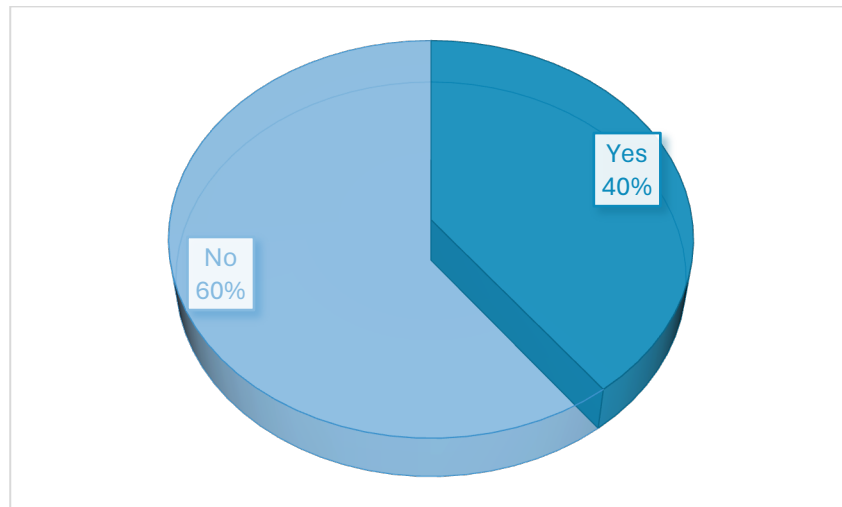


Figure 50 shows the respondents' view about the news they hear from the media. The result show that 198 (39.6%) of the respondents said yes, which implies that they trust the news they hear from the media, while 302 (60.4%) of the respondents said no, which means that they do not trust the news they hear from the media. From the result, one can conclude that majority of the respondents do not trust the news they hear from the media.

**Figure 51: Rural Respondents' Ability to Detect Fake News**

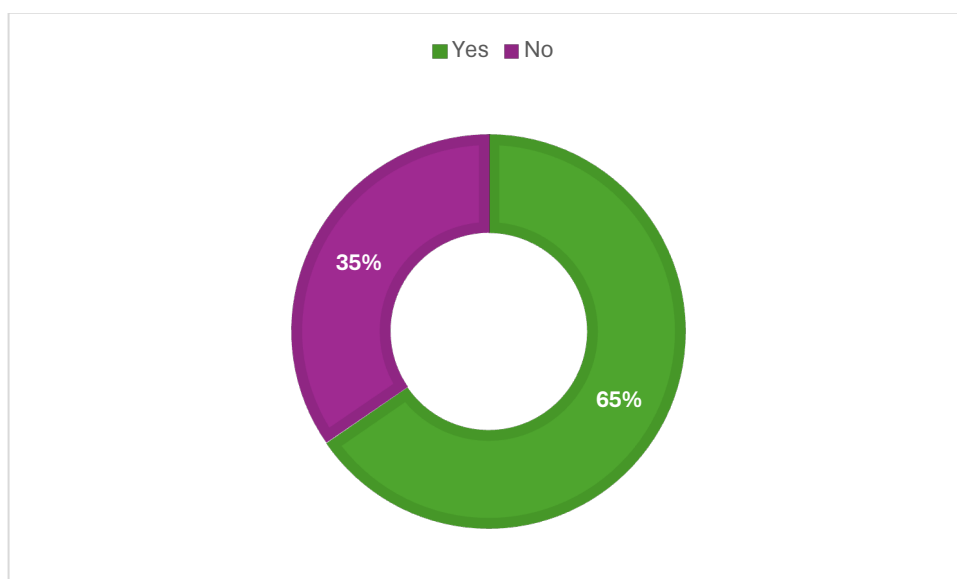


Figure 51 shows the respondents' ability to detect fake news. The result show that 327 (65.4%) of the respondents said yes, which implies that they have the ability to detect fake news, while 173 (34.6%) of the respondents said no, which means that they do not have the ability to detect fake news. From this result, it can be concluded that majority of the respondents can detect fake news.

**Figure 52: Rural Respondent's Fake News Detection Techniques**



Figure 52 shows how the respondents detect fake news. The result show that 60 (12.0%) of the respondents detect fake news through verification, 72 (14.4%) detect fake news through investigation, 55 (11.0%) detect fake news through fact checking, 140 (28.0%) detect fake news through others, while 173 (34.6%) of the respondents noted that they don't detect fake news. From this result, it can be concluded that majority of the respondents are not able to detect fake news.

**Figure 53: Rural Respondent's Disposition Towards Political News**

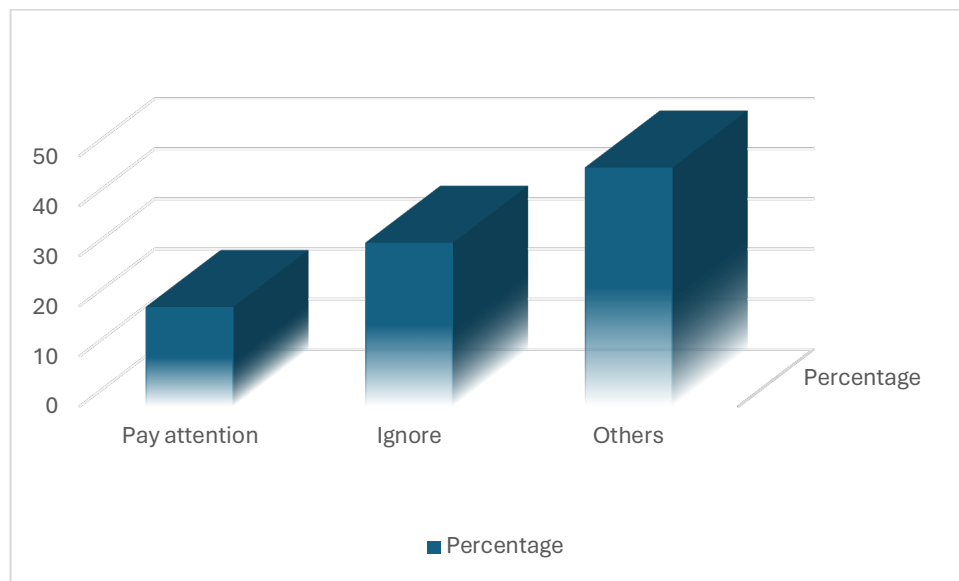
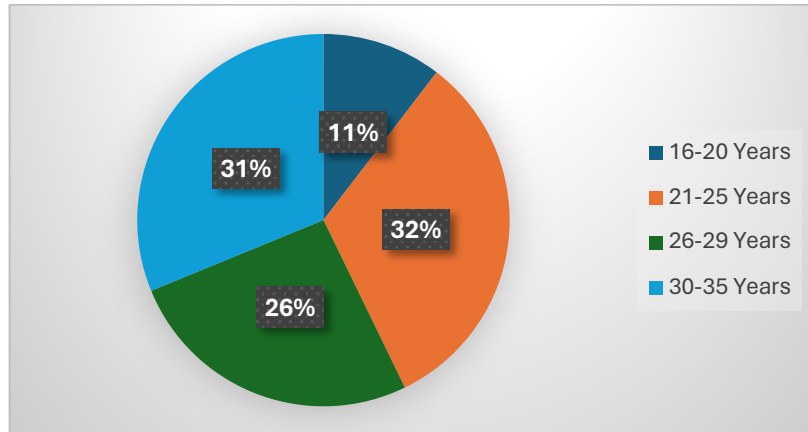


Figure 53 shows the respondents' attention to political aspect of the news. The result show that 99 (19.8%) of the respondents pay attention to political aspect of the news, 163 (32.6%) ignore political aspect of the news, while 238 (47.6%) of the respondents' attention is on others. This result can be construed that majority of the respondents' attention is on other aspects of the news media than political aspect of the news.

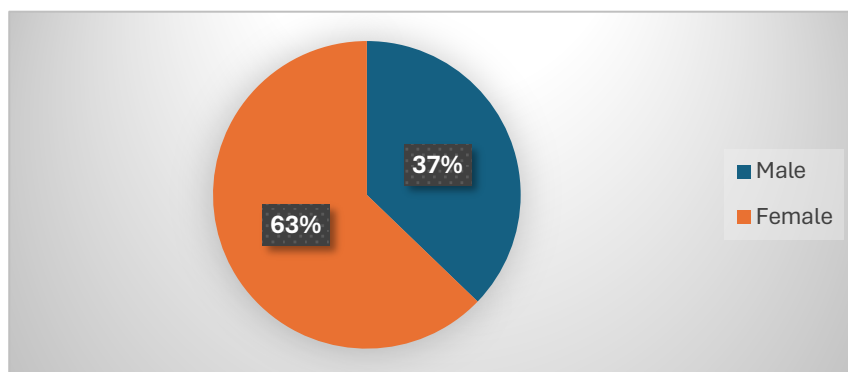
## 7.2 PRESENTATION OF DATA GATHERED FROM URBAN RESPONDENTS

**Figure 54: Age of Urban Respondents'**



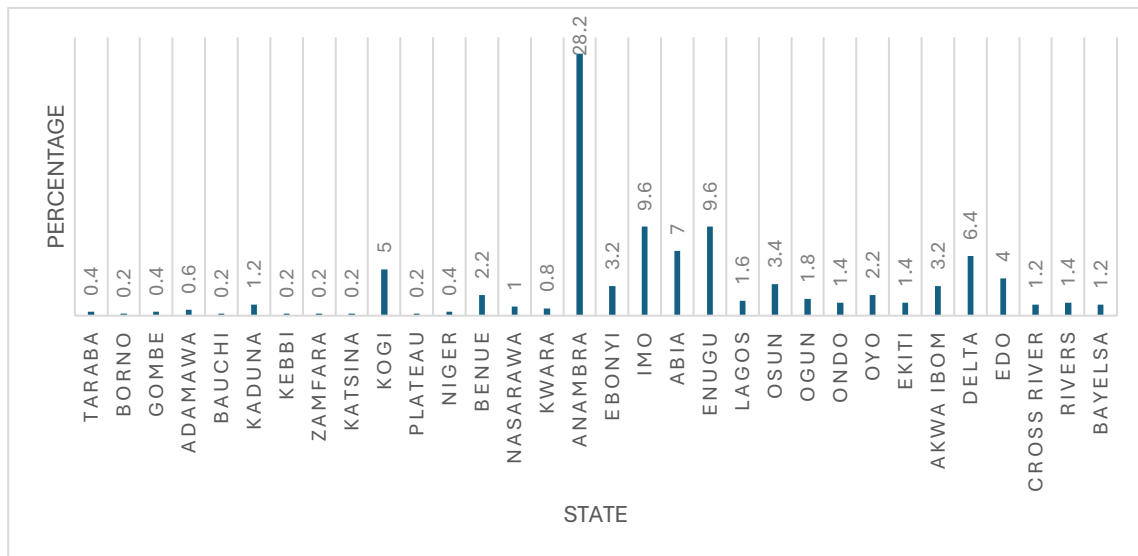
The data presented in Figure 54 show that 52 (10.4%) of the respondent were 16-20 years old, 162 (32.4%) were 21-25 years old, 130 (26.0%) were 26-29 years old, and 156 (31.2%) were 30-35 years old.

**Figure 55: Gender of Urban Respondents'**



Based on the data presented in Figure 55, a total of 186 (37.2%) of the respondents were males and 314 (62.8%) were females.

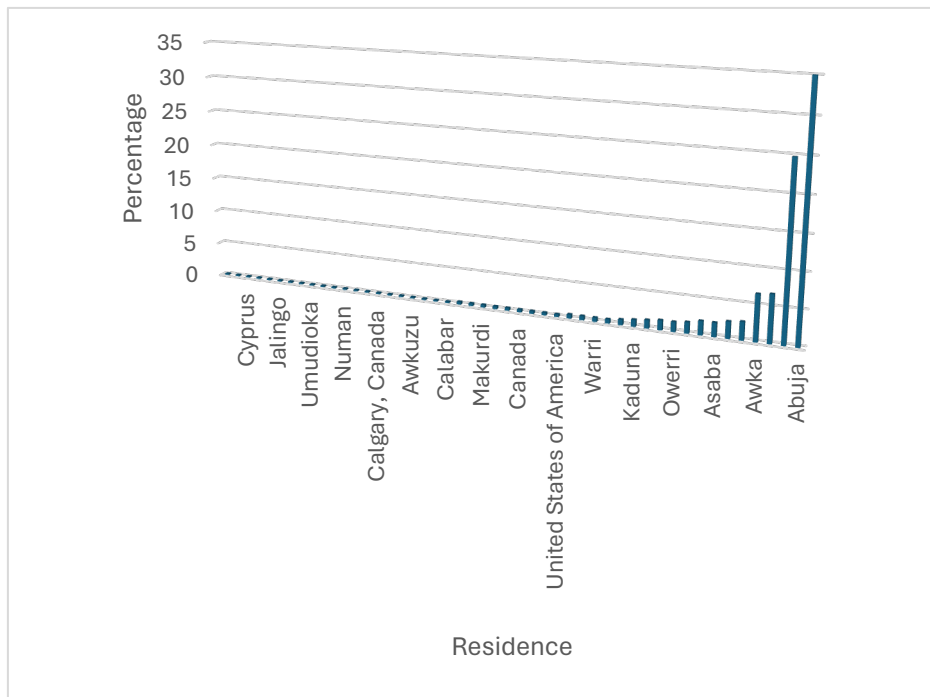
**Figure 56: Urban Respondents' State of Origin**



According to the data presented in Figure 56, the majority of the respondents were from South-east Nigeria. Specially, 288 (17.40%) of the respondents were from states in South-east Nigeria (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo), 87 (17.4%) of them were from states in South-south (Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross-River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers), 59 (11.8%) were from South-western Nigeria (Ekiti, Lagos, Osun, Ondo, Ogun, and Oyo), 48 (9.6%) were from Nigeria's North-central states (Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nassarawa, Niger, and Plateau), 9 (1.8%) of the respondents were from states in North-west Nigeria (Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, and Zamfara), while the remaining 9 (1.8%) of them were from North-east Nigerian states (Adamawa, Borno, Bauchi, Gombe, and Taraba).

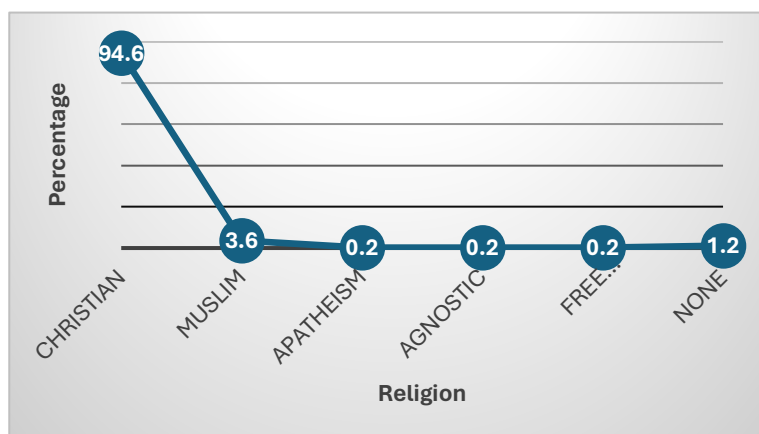


**Figure 57: Urban Respondents' Places of Residence**



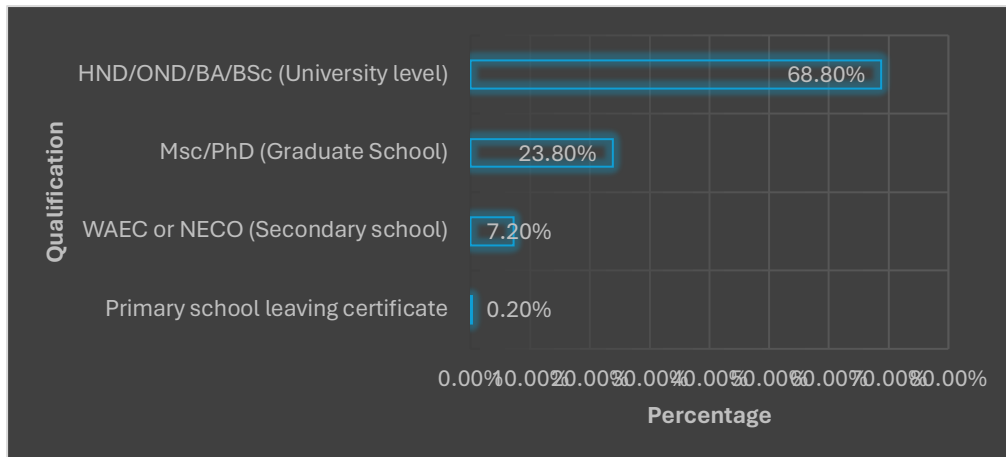
On the places of residence, the data in Figure 57 show that 185 (37.0%) of the study participants were resident in towns/cities/villages in states in North-central Nigeria, 133 (26.6%) resided in South-west Nigeria, 106 (21.2%) lived in South-east Nigeria, 47 (9.4%) of them resided in South-south Nigeria, 6 (1.2%) lived in North-west Nigeria, 4 (0.8%) lived in North-east Nigeria, while the remaining 19 (3.8%) live overseas.

**Figure 58: Religion of Urban Respondents'**



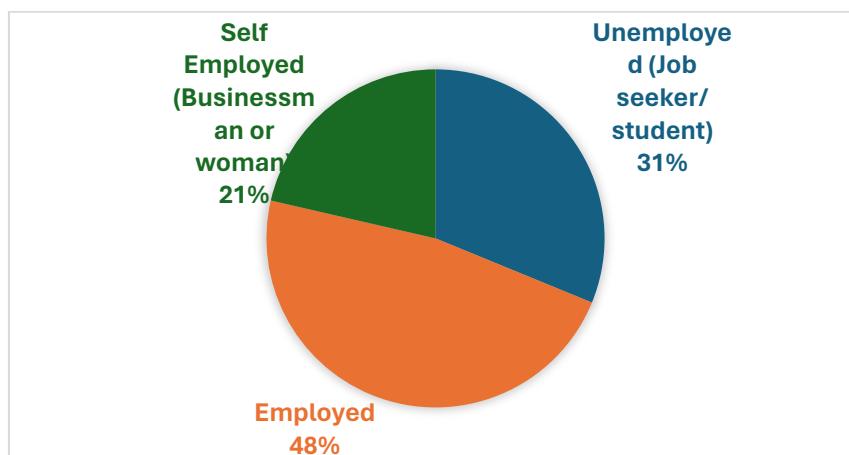
Regarding religion, the data in Figure 58 indicate that the majority of the respondent were Christians (N = 473, 94.6%), 18 (3.6%) of them were Muslims, 1 (0.2%) practised apatheism, another 1 (0.3%) is agnostic in religion and 1 (0.2%) was a free thinker. Only 6 (1.2%) of the respondents said they practise no religion.

**Figure 59: Urban Respondents' Highest Educational Qualifications**



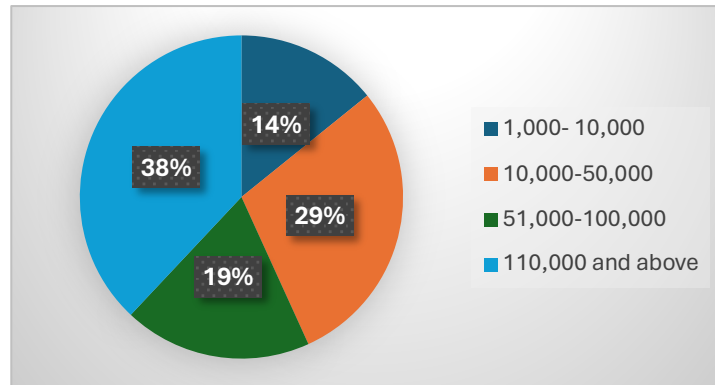
The data presented in Figure 59 show that a total of 344 (68.8%) of the respondents have attained education at the tertiary level (HND, OND, BA/BSC), 119 (23.8%) have attained postgraduate education, 36 (7.2%) have received secondary school education, while only one (0.2%) of the respondents has not gone beyond primary school education.

**Figure 60: Urban Respondents' Current Job Status**



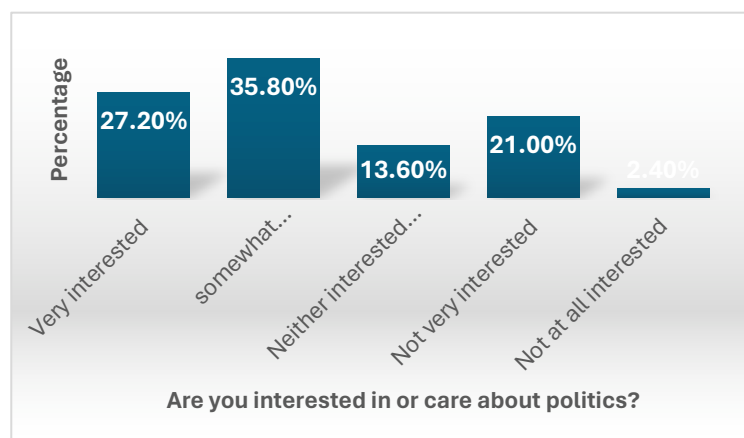
On the respondents' current employment status of the study participants, the data presented in Figure 60 indicate that 237 (47.4%) of them were gainfully employed, 107 (21.4%) were self-employed, and the remaining 156 (31.2%) were either students or still searching for gainful employments.

**Figure 61: Urban Respondents' Monthly Income**



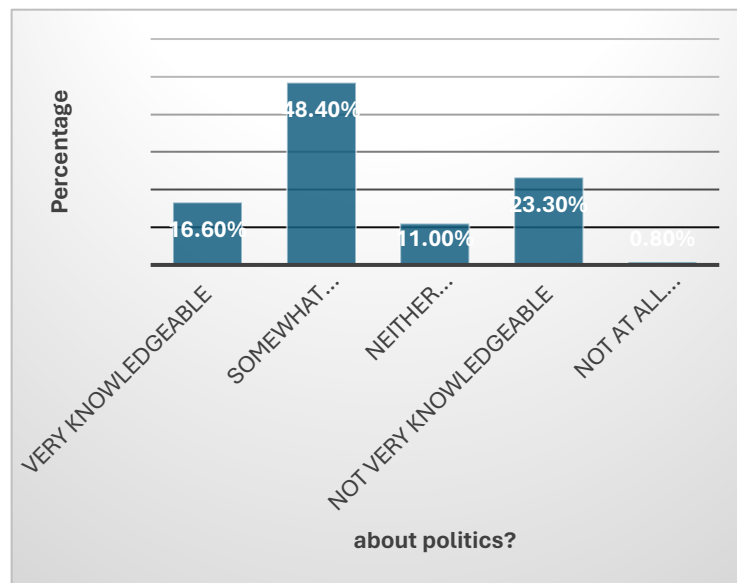
Based on the respondents' monthly earnings, the data shown in Figure 61 indicate that the largest chunk of the respondents (N = 190, 38.0%) received N110,000 and above per month, 94 (18.8%) received between N51,000 and N100,000, 145 (29.0%) received between N10,000 and N50,000, and 71 (14.2%) earned between N1,000 and N10,000 monthly.

**Figure 62: Urban Respondents' Level of Interest in Politics**



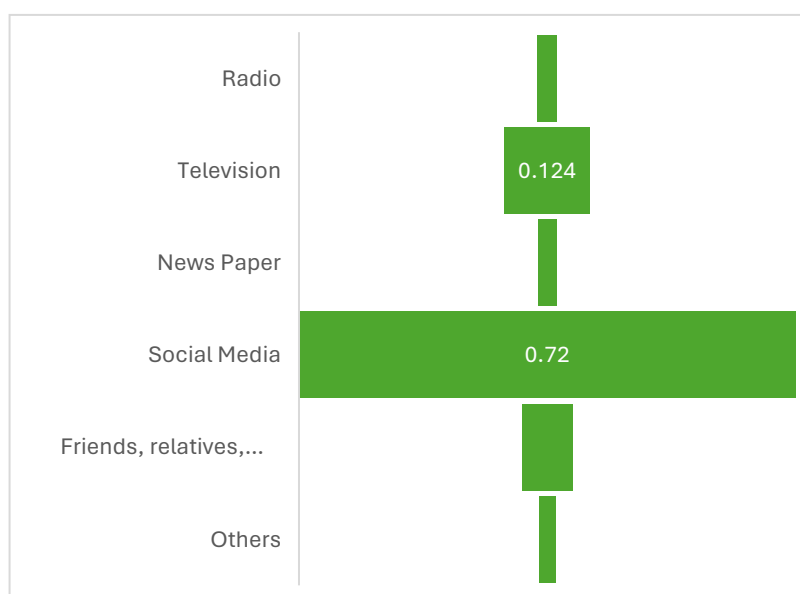
According to the data presented in Figure 62, a total of 136 (27.2%) of the respondents indicated that they were very interested in politics, 179 (35.8%) were somewhat interested, 68 (13.6%) were neither interested nor uninterested, 105 (21.0%) were not very interested, while 12(2.4 %) were not interested in politics at all.

**Figure 63: Urban Respondents' Knowledge about Politics**



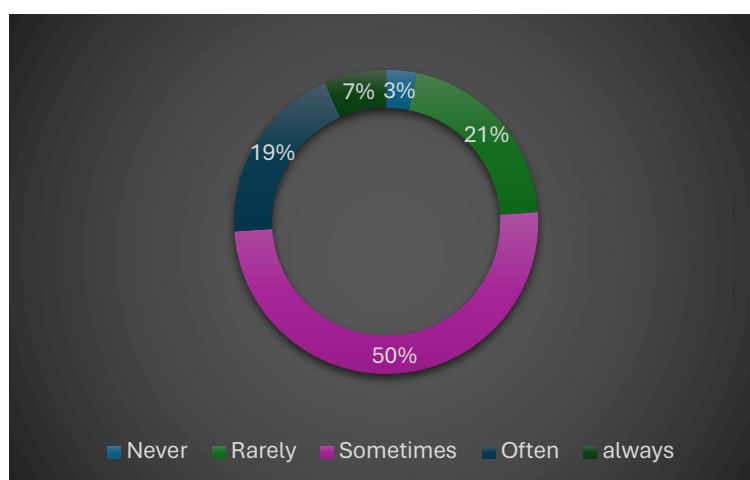
On the depth of knowledge about politics, the data in Figure 63 indicate that 83 (16.6%) of the respondents said they were very knowledgeable, 242 (48.4%) claimed they were somewhat knowledgeable, 55 (11.0%) were neither knowledgeable nor ignorant, 116 (23.2%) were not very knowledgeable, while 4 (0.8%) were not at all knowledgeable.

**Figure 64: Urban Respondents Most Often Used Sources of Political Information**



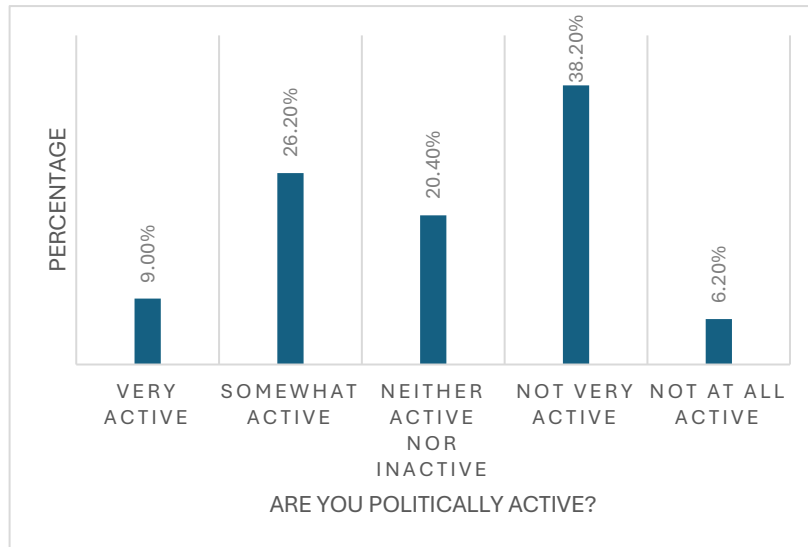
The data presented in Figure 64 show that social media platforms are the most often used media sources of information about politics given that 360 (72.0%) of the respondents used the platforms. Similarly, 62 (12.4%) of the respondents mostly used television, 15 (3.0%) used radio, 14 (2.8%) used newspaper, 37 (7.4%) used friends, relatives, and work colleagues, while 12 (2.4%) used online media sources that are not social media-based to get information about politics.

**Figure 65: Talking to Other Youths About Politics (Urban Respondents)**



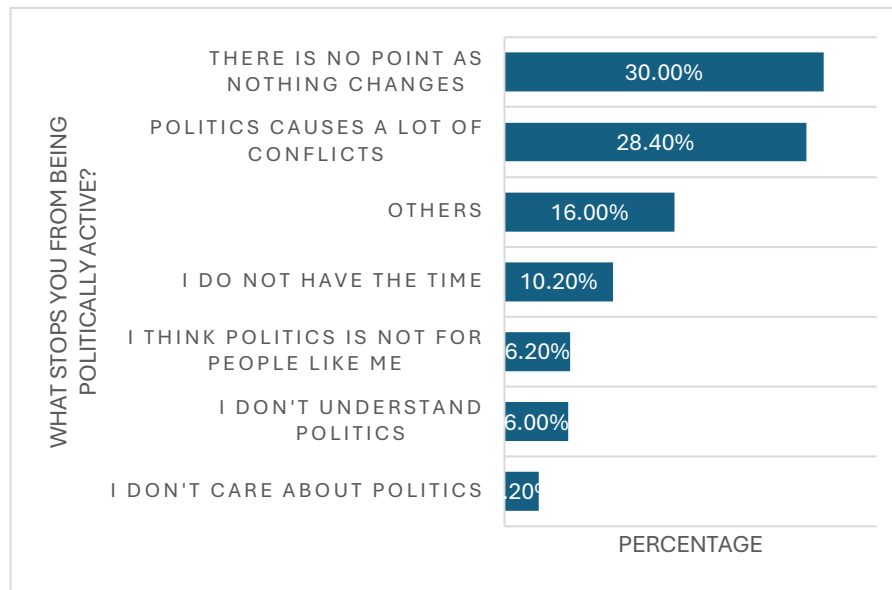
According to the data presented in Figure 65, 33 (6.6%) of the study participants talk to other youth about politics always, 97 (19.4%) do so often, 250 (50.0%) sometimes talk to their peers about politics, 104 (20.8%) of them rarely do so, and 16 (3.2%) have never talked to other youth about politics.

**Figure 66: Urban Respondents' Level of Activeness in Politics**



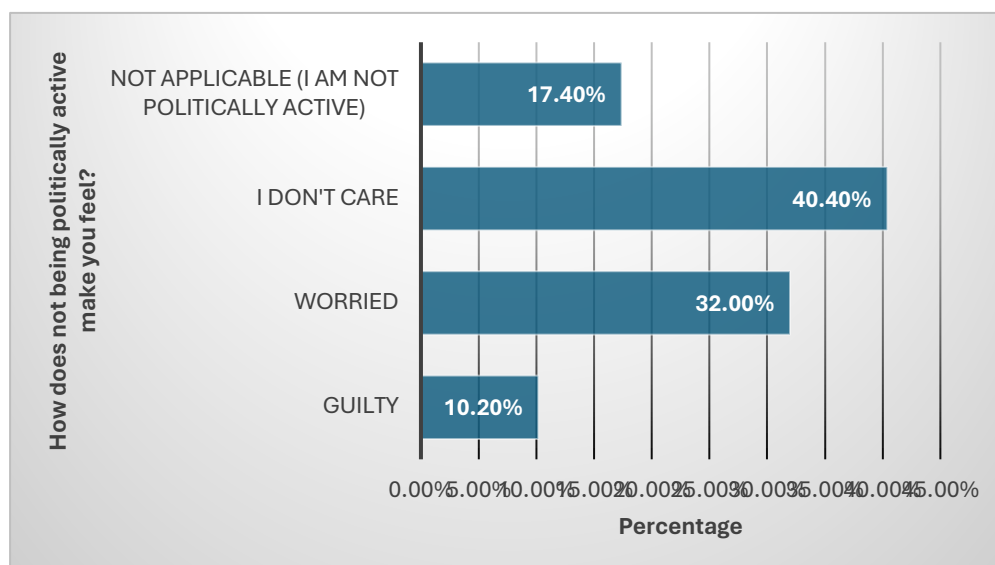
Concerning the respondents' level of political activeness, the data in Figure 66 indicate that 45 (9.0%) of the study participants were very active politically, 131 (26.2%) were somewhat active, 102 (20.4%) were neither active nor inactive, 191 (38.2%) were not very active, and 31 (6.2%) were not at all active.

**Figure 67: Why Urban Respondents are not active in Politics.**



As shown in the data presented in Figure 67, many youths are politically inactive because they believe their political activeness won't change anything (N = 150, 30.0%), or because politics causes a lot of conflicts (N = 142, 28.4%). Besides, some of the respondents do not have time for political activities (N = 51, 10.2%), believe that politics is not for people like them (N = 31, 6.2%), do not understand politics (N = 30, 6.0%) and care less about political issues (N = 63, 12.65). More so, some of the respondents are politically inactive because they think that Nigerian politics is ridiculous and/or because politicians make the political system too complicated for new entrants. Nevertheless, a total of 17 (3.45%) respondents noted that they had no hindrance to political activeness.

**Figure 68: Urban Respondents Feeling of not Participating in Politics**



Regarding the effects of political inactiveness on youths, the data shown in Figure 68 indicate that most of the respondents do not care at all about the consequences of their political inactiveness (N = 202, 40.4%), some feel worried (N = 160, 32.0%) and others feel guilty (N = 51, 10.2%).

**Table 1: Urban Respondents' Perception about Politics**

Option	SA	A	N	D	SD
<b>Nigerian politics is just for men</b>	23 (4.6%)	55 (11.0%)	36 (7.2%)	189 (37.8%)	197 (39.4%)
<b>Nigerian politics is only for older people</b>	44 (8.8%)	63 (12.6%)	36 (7.2%)	158 (31.6%)	199 (39.8%)
<b>Nigerian politics is only for the wealthy people</b>	92 (18.4%)	112 (22.4%)	41 (8.2%)	111 (22.2%)	144 (28.8%)

SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neither agree nor disagree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree



The data presented in Table 1 indicate that majority of the respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed that Nigerian politics is exclusively for men. They also refuted the statement that politics in Nigeria is meant for older people, or that Nigerian politics is meant for wealthy people alone.

**Table 2: Problems Youth Face in Nigeria (Urban Respondents Grouped in Themes)**

S/N	THEME	CODE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1.	<b>Economic Challenges</b>	Unemployment	326	65.2
		Poverty/Hardship	308	61.6
		Unfavourable Business conditions	196	39.2
		Low paying jobs	107	21.4
		Inadequate entrepreneurship support	252	50.4
		2.	<b>Political Challenges</b>	Political greed
Failed promises	137	27.4		
Social media lies/ propaganda	94	18.8		
Godfatherism	271	54.2		

		Political exclusion/ marginalisation	312	62.4
		Disregard for youths	89	17.8
		Political ignorance	76	15.2
		Election rigging	159	31.8
		Political bullying	88	17.6
		Corruption	287	57.4
		Misrepresentation	82	16.4
		Political apathy	253	50.6
		Political pessimism	21	4.2
		Unheard voices	136	27.2
<b>3.</b>	<b>Social Challenges</b>	Poor healthcare system	165	33.0
		Epileptic power supply	203	40.6
		Bad roads	112	22.4
		Shortcut to wealth	98	19.6
<b>4.</b>	<b>Educational Challenges</b>	Poor educational system	171	34.2

		Harassment from lecturers	76	15.2
		ASUU strike	83	16.6
<b>5.</b>	<b>Security Challenges</b>	Crime	31	6.2
		Police Harassment/intimidation	147	29.4
		Fear of the unknown	113	22.6
		Ritual killings	13	2.6
		Kidnapping	91	18.2
		Insurgency	48	9.6
		Cultism	61	12.2
<b>6.</b>	<b>Cultural Challenges</b>	Age discrimination	206	41.2
		Ethnic differences	41	8.2
		Tribalism	53	10.6
		Poor mentorship culture	94	18.8
<b>7.</b>	<b>Religious Challenges</b>	Religious differences	42	8.4
		Religious conflicts	35	7.0

As shown in Table 2, youth face myriad challenges that fall into the broad categories of economic, political, social, educational, security, cultural, and religious problems.

As observed by the respondents, unemployment (N = 326, 65.2%) and poverty (N = 308, 61.65) are the largest economic challenges facing youth in Nigeria, just as they are beset by unfriendly business environment (N = 196, 39.2%) and inadequate support for entrepreneurial activities (N = 252, 50.4%) and low paying jobs (N = 107, 21.4%). For instance, a respondent noted that:

*“A major problem we face is that of unemployment, there is hardly any job in Nigeria, but we are always tagged lazy youths by the government. This problem makes most youth do unthinkable things just to have a source of livelihood” (R.36, Female, 16-20 years).* Another respondent noted that youths in Nigeria grapple with the *“lack of support from the government in urban businesses, very low access to business loans and grants, and very high unemployment rate which makes most graduates resort to selling wigs and clothes on social media” (R.121, Female, 30-35 years).* As a result of this festering poverty rates, most youths are unable *“to fund their political ambition as parties make it financially difficult to participate fully in politics” (R.378, Male, 30-35 years).*

On the political challenges facing young Nigerians, the data presented in Table 17 suggest that the challenges of political exclusion/marginalisation (N = 312, 62.4%), corruption (N = 287, 57.4%), Godfatherism (N = 271, 54.2%), and political apathy (N = 253, 50.6%) are some of the major problems facing youth in Nigeria. In the view of one of the respondents, *“youth are not encouraged by the older political parties, political fathers seem not to give way to the younger political class. The issue of two parties ruling has really hindered the younger ones from participating fully in politics” (R. 109, Female, 30-35 years).* Also, some of the respondents added that the major political challenges facing young Nigerians is *“the gross insensitivity of the older folks*

as regards letting youth into the political corridors” (R. 497, Male, 30-35). They asserted that *“corruption has eaten deep into the Nigerian system political leaders are more concerned about their pockets than the growth and well-being of Nigerians”* (R.12, Female, 30-35 years). The respondents believe that the political corruption challenge has blossomed *“because the political elite need this disorganised framework for their money politics to thrive (R.57, Male, 30-35 years)* coupled with the fact that many youths in Nigeria *“are very indifferent about politics...and they feel nothing changes as to the fact that people who were in power during the prime time of our parents are still the ones in power today”* (R.342, Male, 26-29).

About the social challenges militating against Nigerian youths, the respondents listed the lack of basic amenities like inadequate power supply (N = 203, 40.6%), poor healthcare system (N = 165, 33.0%), inaccessible roads (N = 112, 22.4%) and the quick rich syndrome (N = 98, 19.6%) as the major social problems. According to the respondents, there is a huge *“lack of government intervention in providing necessary infrastructures for normal livelihood”* (R.381, Male, 30-35 years). Besides the amenities problem, the respondents also affirmed that the get-rich-quick syndrome among youths in Nigeria is getting to an alarming rate because *“people are desperate for jobs after leaving school, but due to the nature of the economy and the scarcity of jobs, they resort to other quicker and dangerous means”* (R.93, Female, 21-25 years).

Among the respondents who identified challenges in the education sector, the poor state of the Nigerian education system (N = 171, 34.2%), the recurrent strike by university workers (N = 83, 16.6%), and harassment from lecturers (N = 76, 15.2%) are the major issues to contend with. While commenting on the state of education in Nigeria, a respondent observed that *“our ambitions, creativity, and zeal are not given*

*a chance; that is why many youths are leaving Nigeria for other countries so often these days. The Nigerian government school system is a sorry case at the moment...An average government school student spends more than the stipulated number of years in school which is ridiculous and sad” (R.371, Female, 21-25 years).*

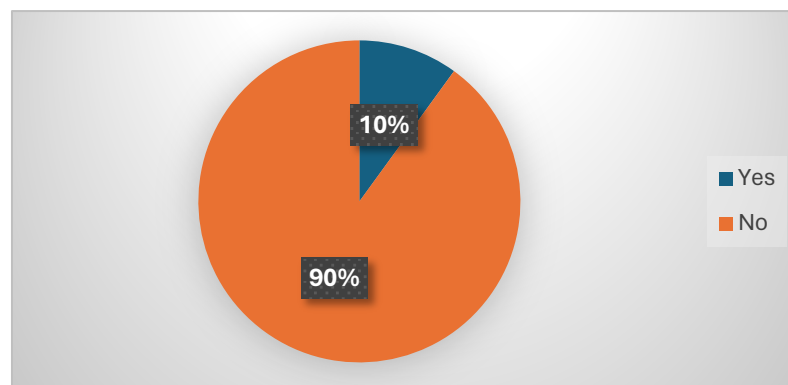
On the various security challenges besetting youth in Nigeria, the respondents identified police harassment/intimidation (N = 147, 29.4%), fear of the unknown (N = 113, 22.6), and kidnapping (N = 91, 18.2%) as some of the key challenges militating against young Nigerians. One of the respondents noted that youth in Nigeria face the risk of *“insecurity and high rate of social vices, such as cultism, kidnapping, sexual harassment, and rape” (R.387, Female, 26-29 years)*. Besides, many youths grapple with the *“fear of being killed or rather the fear of dying at a young age if they participate in elections” (R.415, Female, 21-25 years)*. Another respondent concurred with the following assertion: *“we are being killed (ENDSARS); we are systematically shut out when we try to engage; we are not prioritised” (R.376, Male, 30-35 years)*. On the problem of harassment from agents of the state, the respondents revealed that there is an *“authoritarian pushback against the youths when they express their dissatisfaction with governance” (R.355, Male, 21-25 years)*. Another added that *“even after the end police brutality campaign, police still illegally stop and search youths, arrest and sometimes torture them because they use an expensive gadget, or have dreadlocks or ride a car” (R.444, Female, 21-25 years)*.

From the cultural front, the respondent identified age discrimination (N = 206, 41.2%), poor mentorship culture (N = 94, 18.8%), ethnic differences (N = 41, 8.2%), and tribal sentiments (N = 53, 10.6%) as the major cultural challenges facing Nigerian youths. A respondent noted that there is no *“acceptance from the older generation; the older*

generation looks down on the younger generation” (R.487, Female, 26-29 years). Another added that “no matter how much we speak, we are not heard and we are often disregarded as young ones who have no experience; therefore, not to be listed to (R.33, Female, 21-25 years). A further comment added thus: “we are not given any opportunity at all; we are seen as too young and without experience when it comes to job seeking, and how do we have experience when we are not given the chance? The people already in power- both in politics and business- suppress the newcomers so they alone would continue to excel”. (R.345, Female, 21-25 years).

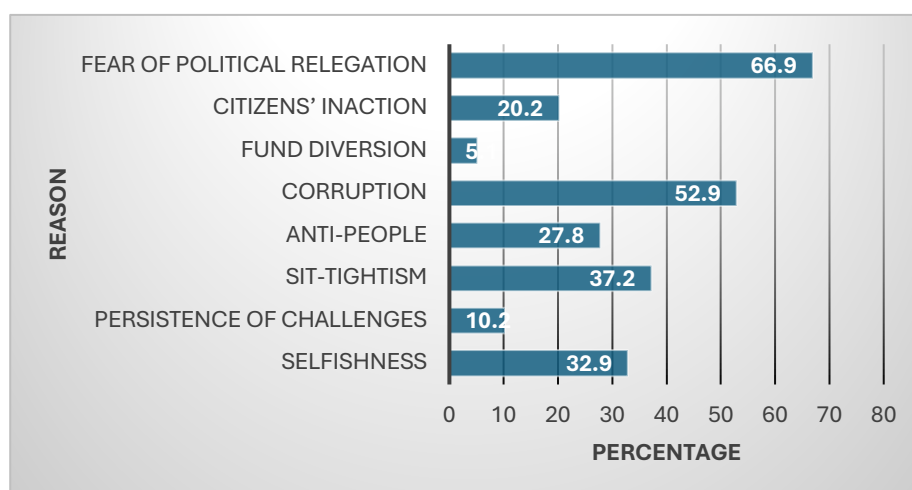
Finally, the respondents identified religious differences (N = 42, 8.4%) and religious conflicts (N = 35, 7.0%) as some of the challenges youth contend with in Nigeria. According to them, political elites/leaders “manipulate religion and tribe to create division and remove any form of unity among youths” (R.445, Female, 21-25 years).

**Figure 54: Urban Respondents Perception about problems in Politics**



According to the data presented in Figure 69, most of the respondents believe that the myriad challenges facing youth in Nigeria are not being given the desired attention by the political elites and political leaders in the country (N=450, 90.0%), while the remaining 50 (10.0%) of the respondents think the challenges are being given adequate attention.

**Figure 55: Urban Respondents Perception about problems in Politics**



The data presented in Figure 70 suggest that among the respondents who think the problems facing youth in Nigeria are not being addressed, “*greed on the part of the older folks*” is one reason political leaders are ignoring the plight of young Nigerians (**R.497, Male, 30-35 years**). One of the respondents thinks that the problems are “*not given attention because what the political elites/leaders come to do in office is to steal money and leave office. They didn’t fight for that position because they wanted to help the country or state as the case might be. Plus, they do not have children in this country. Their children are in more developed countries*” (**R.5, Female, 21-25 years**). Another respondent further buttressed this claim Thus: “*The youth are simply not heard, or maybe they are and our political leaders just don’t care. All the leaders think of is enriching themselves and sending their families out of the country because they can afford to. The political leaders enter positions with no proper plans on how to make things better*” (**R.11, Female, 26-29 years**). Also, another respondent observed that: “*the leaders in Nigeria are so selfish and greedy that they do not care about their citizens. They care only about their household. For instance, the persisting ASUU strike which started on the 14th of February 2022 to date, the government is not even*



*planning for the students to resume back, but their children are abroad studying hard while we sit at home doing nothing” (R.60, Female, 16-20 years).*

Furthermore, the respondents think that the issues are not being given adequate attention by political leaders because of the anti-people orientation of the political class. According to one of the respondents, these challenges have lingered “*because the government is truly not for the people*” (R.9, Female, 21-25 years). Based on the comments, such an anti-people disposition of the political class seems to manifest in their lack of commitment to tackling the challenges facing young Nigerians. To this end, one of the respondents noted that: “*there is no commitment from the Nigerian political class to solve or ameliorate the impact of the problems on the youth. Nigeria commits less than 10% of its annual budget to education when there is an ‘army’ of uneducated youths...So the few who are privileged to get a good education are thriving while the uneducated multitude is languishing. This has further deepened the level of “inequality among youths in the country” (R.228, Male, 30-35 years).*

On the issue of sit-tightism, the respondents argued that “*the elites are older people who want to be in power perpetually*” (R.334, Female, 21-25 years). Thus, one of the respondents rhetorically queried that “*if they (political elites) work to eradicate poverty and ensure every young person has access to quality education, which thugs will they find to use for their nefarious tasks?” (R.336, Female, 26-29 years).* Another respondent argued that this sit-tight approach to power has resulted in a situation where “*offices are still being recycled among the old and wealthy politicians who are ready to go to any length to crush anyone who stands in their way*” (R.439, Female, 30-35 years).

Closely connected to the sit-tight disposition is the fear of political relegation among political elites and political leaders in Nigeria. According to one of the respondents *“political leaders don’t pay attention because they feel the youths will outdo them and would end up having great chances of making the country better”* (R.407, Female, 21-25 years). Due to this fear, *“the political elites and political leaders in Nigeria don’t care. In fact, they prepare the youths to remain down, oppressed, and depressed so they can manipulate us into doing whatever they want. They won’t improve the education sector for all parts of the country so they can use our youths as thugs”* (R.445, Female, 21-25 years). Besides, the respondents also think that the Nigerian political class consists of *“power-hungry individuals for their selfish reasons and would not like their power to be limited; so they don’t give attention to bringing young innovative people into politics”* (R.342, Male, 26-29 years).

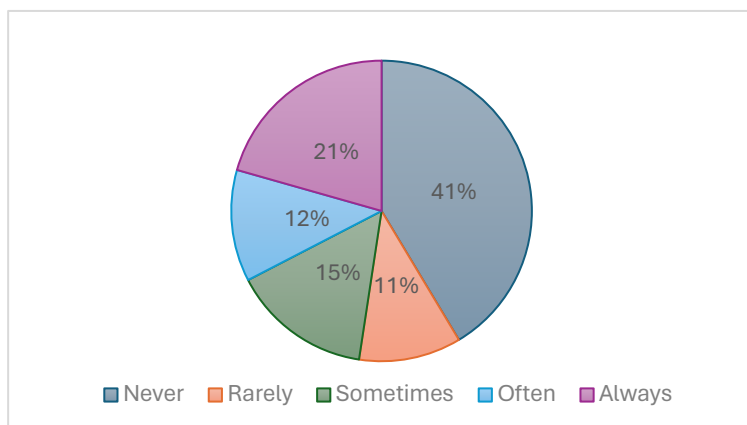
On the issue of corruption, the respondents believe that *“corruption has eaten deep into the Nigerian system. Political leaders are more concerned about their pockets than the growth and well-being of Nigerians”* (R.12, Female, 30-35). According to the respondents, such perceived corruption among the political elites/leaders seems to also manifest in Nigerian elections, thus *“the political leaders are not overly concerned with what the public opinion is about their rule over the masses because the masses do not have a say in how the government is run, the elections do not matter cause at the end of the day, the election result would be determined by a judge in the courts”* (R.88, Male, 26-29 years). More so, another respondent thinks the issue has persisted because the political elites/leaders *“created the rot and benefit from it...because there is no accountability in the system”* (R.452, Female, 26-29 years).

On the persistence of the problem, some of the respondents asserted that the problems facing Nigerians have not changed. According to one of them, “so far, the situations have become worse, more graduates every year with no jobs or jobs with peanuts as pay. Even after the end police brutality campaign, police still illegally stop and search youths, arrest and sometimes torture them because they use an expensive gadget, or have dreadlocks or ride a nice car” (R.444, Female, 21-25 years).

Another respondent lucidly paints the situation in the following words:

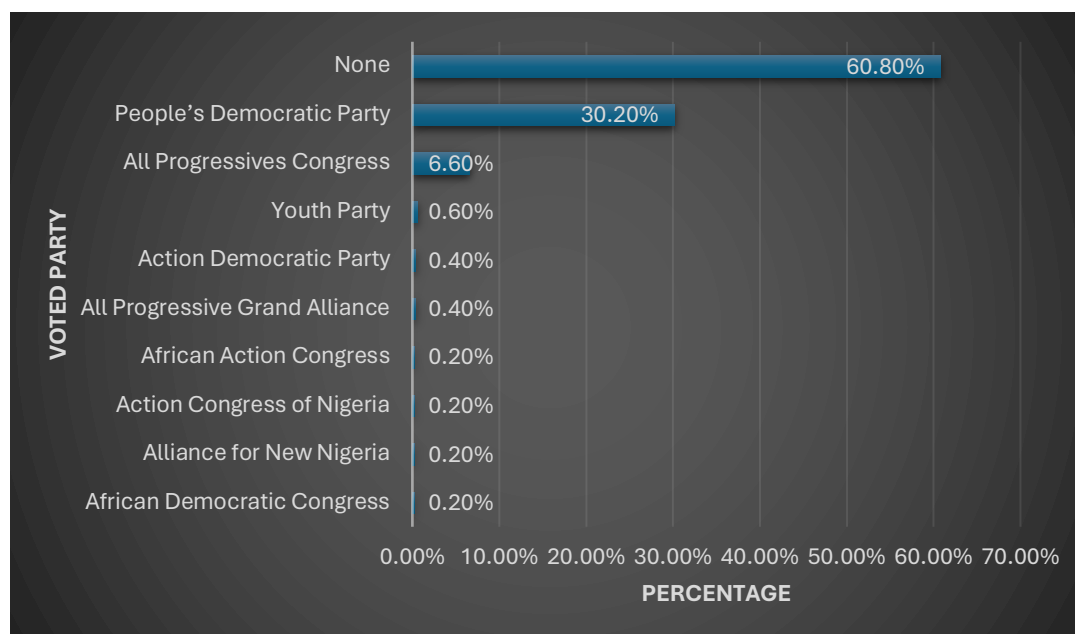
“Youth profiling was one of the reasons that #EndSARS was a thing in 2020, but it is still rampant now; youths are still profiled based on their looks, yet the perpetrators of the crimes we see are not on dreadlocks, or piercing, or torn jeans. The rate of unemployment has increased; if they were given attention, it wouldn’t rise. There is insecurity everywhere, rape, murder, etc and the victims rarely get justice. If the politicians care about education, we shouldn’t have had a strike in the education sector extending to more than a quarter of the year. Four years courses are now read for six years” (R.485, Female, 21-25 years).

**Figure 56: Urban Respondents’ Voting Frequency**



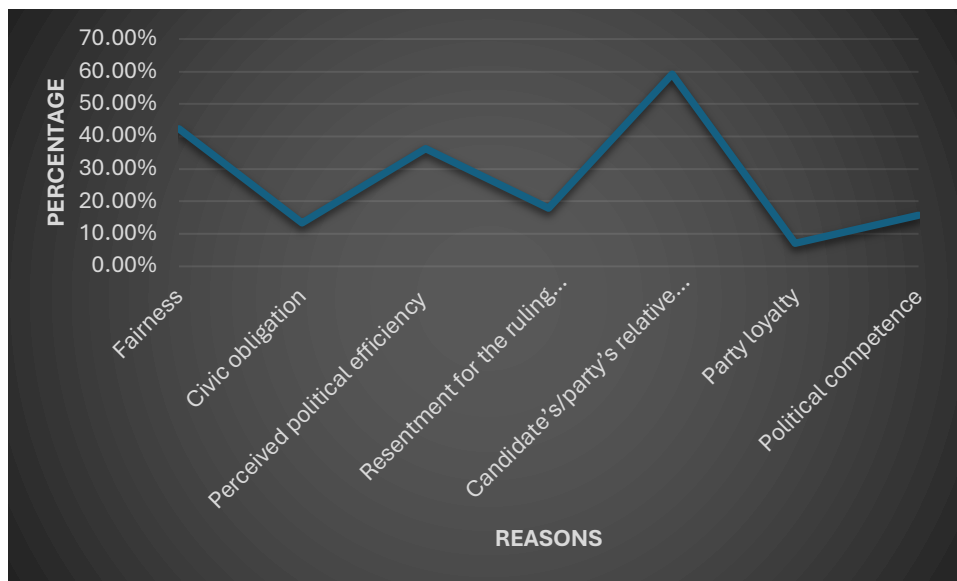
On the issue of voting during elections, the data in Figure 71 indicates that 103 (20.6%) of the respondents vote always, 60 (12.0 %) vote often, 75 (15.0%) vote sometimes, 55 (11.0%) rarely vote, while 207 (41.4%) have never voted.

**Figure 57: Urban Respondents Choice of Political Party**



Data in Figure 72 shows that among the respondents who voted in the 2019 presidential election, 151 (30.2%) voted for the People's Democratic Party (PDP), 33 (6.6%) voted for the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), 3 (0.6%) voted for the Youth's Party (YPP), 2 (0.4%) voted for the Action Democratic Party (ADP), 2 (0.4%) voted for the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), while only 1 (0.2%) voted for each of the African Democratic Congress (ADC), Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), Alliance for New Nigeria (ANN), 2(0.4%) voted for the African Action Congress (AAC).

**Figure 58: Urban Respondents Reasons for Voting Their Party in the Last election.**



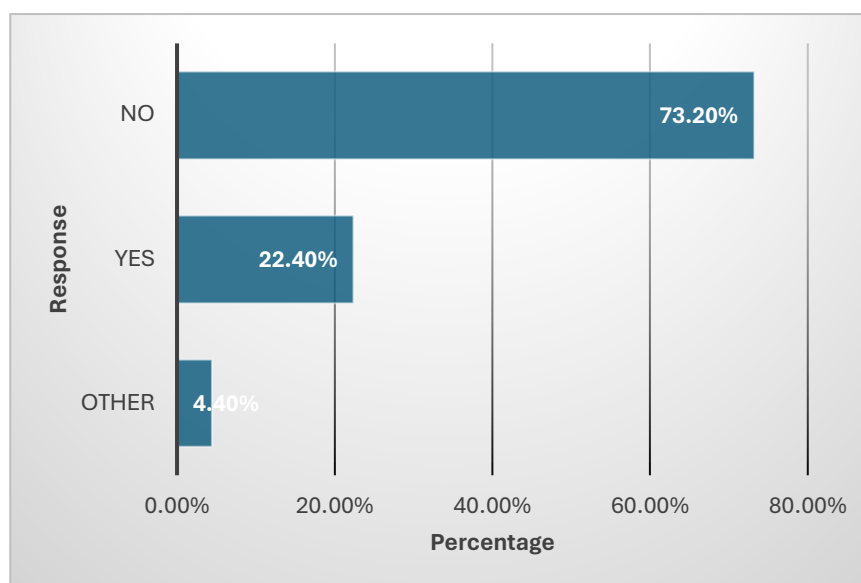
According to the results presented in Figure 73 the main reasons youth voted for a given political party were the perceived relative advantage of the candidate/party (N = 116, 59.2%), fairness of the political party (N = 83, 42.3%), perceived political efficiency (N = 71, 36.2%) and resentment for the ruling class (N = 35, 17.9%). For instance, on the relative advantage of the party/candidate, one of the respondents who voted for the PDP in the 2019 presidential election asserted that *“they were the better option at the time”* (R.69, Female, 30-25 years). Similarly, another respondent noted that the PDP *“candidate said the hard truths on some actions that would be taken to cut inefficiencies and waste in the oil sector, such as NNPC, sound educational policy and looked coherent in response to questions as against the ruling party”* (R.58, Male, 30-35 years). Another respondent explained that *“I voted because of the Vice-Presidential aspirant, that is Peter Obi. He is a wonderful leader and Nigeria would be favored to have him”* (R.72, Female, 26-29).

Among the respondents who voted based on resentment for political parties and/or candidates, one of them said, *“I just didn’t want President Buhari to continue”*

(**R.24, Female, 30-35 years**). Another respondent who resented the PDP and voted for the APC instead noted that: “I thought they would make the change we so desperately need as a nation, but apparently, I was wrong” (**R.25, Female, 16-20 years**). Another respondent said: “*I wanted change, I was sick of APC*” (**R.62, Female, 21-25 years**).

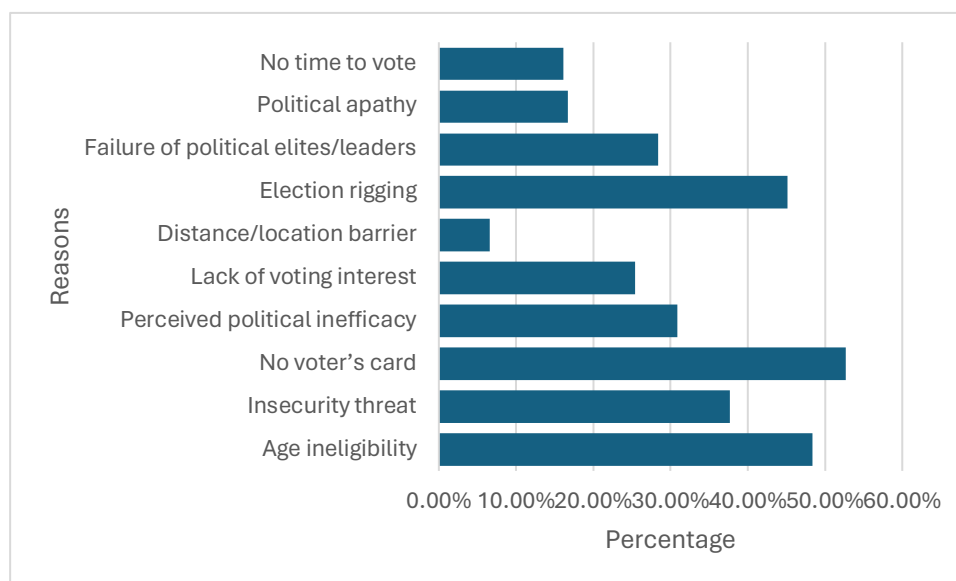
Finally, a respondent who voted based on party loyalty observed that “*I am a party member and I believe in the ideology of government for all people irrespective of tribe or religion*” (**R.63, Male, 26-29 years**).

**Figure 59: Urban Respondents’ Consistency in Voting in Every Election**



As indicated by the data presented in Figure 74, 112 (22.4%) voted in every election, 366 (73.2%) voted in some elections, while 22 (4.4%) of the respondents had some other responses like not being eligible to vote in previous elections or only one election had held since they attained the legal voting age.

**Figure 60: Urban Respondents Reason for Not Voting in Every Election**

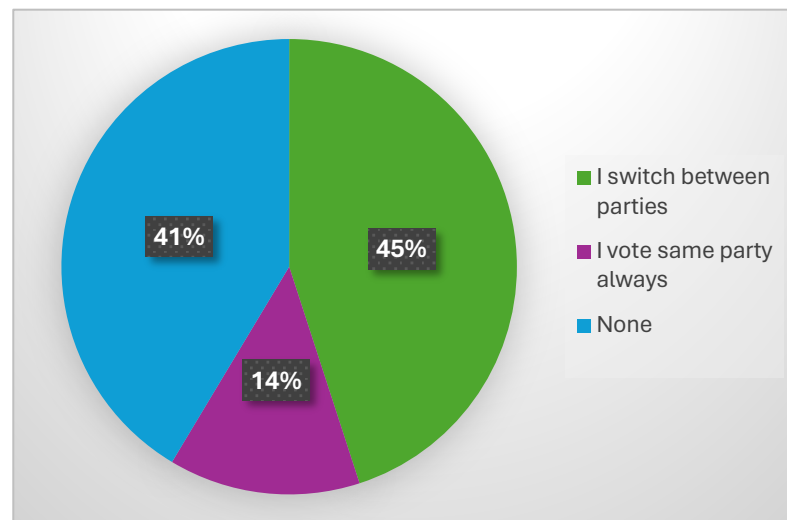


The data presented in Figure 75 shows the various reasons youth don't vote in Nigerian elections. Among these reasons, disenfranchisement based on age (N = 177, 48.4%), and inaccessibility of voter's card (N = 193, 52.7%) seem to top the chart. These issues are further exacerbated by election rigging (N = 165, 45.1%) and rising insecurity at polling units (N = 138, 37.7%). While commenting on these issues, one of the respondents said: *"the reason why I didn't vote in the last election is because I didn't have my PVC ready. Plus, I feel voting is a waste of time because the government would still rig and choose who is going to win the election, making our votes invalid and a waste of time"* (R.5, Female, 21-25 years). Another respondent disclosed that he does not vote because he is *"not impressed by the parties or the candidates available to vote for and because before voting we already know the winner; hence, no fair elections"* (R.14, Female, 30-35 years).

Some of the respondents have also abstained from voting due to perceived political inefficiency (the thinking that their votes won't cause any meaningful change). For instance, one of the respondents explained that: *"If I notice that the party I am*

*supporting is going to win, I just feel my vote won't count" (R.69, Female, 30-35 years).* Another one said, *"I feel like I am wasting my votes because with or without my votes, they already know their winners" (R.10, Female, 30-35 years).* This feeling of political inefficiency seems to be fueling political apathy among the respondents, leading to a situation where the respondents are not interested in voting at all.

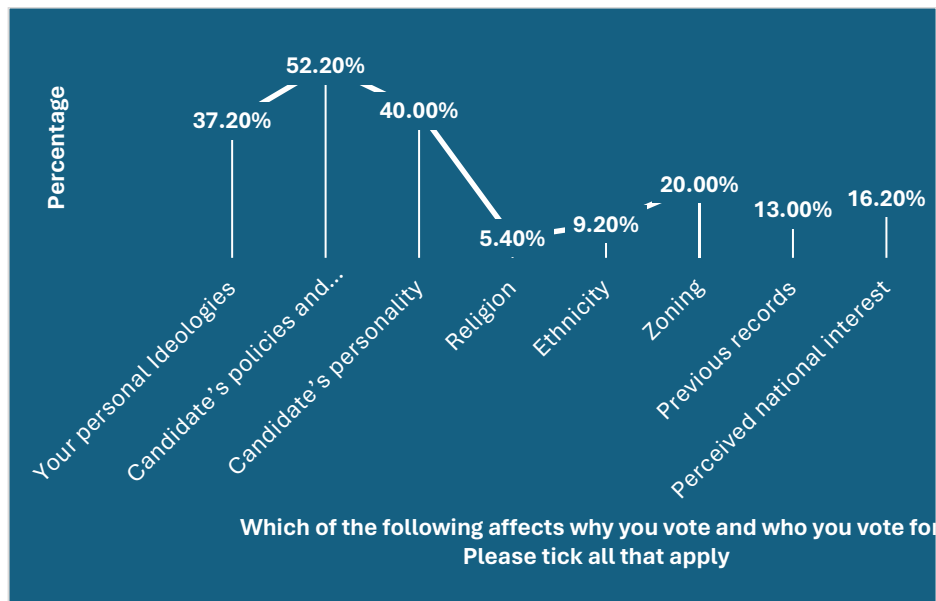
**Figure 61: Urban Respondents' Consistency in Party Choice**



The data presented in Figure 76 show that among the respondents who voted during elections, 225 (45.0%) of them switched between political parties, while 67 (13.4%) voted for the same party always.

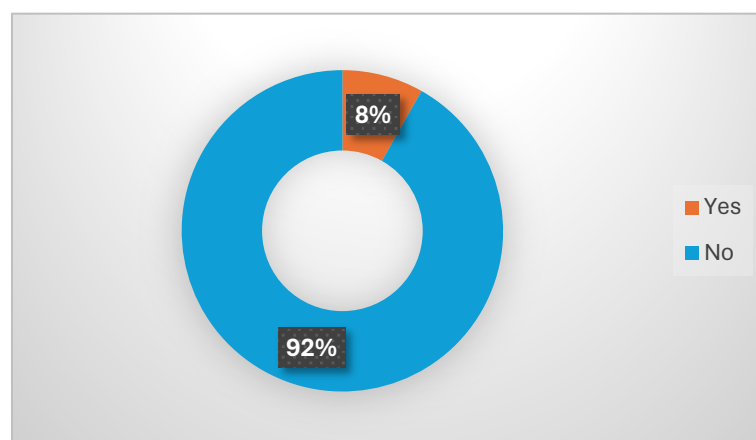


**Figure 62: Determiners of Urban Respondents' Voting Choice**



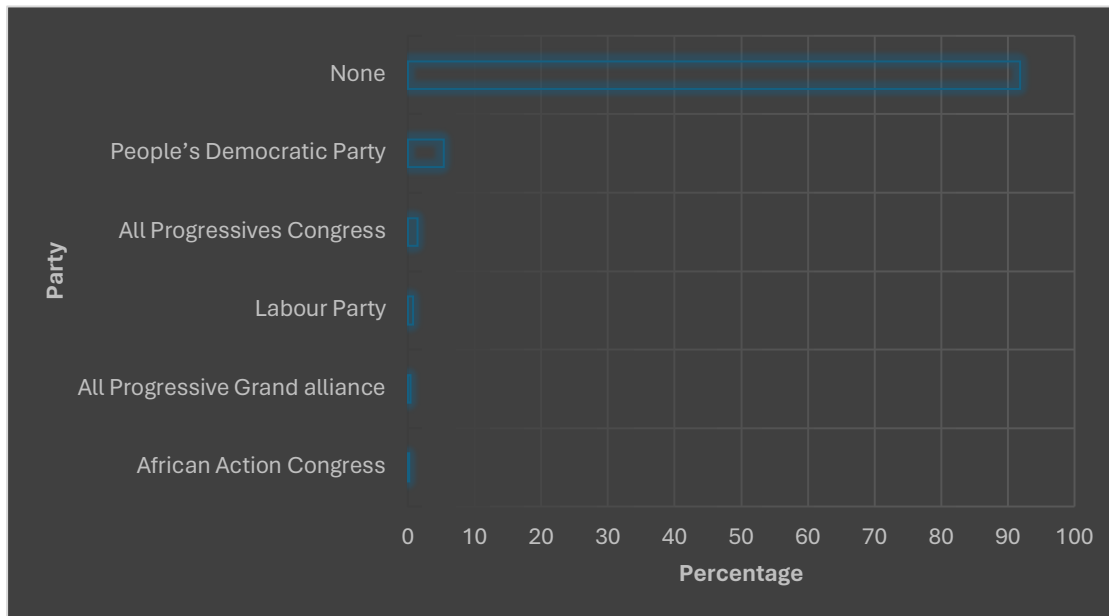
Regarding the determiners of why young Nigerians vote and whom they vote for, the data presented in Figure 77 indicate that candidate's policies and manifestoes (N = 261, 52.2%), candidates' personalities (N = 200, 40.0%), and voter's ideologies (N = 186, 37.2%) are the main influencers of the respondents' voting decision. Other factors that affect this decision are zoning (N = 100, 20.0%), party/candidate's previous records (N = 65, 13.0%), ethnicity (N = 46, 9.2%), perceived national interest (N = 81, 16.2%), and religion (N = 27, 5.4%).

**Figure 63: Urban Respondents' Membership of a Political Party**



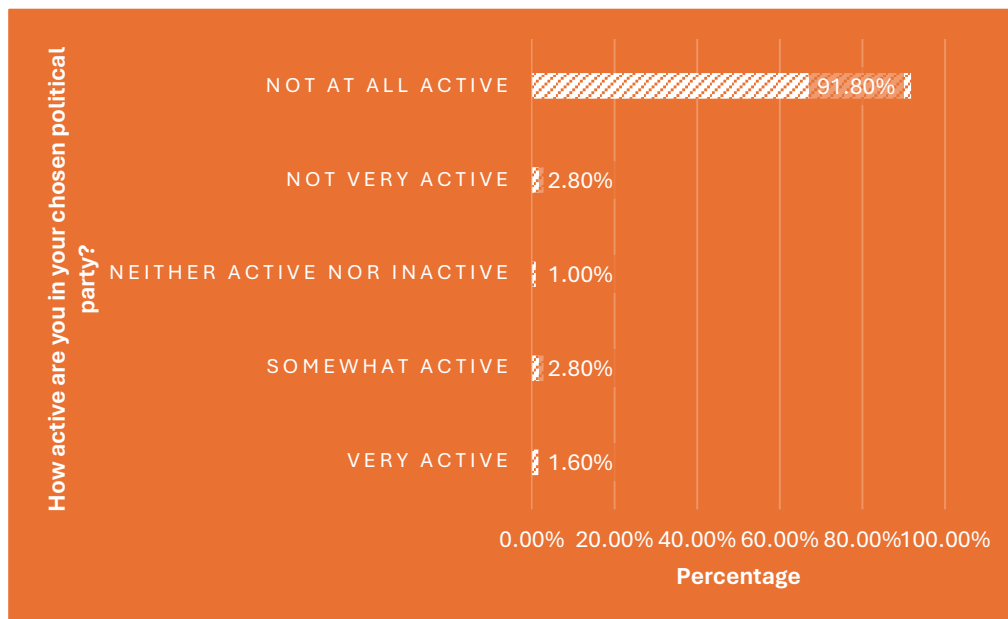
As shown in Figure 78, 459 (91.8%) of the respondents were not registered members of any political parties, while 41 (8.2%) of them were registered members.

**Figure 64: Political Parties Urban Respondents' Align With**



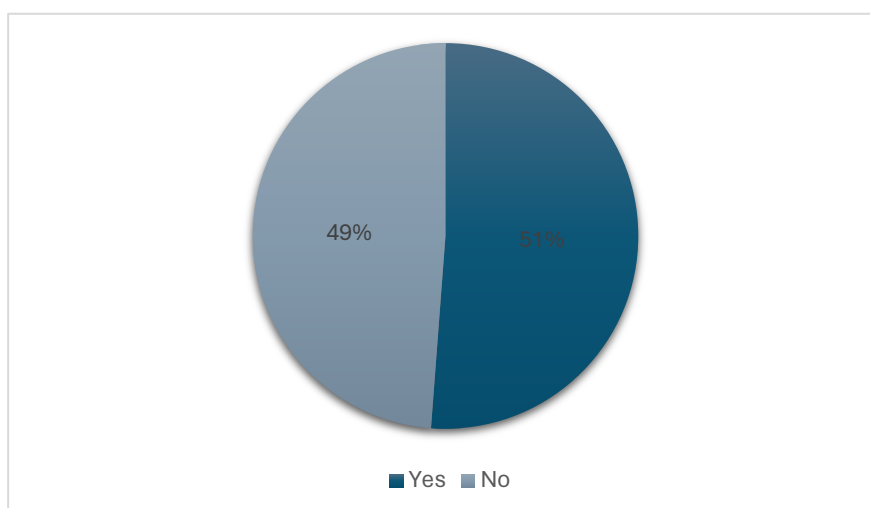
Among those who were registered members of a political party, Figure 79 shows that 27 (5.4%) were members of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), 7 (1.4%) were of the All Progressive Congress (APC), 4 (0.8%) were Labor Party members, 2 (0.4%) were members of the All Progressive Grand Alliance, and 1 (0.2%) was a member of the African Action Congress.

**Figure 65: Urban Respondents Level of Activeness in Their Chosen Political Party**



According to the data presented in Figure 80, 8 (1.6%) of the respondents were very active politically, 14 (2.8%) were somewhat active, 5 (1.0%) were neither active nor inactive, 14 (2.8%) were not very active, while the largest chunk of them (N=459, 91.8%) were not at all active.

**Figure 66: Urban Respondents' Volunteer to Help During Election Campaigns**



The data in Figure 81 indicate that some of the respondents (N = 256, 51.2%) usually volunteer to help during election campaigns, while others (N= 244, 48.8%) do not.

**Figure 67: Urban Respondents' Contribution During Election Campaigns**

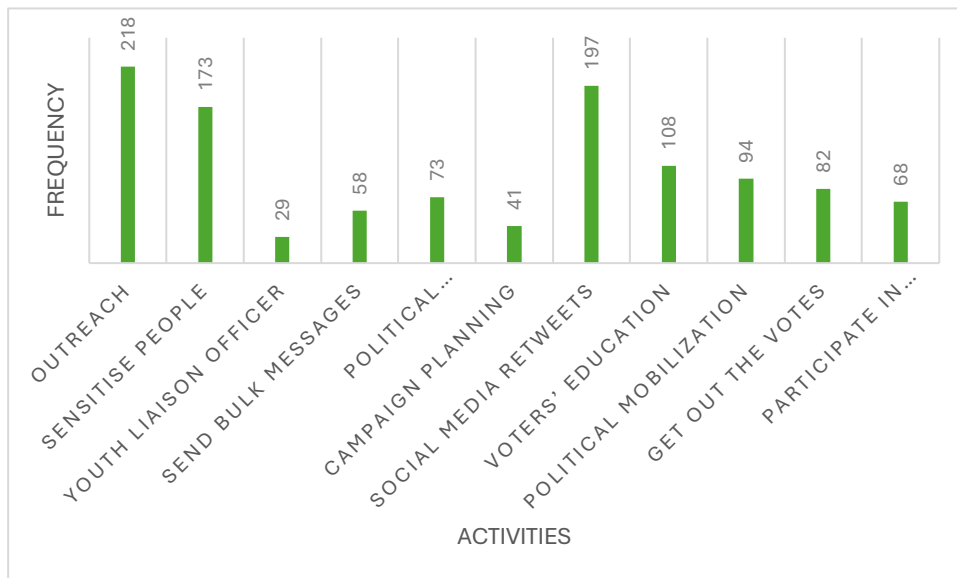
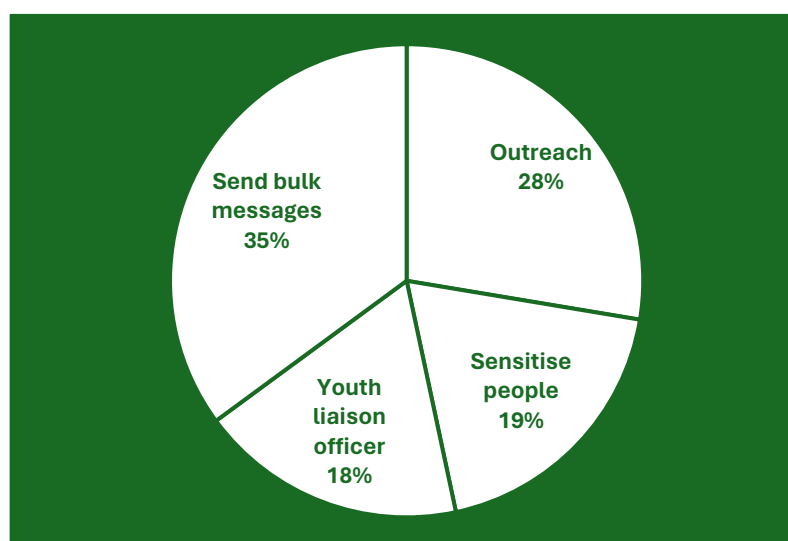


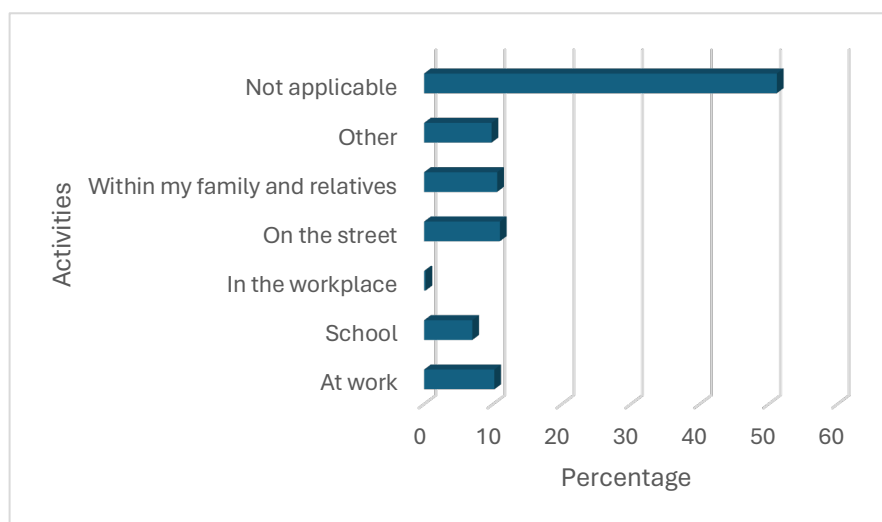
Figure 82 presents the various campaign activities that the respondents engaged in. According to the data, 218 (85.2%) were involved in online campaigns during elections, 173 (67.6%) volunteered to talk to friends, 29 (11.3%) organised political meetings, 58 (22.7%) canvassed support for political parties and their candidates, 73 (28.5%) sensitised the public on election-related matters, 41 (16.0%) were involved in election campaign planning, 197 (77.0%) shared/retweeted political campaign activities posted on social media, 108 (42.2%) educated people on voting, 94 (36.7%) were involved in political mobilisation, 82 (32.0%) mainly sought to directly get votes for political parties/candidates, while 68 (26.6%) actively participated in physical election campaigns.

**Figure 68: Urban Respondents' Other Contributions During Political Activities**



On the other political activities that youth engage in Nigeria, the data in Figure 83 show that 74 (28.9%) of the respondents were also involved in political outreach with other youth, 51 (19.9%) organised public sensitisation, 49 (19.1%) served as youth liaison officer, and 94 (36.7%) were involved with sending bulk messages.

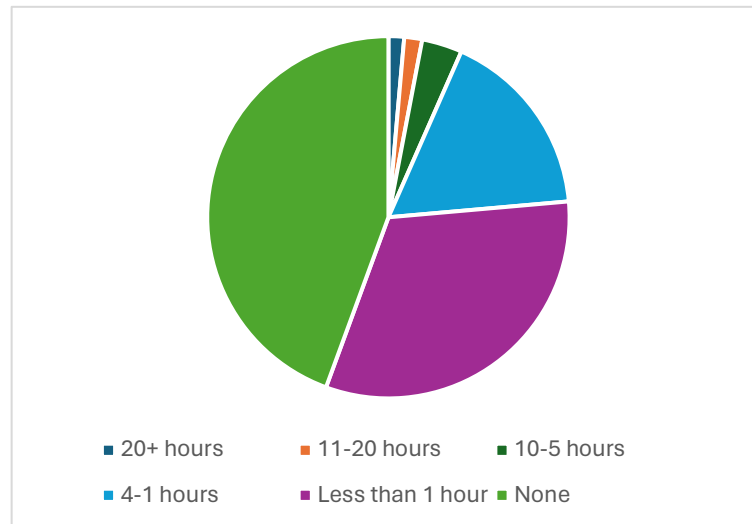
**Figure 69: Urban Respondents' Place of Undertaking Political Activities**



Among those who volunteer to undertake political activities, the data in Figure 84 indicates that 52(10.4%) undertook such activities at their workplaces, 35 (7.0%) did so at school, 55 (11.0%) were more active on the street, 53 (10.6%) of the

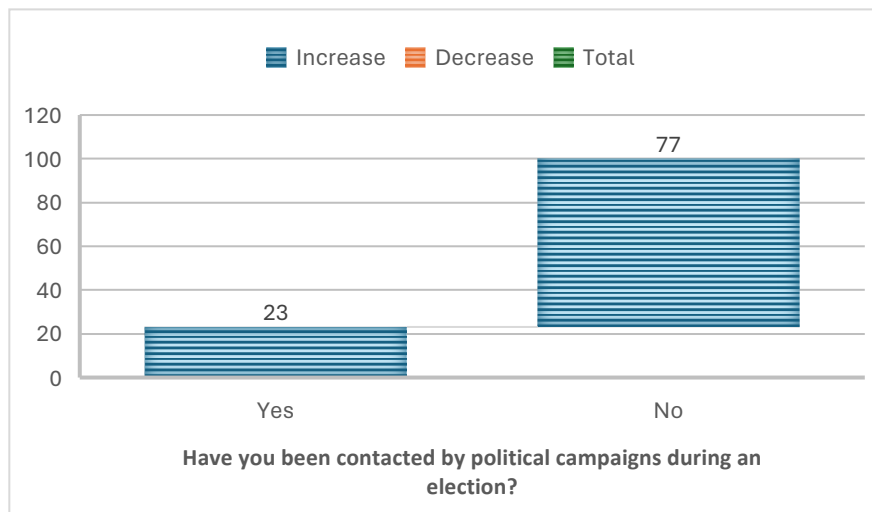
respondents preferred undertaking such activities within their family and friends' circles, while 49 (10.2%) of the respondents preferred other locations.

**Figure 70: Time Per Week Urban Respondents' Spent on Political Activities**



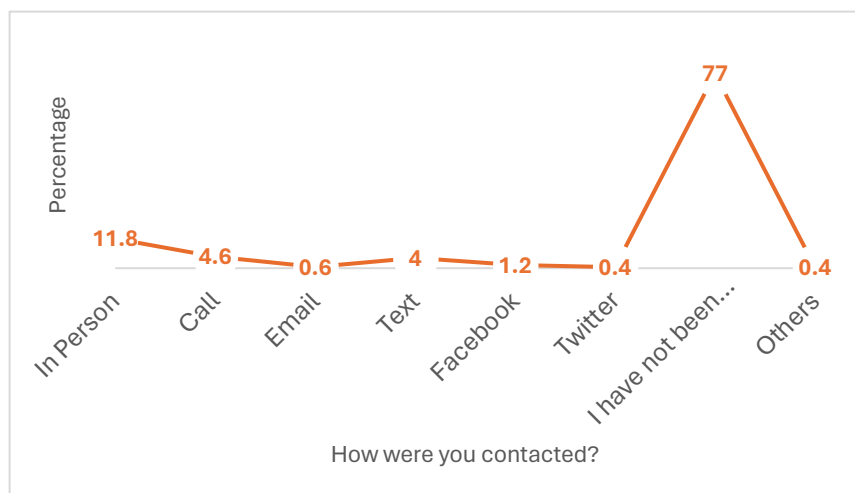
On the length of time spent on political activities every week, the data presented in Figure 85 indicate that the respondents do not devote much time to politics-related activities given that 160 (32.0%) of them spend less than one hour every week on political activities, 85 (17.0%) spend between 1-4 hours, 18 (3.6%) spend 5-10 hours, 8 (1.6%) of the respondents spend 11-20 hours per week, while 7 (1.4%) devote over 20 hours per weeks to political activities. Nevertheless, 222 (44.4%) of the respondents do not devote any time to political activities at all.

**Figure 71: Whether Urban Respondents Have Been Contacted by Political Campaigns**



The data presented in Figure 86 suggest that 115 (23.0%) of the respondents have been contacted by political campaign organisers during past elections, while 385 (77.0%) of them have not been contacted.

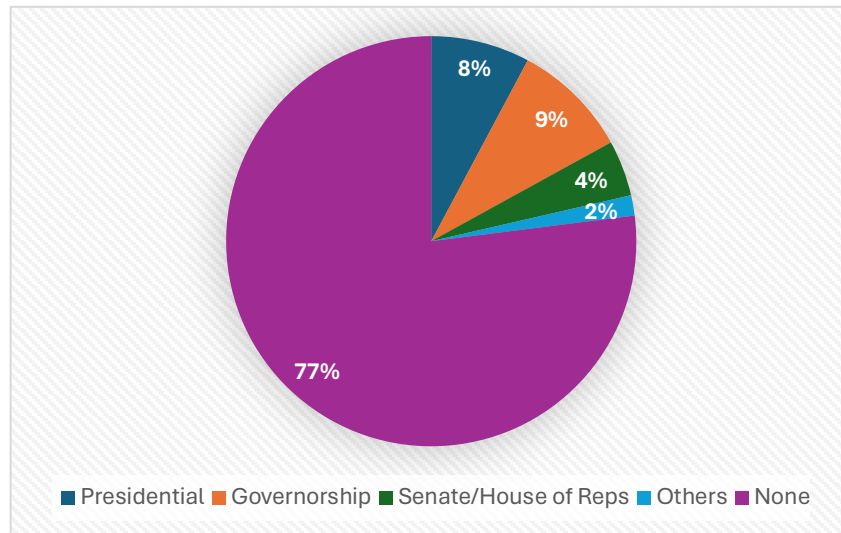
**Figure 72: How Urban Respondents Were Contacted by Political Campaigns During an Election**



Among the respondents who had been contacted by political campaign organisation during elections, data in Figure 87 show that 59 (11.8%) of them were contacted in person, 23 (4.6%) were reached via telephone calls, 3 (0.6%) were through emails, 20 (4.0%) were via text messages, 6 (1.2%) were contacted through

Facebook, 2 (0.4%) were through Twitter, 2 (0.4%) were contacted via other means like face-to-face conversations.

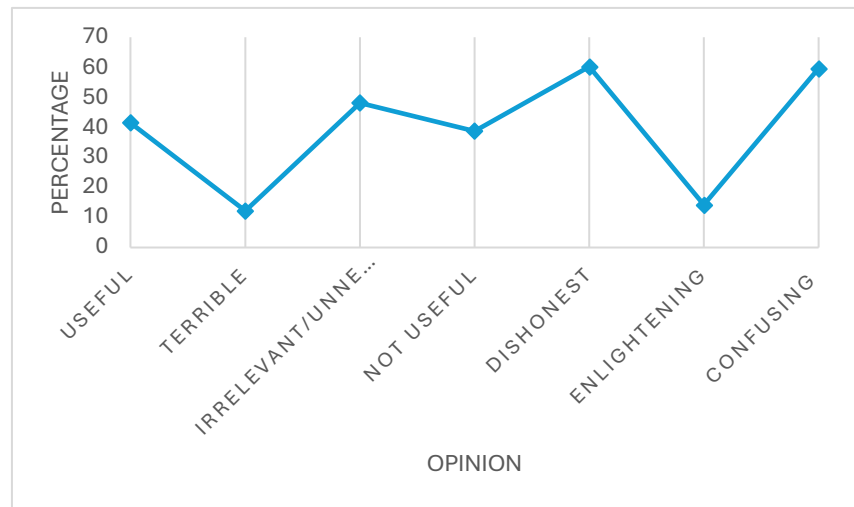
**Figure 73: Type of Elections Urban Respondents' Were Contacted For**



On the type of elections for which the respondents were contacted, Figure 88 indicates that 39 (7.8%) of the respondents were contacted during presidential elections, 46 (9.2%) were contacted during gubernatorial elections, 22 (4.4%) received such contact during senate/house of representatives' election, while 8 (1.6%) of the respondents were contacted during other elections such as ward councillorship and state house of assembly elections.



**Figure 74: Urban Respondents' Perception of Political Messaging**



According to the information presented in Figure 89, many of the respondents perceive political messaging during election campaigns as useful (N = 208, 41.6%) and enlightening (N = 71, 14.2%). However, a good number of the respondents also believe the messages are dishonest (N = 301, 60.2%), confusing (N = 298, 59.6%), irrelevant (N = 241, 48.2%), not useful (N = 194, 38.8%), and terrible (N = 61, 12.2%).

Some of the respondents who perceive political messages to be useful noted thus:

*“They’re useful. They help to draw attention to all the available and realistic candidate choices” (R.393, Male, 21-25 years).*

*“Political message is useful because some people might not know a particular candidate, but through messaging the person can know the person coming and the name; so it’s useful” (R.418, Male, 21-25 years).*

*“Yes, I find it useful. It helps enlighten the masses about who they are voting for, therefore giving them better knowledge while making their choices. It also serves as a reminder” (R.301, Male, 30-35 years).*

*“It is useful because it makes us know each candidate very well, although they may do otherwise if elected because of corruption, they still pass a meaningful message during the campaign” (R.294, Male, 30-35 years).*

However, respondents with contrary opinions asserted that: *“I don’t find it useful because it mainly consists of half-truths” (R.177, Male, 26-29 years).*

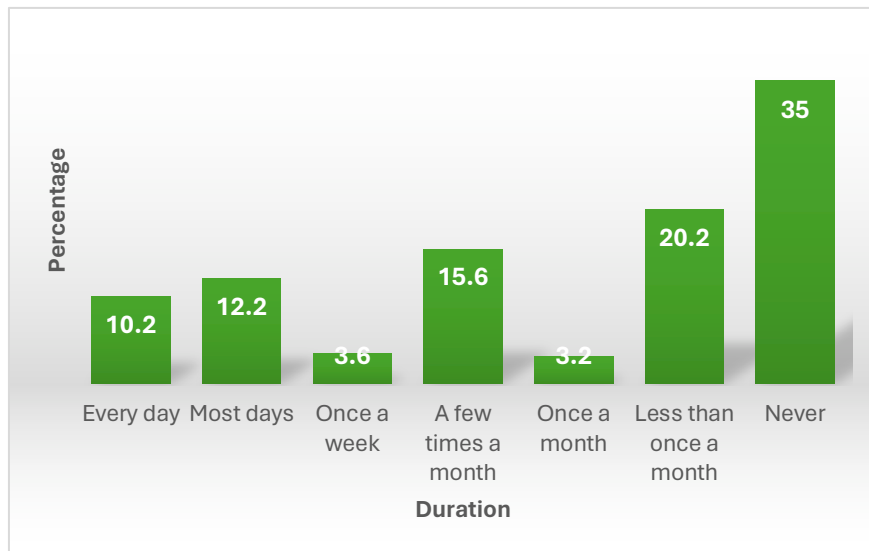
Others noted that: *“Political messaging, from historical precedent, are just empty promises to mobilize voters to the ballot box. A vast majority of promises made during voting campaigns are not kept during the administration of the winning entity. Case In Point: we still have intermittent power after 62 years as an independent democracy” (R.306, Male, 30-35 years).*

*“I feel their messages are just type-written by careful strategists, but those messages never see the light of the day when elected into office” (R.241, Male, 26-29 years).*

*“It is terrible; the candidates say what the majority voters want to hear so they will get elected” (R.396, Female, 26-29 years).*

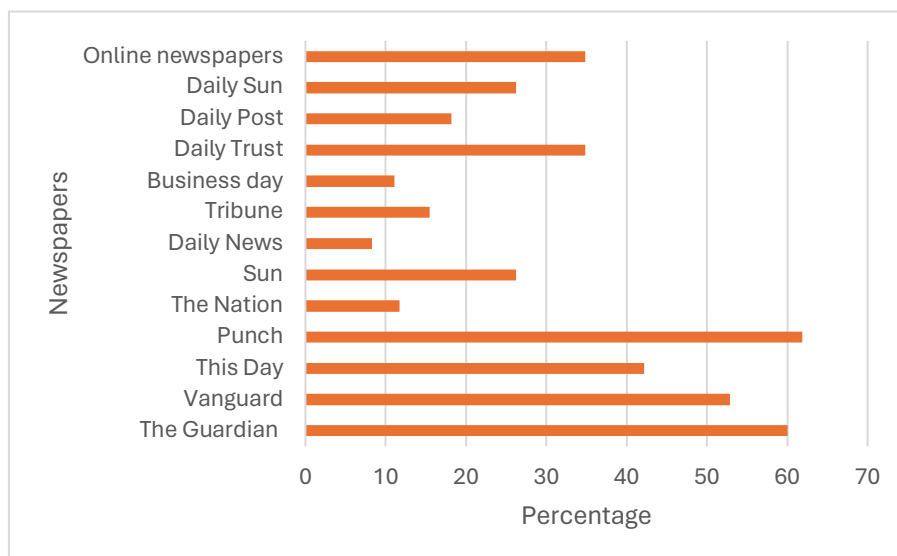
*“I do not find it useful. They have used different mediums to campaign in the past and all have been futile. It is just deceiving us to get votes” (R.343, Female, 26-29 years).*

**Figure 75: Urban Respondents' Frequency of Reading Newspapers**



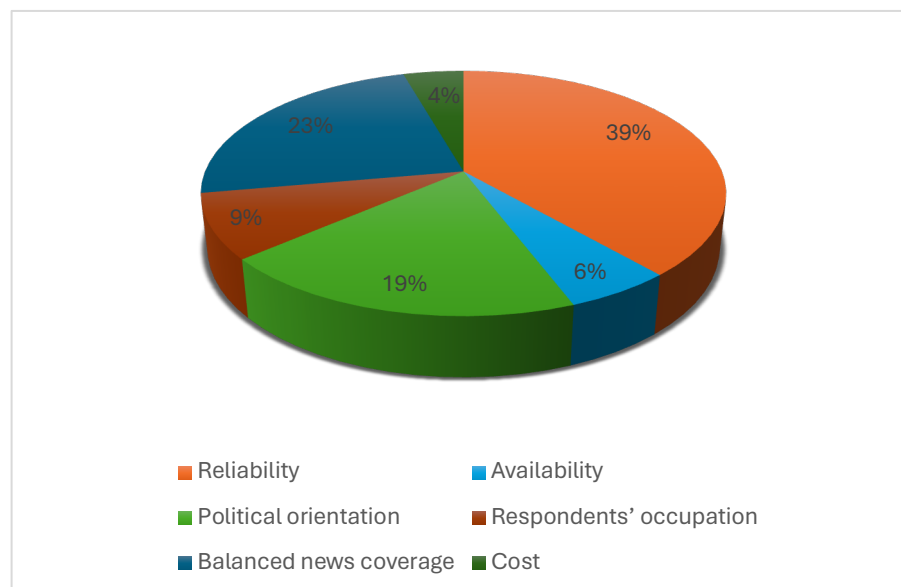
On the frequency of reading newspapers, Figure 90 indicates that 51 (10.2%) of the respondents read newspapers every day, 61 (12.2%) read newspapers on most days of the week, 18 (3.6%) read them once a week, 78 (15.6%) read them a few times in a month, 16 (3.2%) do so once in a month, 101 (20.2%) read newspapers less than once per month, and 175 (35.0%) never read newspapers.

**Figure 76: Urban Respondents' Newspaper Preferences**



As shown in the data presented in Figure 91 the most widely read newspapers among the 325 respondents who read newspapers were *Punch* (N = 201, 61.9%), *The Guardian* (N = 195, 60.0%), *Vanguard* (N = 172, 52.9%), *Sun* (N = 85, 26.2%), *This Day* (N = 137, 42.2%), and *Daily Trust* (N = 113, 34.8%). Others are *Daily Sun* (N = 85, 26.2%), *Daily Post* (N = 59, 18.2%), *Tribune* (N = 44, 15.5%), *Business Day* (N = 36, 11.1%), *The Nation* (N = 38, 11.7%), *Daily News* (N = 27, 8.3%) and online newspapers (N = 113, 34.8%).

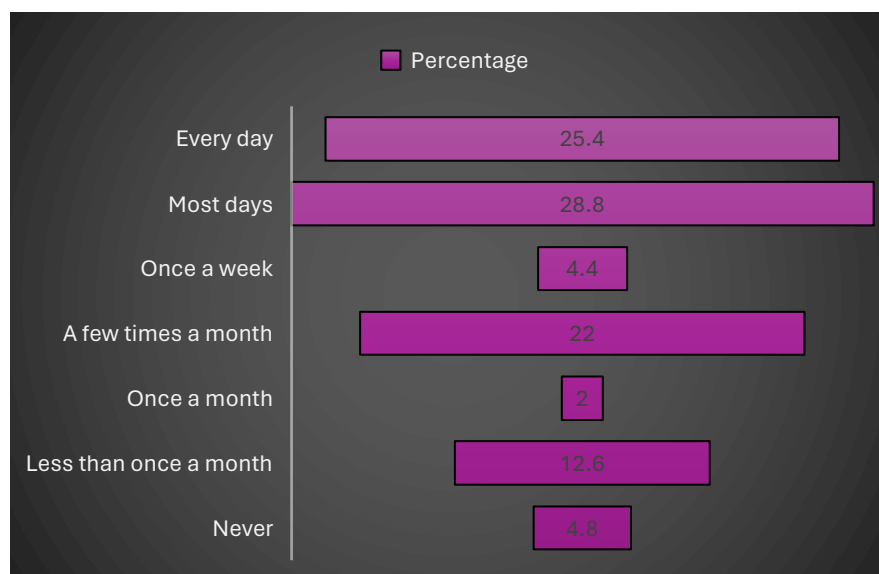
**Figure 77: Urban Respondents' Reasons for Reading Newspapers of Choice**



Concerning the reason for reading their chosen newspaper(s), the data in Figure 92 show that the perceived reliability (N = 185, 56.9%), balance news coverage (N = 112, 34.5%), and political orientation of the newspaper (N = 93, 28.6%) were the top parameters listed by the respondents. Other factors listed by the respondents were availability of the newspaper(s) (N = 27, 8.3%), respondents' occupation (N = 41, 12.5%), and cost of purchasing newspapers (N = 21, 6.5%). In their explanation, one of the respondents who read *Vanguard* and/or *This Day* newspapers said “*I read it sometimes because it is what is bought and brought home*” (R.5, Female, 21-25

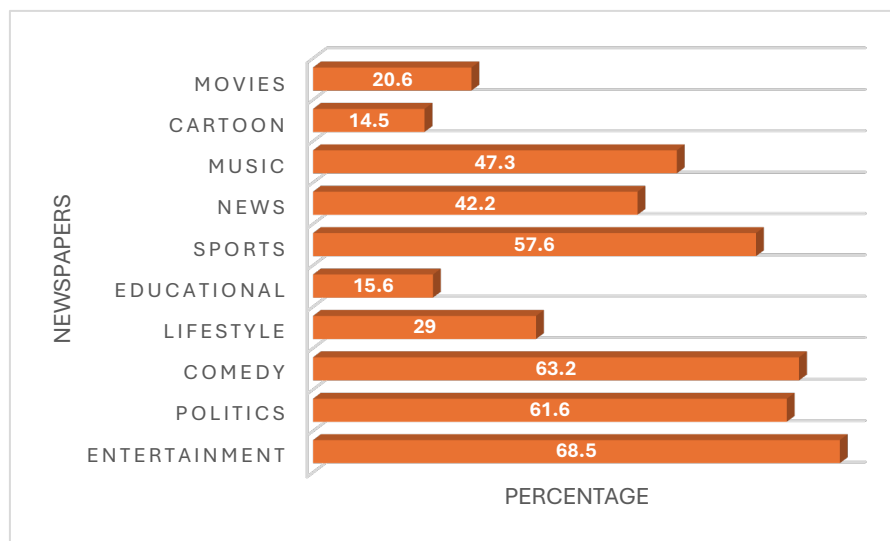
**years**). Another respondent who read *The Guardian* newspaper observed that the newspaper provides “a *balanced and fair assessment of situations*” (**R.73, Male, 26-29 years**), while another who read *Punch* newspaper explained that it is “*because they are up to date*” (**R.18, Female, 30-35 years**).

**Figure 78: Urban Respondents’ Frequency of Watching Television Programmes**



Concerning television viewership among youths in Nigeria, the data in Figure 93 indicate that 127 (25.4%) of the respondents view television programmes every day, 144 (28.8%) do so most days of the week, 22 (4.4%) do so once in a week, 110 (22.0%) prefer watching television programmes a few times in a month, 10 (2.0%) do so once in a month, 63 (12.6%) do so less than once in a month, while 24 (4.8%) of the respondents have never watched television programmes.

**Figure 79: Urban Respondents Preferred Television Programmes**



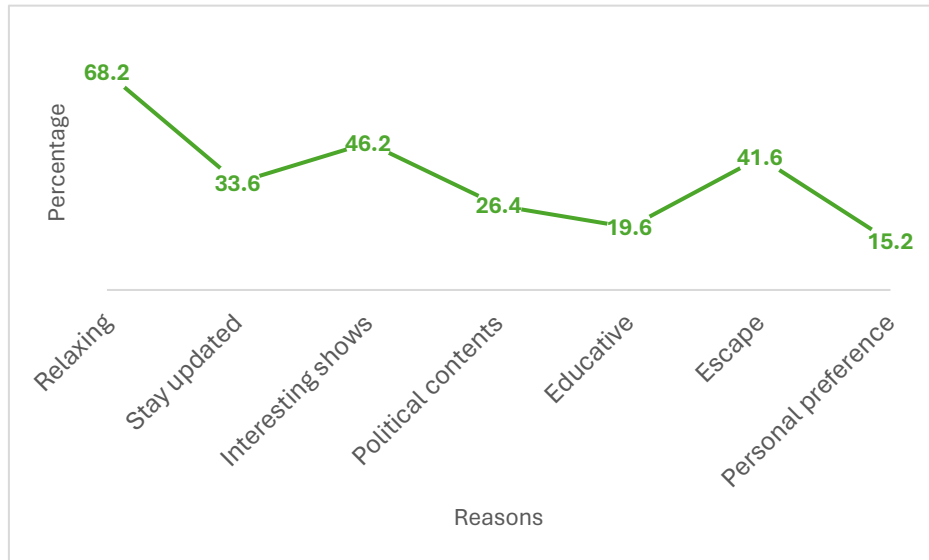
Among the 476 respondents who watch television programmes, the data presented in Figure 94 indicate that entertainment shows are the most popular television programmes (N = 326, 68.5%), followed by Comedy (N = 301, 63.2%), Politics (N = 293, 61.6%), Sports (N = 274, 57.6%), Music (N = 225, 47.3%), News (N = 201, 42.2%), Lifestyle (N = 138, 29.0%), Movies (N = 98, 20.6%), education (N = 74, 15.6%), and Cartoon (N = 69, 14.5%). On the reasons behind the wide preference for entertainment programmes, the respondents noted that it is because: **“it relaxes me after a long day” (R.132, Female, 26-29 years)**, while another noted that it is because there are **“too many sad stories on the news” (R.12, Female, 30-35 years)**.

Those who watch comedy said it was because they needed to be **“distracted from this nuisance of a country” (R.27, Female, 21-25 years)**, and comedy programmes seem to offer this desired escape because **“it lifts my spirit off the negativity or the harms already caused by the present government” (R.47, Male, 26-29 years)**.

One of the respondents who preferred watching political programmes on television said, **“it is because it is what I am interested in” (R.63, Male, 26-29 years)**, while

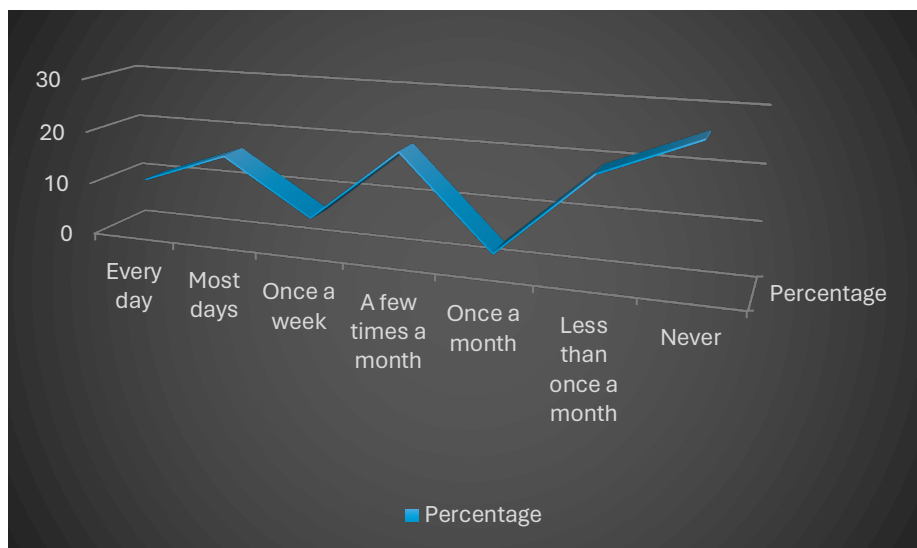
another said it was “*just to keep up with the recent political development*” (R.66, Male, 30-35 years).

**Figure 80: Urban Respondents’ Reasons for Watching Preferred Television Programmes**



Observable from the data presented in Figure 95, 341 (68.2%) of the respondents watch their preferred television programmes for relaxation purposes, 168 (33.6%) watch to stay updated on current developments, 231 (46.2%) watch the programmes because they find them interesting, 132 (26.4%) are mainly interested in the political contents of the television programmes, 98 (19.6%) watch the programmes because of their educative values, 208 (41.6%) use the programmes as an escape from life realities, and 76 (15.2%) watch them simply because of their personal preferences for the programmes.

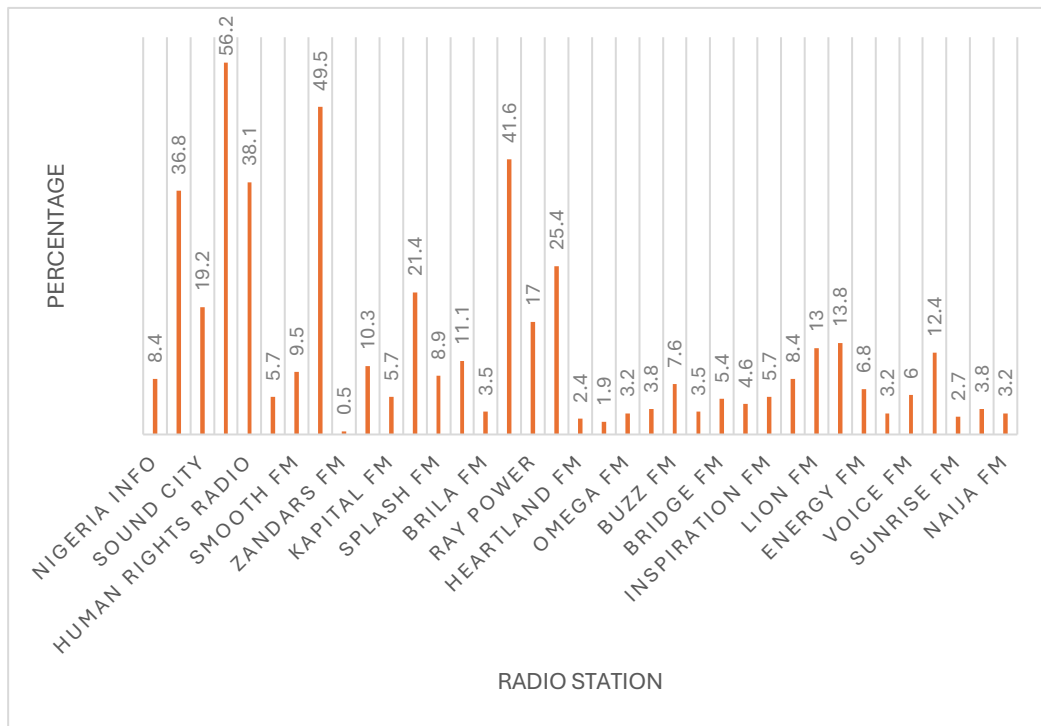
**Figure 81: Urban Respondents' Frequency of Listening to Radio**



With regards to the frequency of listening to radio programmes among youths in Nigeria, the data in Figure 96 show that 51 (10.2%) of the respondents listen to radio programmes every day, 81 (16.2%) do so on most days, 30 (6.0%) listen once per week, 99 (19.8%) do so a few times in a month, 15 (3.0%) listen to radio programmes once a month, 94 (18.8%) prefer listening to radio less than once in a month, and 130 (26.0%) have never listened to radio programmes.

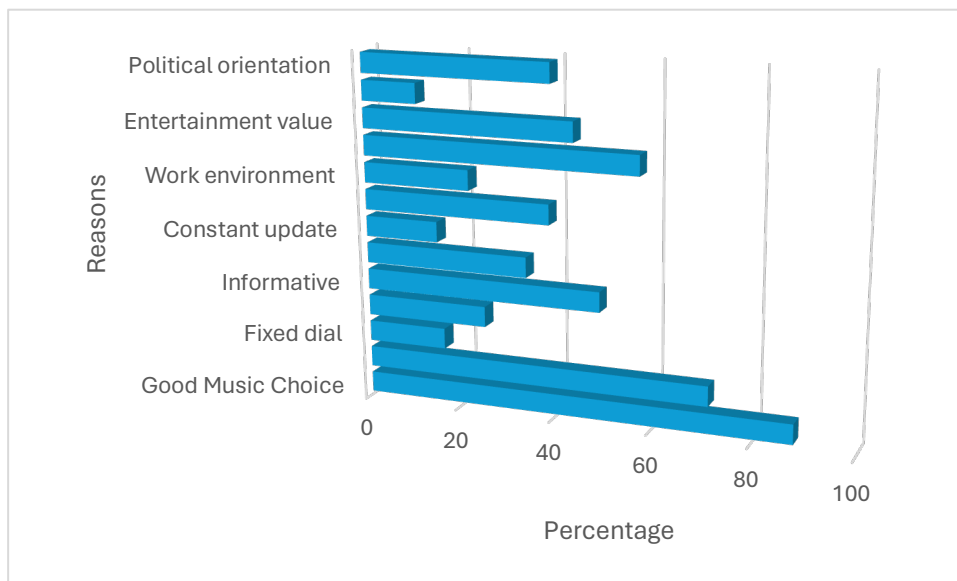


**Figure 82: Urban Respondents Preferred Radio Stations**



As shown in the data presented in Figure 97 Cool FM (N = 208, 56.2%) is the most popular radio station among the respondents, followed by Beat FM (N = 183, 49.5%), Wazobia FM (N = 154, 41.6%), Human Rights Radio (N = 141, 38.1%), Radio Nigeria (N = 136, 36.8%), Kiss FM (N = 94, 25.4%), and Sound City (N = 71, 19.2%), among others. Among these categories, the radio stations with the least listenership among the respondents were Zandars FM (N = 2, 0.5%), Super FM (N = 7, 1.9%), Heartland FM (N = 9, 2.4%), and Sunrise FM (N= 10, 2.7%).

**Figure 83: Urban Respondents' Reasons for Listening to Preferred Radio Stations**



The data presented in Figure 98 further show that the main reasons young prefer these radio stations include their consistent airing of good musical programmes (N = 326, 88.1%), the pro-people orientation of their contents (N = 264, 71.4%), unbiased discussion and analysis of social issues (N = 213, 57.6%), informative contents (N = 183, 49.5%), entertainment-laced programmes (N = 164, 44.3%), diversified programme schedules (N = 145, 39.2%), political orientation (N = 147, 39.7%), and relatable analyses of the station (N = 94, 25.4%). Besides, some of the respondents listen to these radio stations by accidental exposure (when on mass transit) (N = 127, 34.3%), in their work environment (where there is public radio access) (N = 83, 22.4%), because their radio set had been pre-set to a given station (N = 61, 16.5%), constant update (N = 57, 15.4%), or simply because of personal likeness for the station(s) (N = 43, 11.6%). For instance, some of the respondents noted as follows:

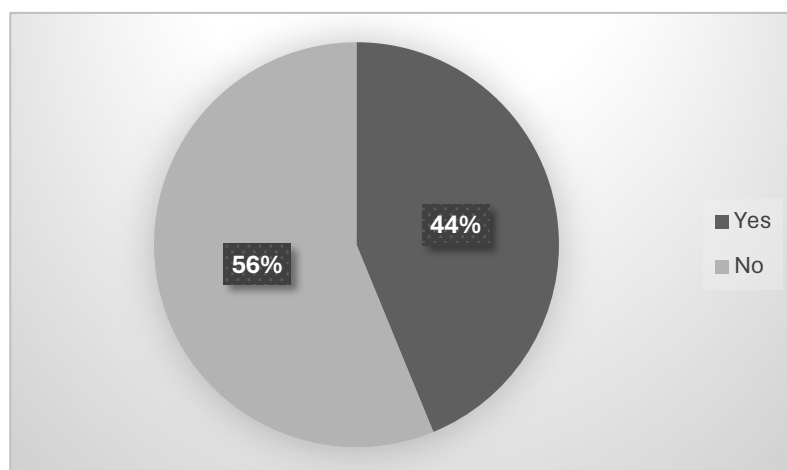
*“I listen to Brekete Radio in Abuja. I love it because of one of the programmes always anchored by the Ordinary President. He speaks on behalf of the masses and most times speaks against government excesses” (R.249, Male, 26-29 years).*

*“I listen to Cool Fm (they treat lots of relationship matters and play good music), Wazobia FM (help give reports and entertainment daily after the close of work), and Brekete family (the philanthropic work going on here is genuinely touching lives of Nigerians around the world)” (R.301, Male, 30-35 years).*

*“I listen to Human Rights Radio because that is what Cab drivers are listening to in the morning” (R.35, Female, 21-25 years).*

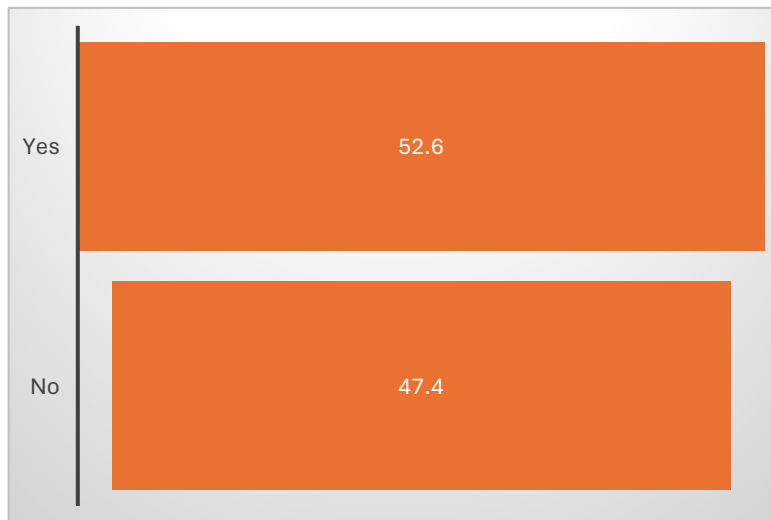
*“I listen to Sound City FM 96.3 and Cool FM 96.9 because they play good music; Human Rights Radio FM 101.1 because the radio station helps people in dire need and is known as ‘voice of the voiceless” (R.5, Female, 21-25 years).*

**Figure 84: Urban Respondents’ View About the News They Hear from The Media**



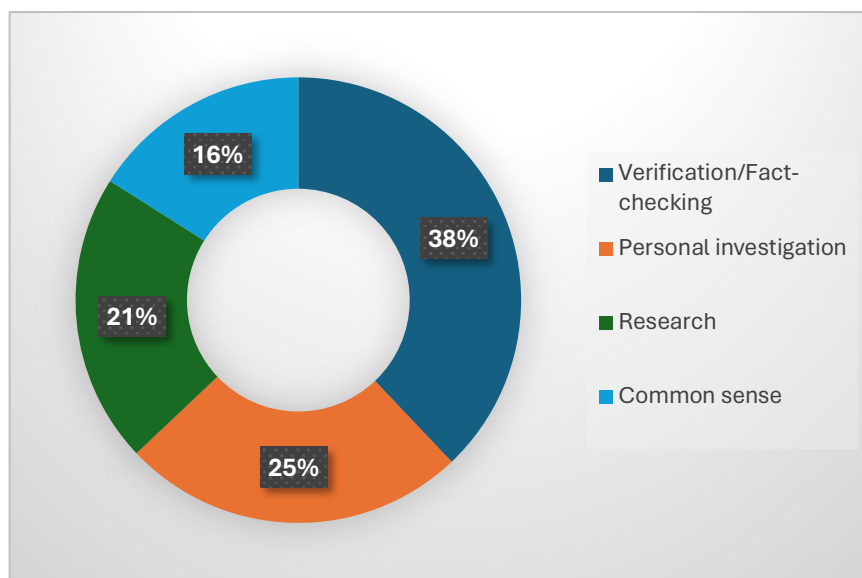
According to the data presented in Figure 99, 219 (43.8%) of the respondents trust the news they hear from the media, but 281 (56.2%) of them do not.

**Figure 85: Urban Respondent's Ability to Detect Fake News**



As shown in Figure 100, 263 (52.6%) believe that they can detect fake news, but 237 (47.4%) said they are unable to detect such news.

**Figure 86: Urban Respondent's Fake News Detection Techniques**



According to the data presented in Figure 101, the main technique adopted by the respondents in the detection of fake news is verification/fact-checking of the published/broadcast news by comparing it with what is published by other media platforms (N = 173, 65.8%). Hence, one of the respondents observed that she “can

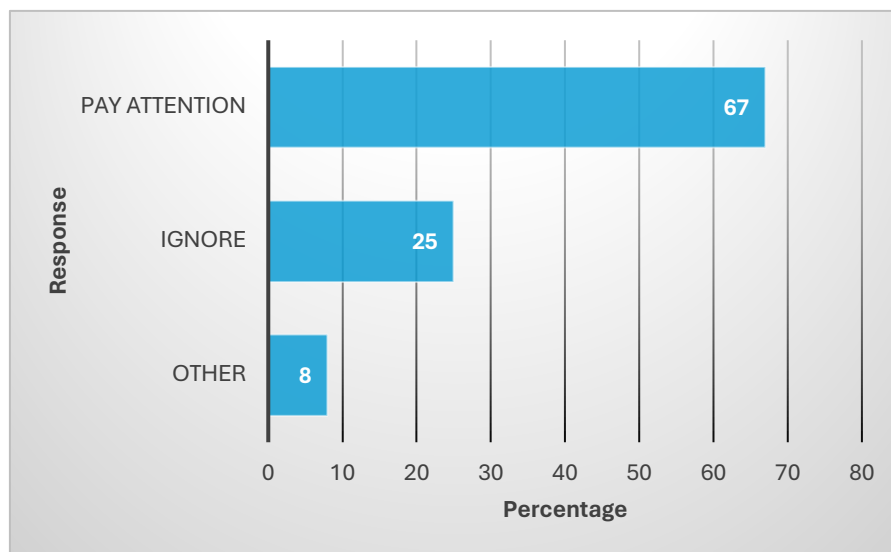
*detect fake news by checking different blogs to get the real story” (R.330, Female, 21-25 years), just as another noted that, “I try to verify (the news) using my sources and Twitter too; I am influencer there” (R.255, Male, 21-25 years).*

Another fake news detection technique adopted by the respondents is a personal investigation of the sources and genuineness of the information they receive (N = 114, 43.4%). To this end, one of the respondents observed: *“I belong to many social media platforms and received information from trusted sources. Sometimes, we have direct access to those we hear fake news about and can hear their side of the story before concluding” (R.301, Male, 30-35 years).* Another added that *“I find out from folks in the area of occurrence, and I listen to alternative media platforms” (R.289, Male, 30-35 years).*

Others (N = 96, 36.5%) said they detect such news by conducting appropriate research on the subject, and *“by making further inquiry as to the correctness of the news” (R.249, Male, 26-29 years),* while another said he does *“follow up research to check the credibility of the sources” (R.340, Female, 21-25 years).*

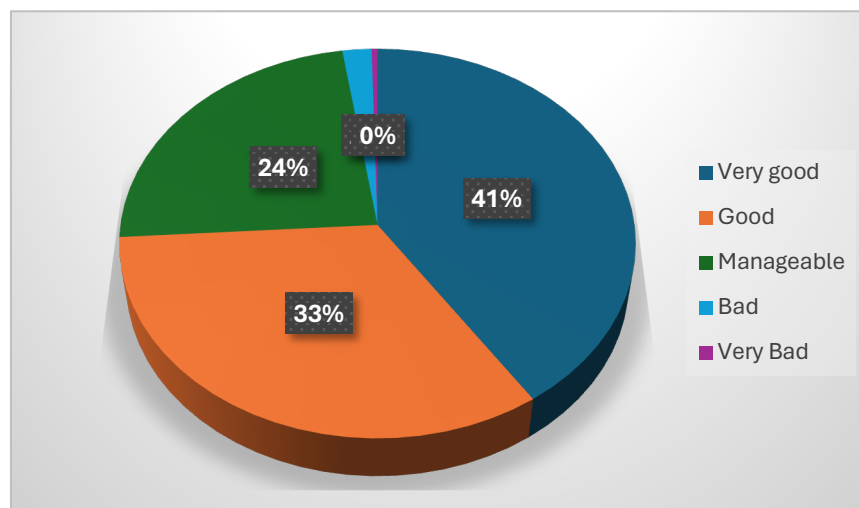
Another category of the respondents (N = 73, 27.8%) adopts the common sense method to detect fake news because *“if it is too good to be true then it is not true” (R.467, Male, 30-35 years).* Instructively, one of the respondents explained that: *“it requires thinking about what you heard and questioning whether it makes sense in the Nigerian political context. Also, some things are just really absurd. We are not stupid despite some officials treating us as if we are” (R.336, Female, 26-29 years).*

**Figure 87: Urban Respondent's Disposition Towards Political News**



Among the respondents, Figure 102 indicates that 335 (67.0%) of the respondents pay attention to political aspects of the news, 125 (25.0%) simply ignore them, while 40 (8.0%) sometimes pay attention or ignore the political aspects of the news.

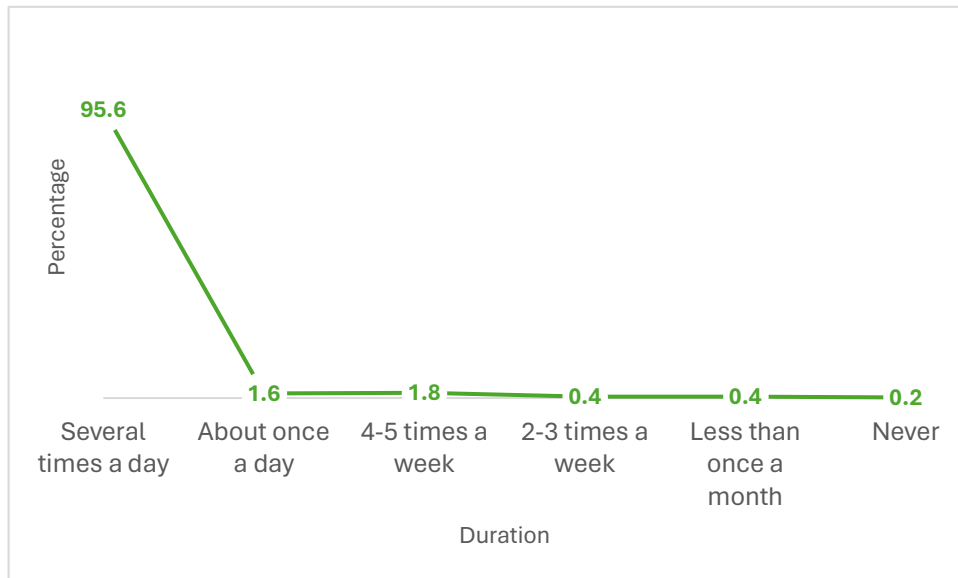
**Figure 88: Stability of Urban Respondents' Internet Connection**



According to the data presented in Figure 103, a total of 203 (40.6%) respondents have a very good internet connection most times, 167 (33.4%) of them

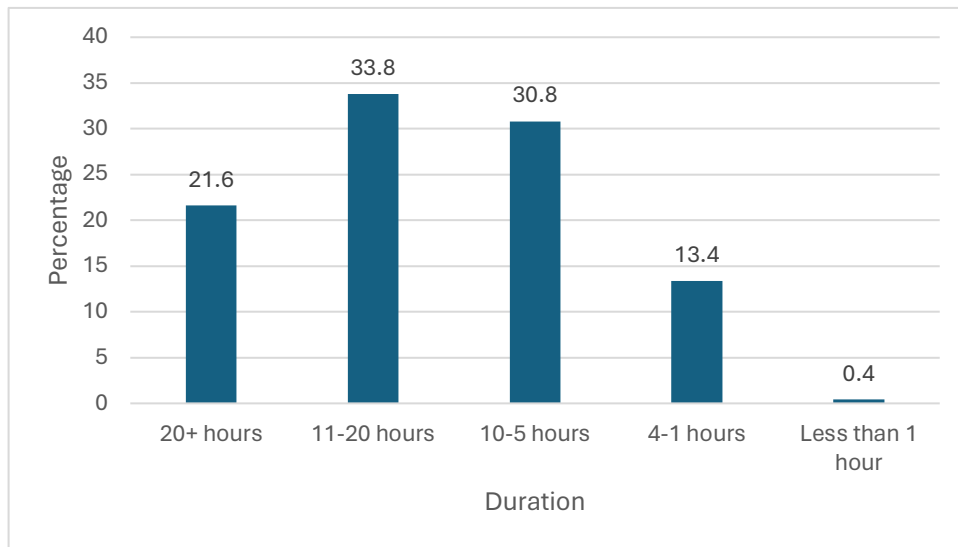
have a good internet connection, 118 (23.6%) have a manageable internet connection, 10 (2.0%) have a bad connection, and 2 (0.4%) have a very bad internet connection.

**Figure 89: Urban Respondents' Frequency of Using the Internet**



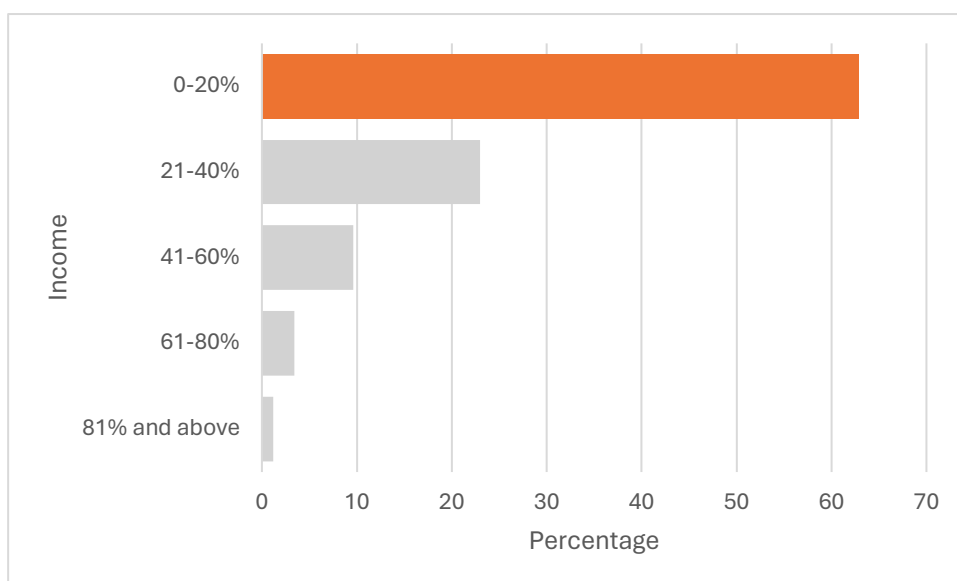
On the frequency of using the internet, Figure 104 shows that 478 (95.6%) of the respondents use the internet several times a day, 8 (1.6%) use it about once a day, 9 (1.8%) use it 4-5 times a week, 2 (0.4%) use it 2-3 times a week, another 2(0.4%) use it less than once a month, while only 1 (0.2%) of the respondents have never used the internet.

**Figure 90: Time Urban Respondents' Spend While Using the Internet**



Regarding the time spent while using the internet, the data presented in Figure 105, show that 108 (21.6%) of the respondents use the internet for over 20 hours every day, 169 (33.8%) use the internet for 11-20 hours daily, 154 (30.8%) use the internet for 5-10 hours per day, 67 (13.4%) use it for 1-4 hours each day, while 2 (0.4%) use it for less than 1 hour daily.

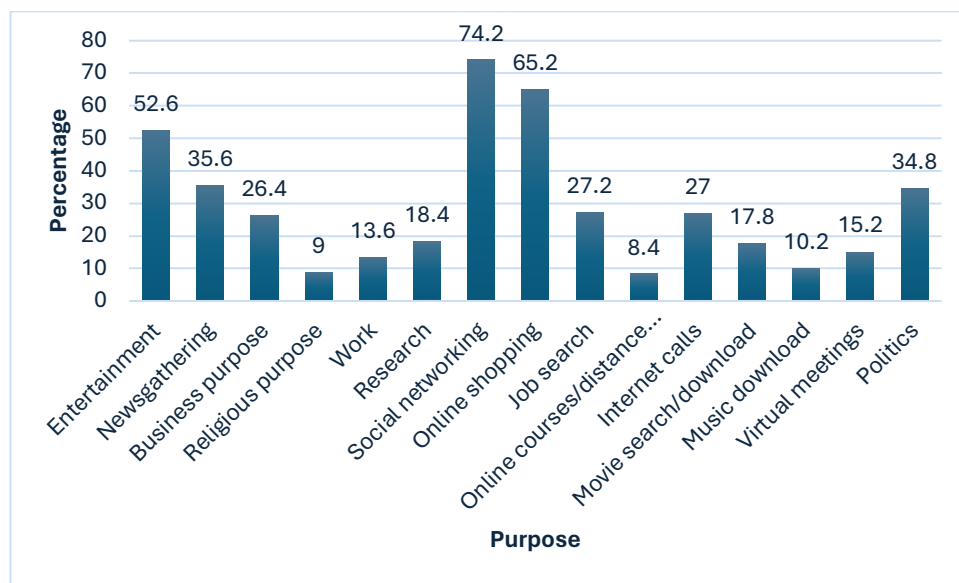
**Figure 91: Percentage of Urban Respondents' Monthly Income Spent on Internet Connection**





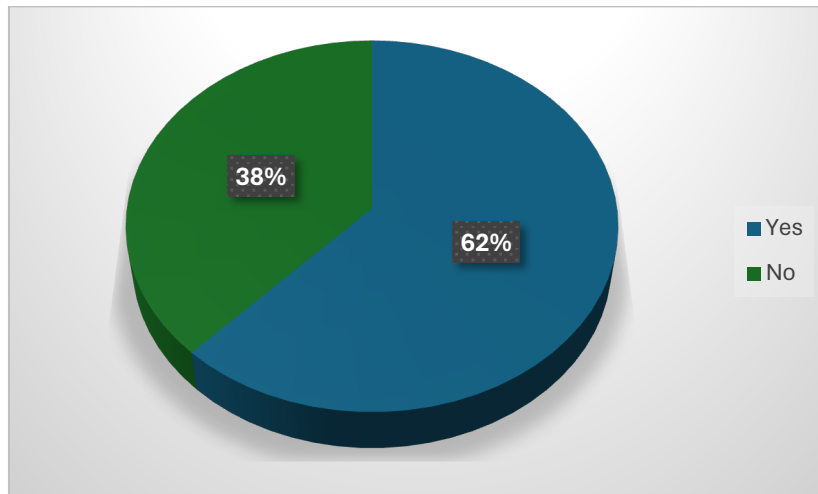
Furthermore, the data in Figure 106, indicate that 314 (62.8%) of the respondents spend 0-20% of their monthly income on internet connections, 115 (23.0%) spend 21-40% of their monthly income, 48 (9.6%) spend 41-60% of their monthly earnings, 17 (3.4%) spend 61-80% of the monthly payment, and 6 (1.2%) spend 81% and above of their monthly income to access the internet.

**Figure 92: Urban Respondents' Purpose for Using the Internet**



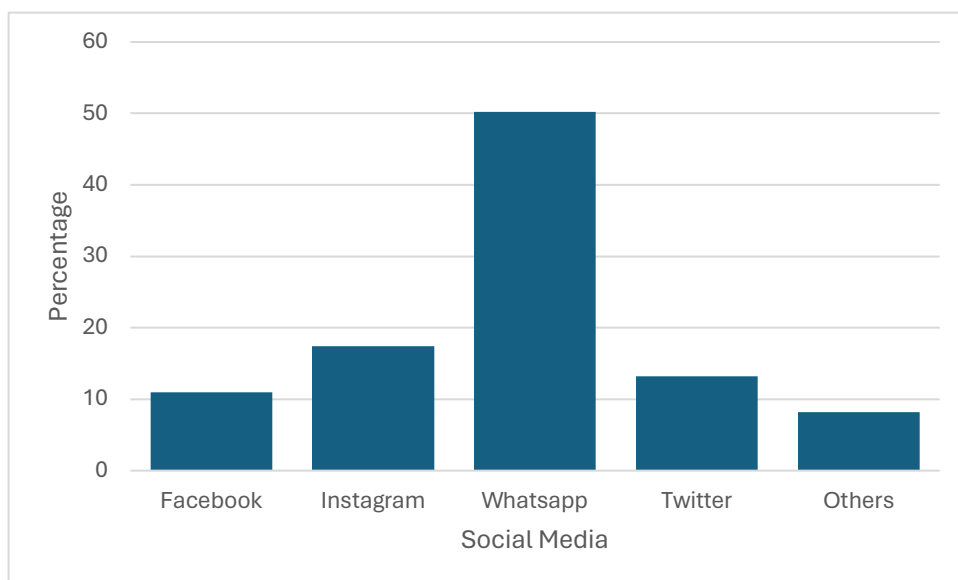
As shown in Figure 107, the respondents' main purposes for using the internet are social networking (N = 371, 74.2%), online shopping (N = 326, 65.2%), entertainment (N = 263, 52.650, news gathering (N = 178, 35.6%), politics (N = 174, 34.8%), job search (N = 136, 27.2%), internet calls (N = 135, 27.0%), business purposes (N = 132, 26.4%) and research (N = 92, 18.4%). Others were movie search/download (N = 89, 17.8%), virtual meetings (N = 76, 15.2%), work (N = 68, 13.650, music download (N = 51, 10.2%), religious purpose (N = 45, 9.0%) and online courses/distance learning (N = 42, 8.4%).

**Figure 93: Are Urban Respondent's Affected by the Cost Implication of Internet Usage?**



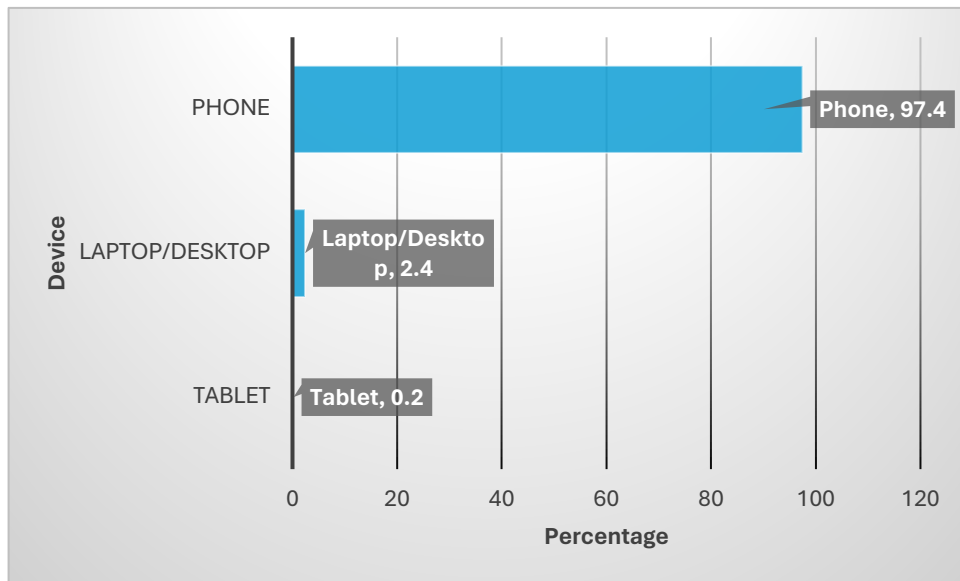
Accordingly, the data in Figure 108 suggest that 310 (62.0%) of the respondents are affected by the cost of accessing the internet, while 190 (38.0%) are not affected by it.

**Figure 94: Urban Respondents' Most Used Social Media Platforms**



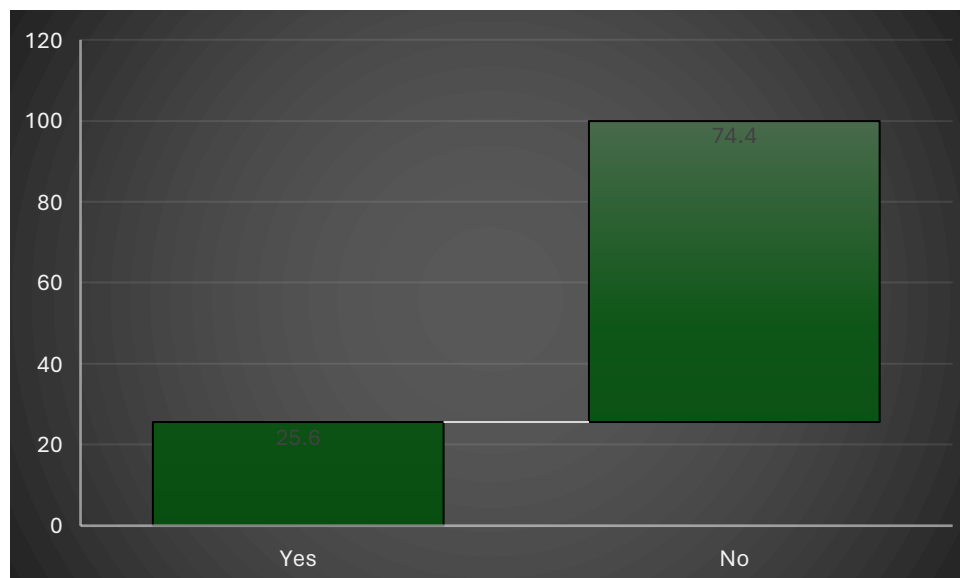
Among the respondent, Figure 109 shows that Whatsapp is the most frequently used social media platform (N = 251, 50.2%), followed by Instagram (N = 87, 17.4%), Twitter (N = 66, 13.2%), Facebook (N = 55, 10.0%) and other social media platforms like Tiktok, LinkedIn, and Youtube (N = 41, 8.2%).

**Figure 95: Urban Respondents' Most Used Device for social media Access**



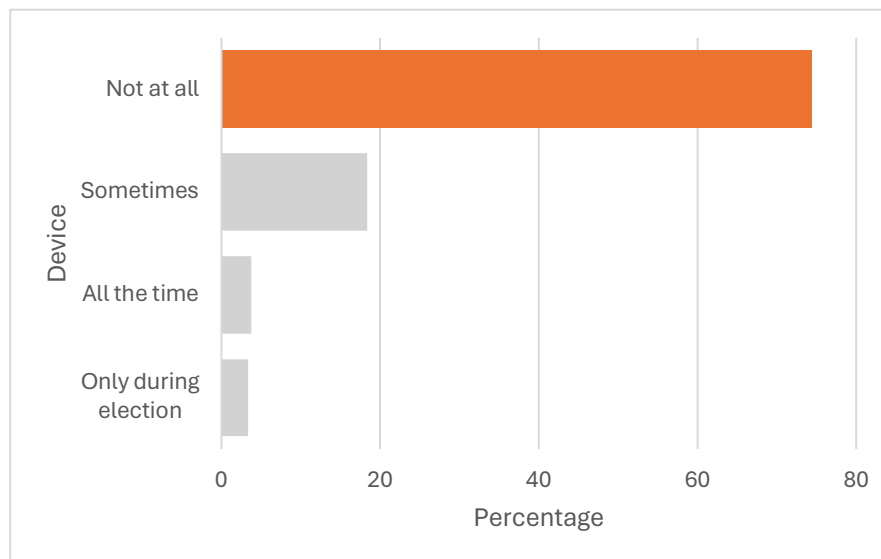
As shown in Figure 110, most of the respondents frequently used phones to access the internet (N=487, 97.4%), few of them used laptop/desktop computers (N=12, 2.4%), and 1 (0.2%) used tablets.

**Figure 96: Do Urban Respondents Create and Post Political Content on social media?**



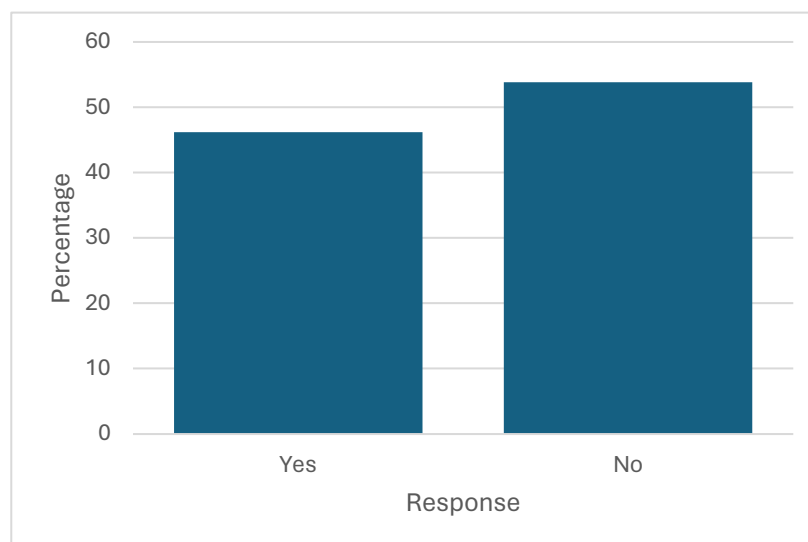
According to the data presented in Figure 111, 128 (25.6%) of the respondents create and post political content on social media, while 372 (74.4%) do not.

**Figure 97: Urban Respondents' Frequency of Creating Political Content on social media**



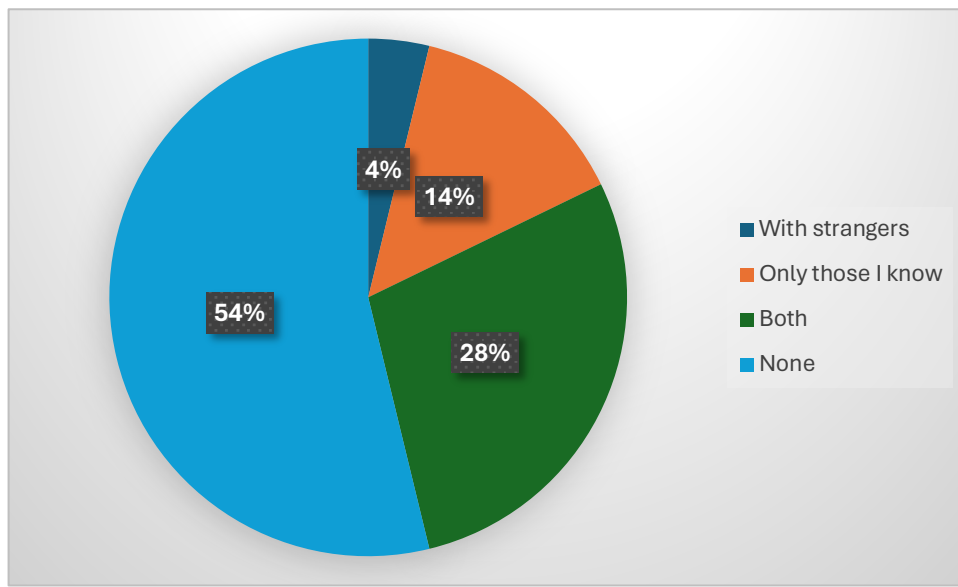
As shown in the data presented in Figure 112, 19 (3.8%) of the respondents create and post their political content on social media all the time, 17 (3.4%) do so only during elections, and 92 (18.4%) do so sometimes.

**Figure 98: Do Urban Respondents' Interact with Political Content on social media Through Liking or Sharing a Post?**



Similarly, the data in Figure 113, indicate that 231 (46.2%) of the respondents like and/or share political content on social media, while 269 (53.8%) do not share politics-related content on social media platforms.

**Figure 99: Categories of People Urban Respondents Share Political Content with on social media.**



Among those who like and/or share political content on social media, the data in Figure 114 suggest that 19 (3.8%) of them share political content with strangers on social media, 70 (14.0%) share with only those familiar to them, and 142 (28.4%) share with both strangers and who they know.

## 7.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### Comparison of Youths participation in Rural and Urban Areas in Nigeria

The study focuses on the responses of youths in Nigeria to political participation. In addition to many studies on political participation both rural and urban, how Nigerian youths use social media in politics, and other forms of political participation in which Nigerian youths engage, this study adds the dimension of youths' level of interest and knowledge in politics. This is done because youths make significant contributions to both offline activities such as voting and online activities using social media in campaigning. The study also revealed how politicians use social media for campaigning as well as other forms of media. The study looked at how social media was used to carry out various political activities ranging from campaigns to riots (normative and non-normative) and other various campaigns. The study also investigated several factors that may have led to youths using social media in politics, such as distrust in governments and scepticism in elections. The study also looked at the political circumstances that are thought to have contributed to the apolitical nature of Nigerian youths, in particular how unemployment, violence, and a poor socioeconomic environment in Nigeria's rural and urban areas. This indicates that criteria such as voter participation, political awareness, and engagement in civic or political groups need to be examined. Research has shown that in general, youth in urban areas tend to have higher levels of political participation compared to their rural counterparts. This is likely due to a variety of factors such as greater access to information and resources, a more diverse population, and a greater sense of community and social connectedness in urban areas. For example, studies have

shown that voter turnout among youth is typically higher in urban areas than in rural areas. This could be because urban areas have higher population densities and more resources available for voter education and mobilization.

Additionally, research has shown that youth in urban areas tend to have greater access to political information and are more likely to be politically engaged and aware than those in rural areas. This is likely due to the fact that urban areas have more diverse populations, a greater variety of media outlets, and more opportunities for civic engagement and political participation. On the other hand, youth in rural areas may face challenges in terms of political participation, such as lack of access to information and resources, less diverse populations, and a lack of social and political networks. These challenges may make it more difficult for youth in rural areas to become politically engaged and participate in the political process.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were vital in the present study and may be important in understanding the type of initiative established by the media as well as analytical approaches in media campaigns. Socio-demographic factors such as age, education and religion have been linked with youth's participation in politics (Attar-Schwartz & Ben-Arieh, 2012; Zeglovits & Zandonella, 2013; Russo & Stattin, 2016; Pap, Ham, & Bilandi, 2018; Alelaimat, 2019; Mustapha & Omar 2020; Amoateng, 2020). The table distributions of rural areas presented show that 140 (28.0%) were within the range of 30-35 years old were the majority, while in urban area the finding show that 52 (10.4%) of the respondent were 16-20 years old, 162 (32.4%) were 21-25 years old, 130 (26.0%) were 26-29 years old, and 156 (31.2%) were 30-35 years old, meanwhile the rural area 252 of the respondents (50.4%) are male and 248 of the respondents (49.6%) are female while in urban area the finding

show a total of 186 (37.2%) of the respondents were males and 314 (62.8%) were females. This implies that the respondents aged 21 to 25 made significant progress, with females having the most entries in the urban areas. Notwithstanding, that there are often gender differences in political participation, with men typically having higher levels of political engagement and participation than women. This suggests that there exist discernible disparities in political engagement and participation between individuals of different genders. This study indicates that there is a tendency for men to exhibit higher levels of political engagement and participation in comparison to women. The manifestation of gender disparities in political participation can be observed through different means, including but not limited to voting, candidature for political office, participation in political rallies, and engagement in political discourse. It is vital to acknowledge that these disparities can be shaped by a multitude of social, cultural, and historical elements and may exhibit variations across diverse nations and temporal contexts. Examining and embracing these gender disparities is a crucial facet of researching and advocating for gender parity in the realm of politics. Factors that may contribute to this include societal expectations, cultural norms, and access to resources and opportunities. The findings of Bullough, Kroeck, Newburry, Kundu, and Lowe (2012), as well as Di Napoli, Esposito, Candice, and Arcidiacono (2019), suggest that in order to enhance the level of women's involvement in political leadership, it is necessary to assess various factors. These factors include customs and trade regulations, corruption, the disparity in political empowerment between genders, government expenditure on education, the economic sustainability of the nation, accessibility to positions of power and internet connectivity, political liberties, and cultural variables such as performance orientation, collectivism, and power distance. The assertion submits that an overarching, complete assessment of various issues is



crucial for enhancing the engagement and presence of women in positions of political leadership. The assessment may encircle the examination and resolution of matters pertaining to gender equality, societal and cultural norms, institutional obstacles, and policies that impact women's capacity to attain and thrive in political leadership roles. The assertion posits that to attain increased gender diversity and inclusivity in political leadership, it is necessary to conduct a thorough examination of the existing conditions and barriers that impede women's participation in politics. Once these problems are recognised and then fixed, it is possible to come up with plans and guidelines that will encourage and support women to take on leadership roles in politics. However, urban, and rural areas, it's likely that there will be variations in the level of political participation among male and female youths. For instance, traditional cultural norms may be more prevalent in rural areas which might limit the participation of female youths in political activities. This submits that in rural areas, conventional cultural norms tend to be more deeply rooted and exert a substantial influence on the formation of society's attitudes and behaviours. The prevailing cultural norms in question may exhibit less progressiveness and a greater degree of conservatism about gender roles and expectations. Consequently, the presence of these conventional values can serve as impediments that restrict the participation of young women in political endeavours.

This implies that the existence of these cultural standards may present obstacles for young women aspiring to engage in political activities. Hence, limitations on individuals' freedom, opportunities, or assistance to participate in political venture may be encircled within this framework. To foster more engagement among young women in the political sphere, it may be imperative to confront, and question established societal norms while simultaneously advocating for the adoption of more inclusive and egalitarian principles and behaviours within rural communities. On the

other hand, urban areas may have more opportunities for female youths to get involved in political activities such as youth organizations, and might have more progressive cultural norms. Chiluya's (2022) findings indicate that social media platforms offer women advocacy groups a means to express them, often challenging intimidation tactics and old patriarchal assumptions to advocate for women's rights in the realm of political leadership. The results of Kaskazi and Kitzie (2021) suggest that adolescents primarily access political information and news through digital media platforms, relying on their social networks rather than traditional media sources. In accordance with Chiluya (2022), online activism enables advocacy groups to expand their access to national and international audiences, as well as many populations, including vulnerable rural women and the disadvantaged. Nevertheless, the availability of Internet connections remains limited for women residing in rural areas, resulting in a constrained engagement in online activism primarily concentrated in major centres and cities (Chiluya, 2022). Their desire to actively engage with and express their agency in relation to social and political issues that are important to them personally is what drives this preference. The findings indicate that urban settings offer a more favourable setting for young women to participate in political struggle, mostly due to the existence of supportive institutions and a cultural atmosphere that is less constrictive in terms of gender norms and societal expectations.

According to the study's findings, most respondents (87.4%) are from Bayelsa state, while Gombe and Yobe have the fewest among others. Enugu state has the most respondents in terms of place of residence 123(24.6%), while Abuja has the fewest. In terms of geopolitical region, 288 respondents were from the South-East region, with a majority, while 175 were from Abuja, conclusively allowing 185 from the North-Central region as the fewest. In contexts of residence, findings show that 185

(37.0%) of study participants lived in towns/cities/villages in states in North-central Nigeria, 133 (26.6%) lived in South-west Nigeria, 106 (21.2%) lived in South-east Nigeria, 47 (9.4%) of them lived in South-south Nigeria, 6 (1.2%) lived in North-west Nigeria, 4 (0.8%) lived in North-east Nigeria, and the remaining 19 (3.8%) live overseas. This means that there are more youth in North-central Nigeria than in any other urban region. Research has shown that individuals at different stages of life may have different levels of political participation, depending on factors such as education, income, and family responsibilities and this underscored the demographic questions the respondents were asked to provide answers to. Younger youths, for example, may be less politically engaged than older youths due to lack of life experience, lack of knowledge and interest in politics, and lack of resources to participate in the political process. In the opinion of Farthing (2010), it is necessary to go beyond the notion that young individuals are either politically involved or disengaged and instead recognise that both involvement and disengagement coexist. The proposed reframing of young individuals' political participation would serve to empower their inclination to avoid politics without passing judgement. This perspective would regard them as being inherently non-political in a transformative manner. Previous studies have indicated that the level of participation among younger individuals is lower compared to their older counterparts (Huttunen, 2022; Stockemer & Sundstrom, 2022; Kristensen, 2022). There is a group of young people who actively participate in political activities, demonstrating novel forms of involvement and participation, in contrast to the reluctance that a sizable portion of youth exhibit toward politics and political participation (Zani & Cicognani, 2019). The expression suggests that there is a correlation between age and the level of active involvement in a specific activity, such as political participation or engagement, with younger individuals being less likely to

engage in such activities compared to their older counterparts. To put it otherwise, there exists a distinct discrepancy in participation levels across different generations, with older individuals displaying a higher degree of involvement in the aforementioned activity. This observation may indicate the necessity of promoting and enhancing the involvement of younger individuals in the activity or gaining a deeper comprehension of the underlying factors contributing to this age-related disparity in participation. Thus, with regards to urban and rural areas, it's possible that there will be variations in the level of political participation among different age groups. For instance, urban areas may have more opportunities for younger youths to get involved in political activities such as youth organizations, while rural areas may have fewer resources for youth political engagement. This information gives extra depth to the discussion of findings below and helps to answer the research questions.

In terms of religion, the study's findings in rural area show that the majority of respondents were Christians, with 394 of the respondents representing 78.8% being Christians, 104 of the respondents representing 20.8% being Muslims, and only 2 of the respondents representing 0.4% practising another religion. Likewise, in the urban area the findings indicate that the majority of the respondent were Christians (N = 473, 94.6%), 18 (3.6%) of them were Muslims, 1 (0.2%) practised atheism, another 1 (0.3%) is agnostic in religion and 1 (0.2%) was a free thinker. Only 6 (1.2%) of the respondents said they practise no religion. The finding of the study reveals that the respondents were mainly Christians both in rural and urban area. Research has shown that religion can play a significant role in shaping political attitudes and behaviors. For instance, some studies have found that religious individuals tend to be more politically active and more likely to vote than non-religious individuals (Stewart, 2023; Sobari, 2023; Asha, 2023; Ignazi & Tuorto, 2023). This implies that there exists a relationship

between religious beliefs and political engagement. The findings of this study indicate that individuals who adhere to religious beliefs are more inclined to engage in political activities and exhibit higher levels of electoral participation as compared to individuals who do not identify as religious or hold fewer religious affiliations.

This suggests that a person's propensity to engage in political activity may depend on their religious affiliations or beliefs. The findings discussed can also have significant ramifications for political campaigns and plans, as they may strategically focus on religious communities as a crucial demographic for mobilisation and outreach efforts. Moreover, it stressed the convergence of religion and politics, as religious principles and convictions have the potential to influence an individual's political perspectives and behaviours. Additionally, religious beliefs and values can also influence political views and attitudes, such as views on social issues like abortion and same-sex marriage. This implies that a person's religious beliefs can have a significant impact on their moral and ethical perspective, which can then affect their political stances. This observation shows how closely religion and politics are connected. People's strong religious beliefs can affect how they feel about social and moral issues, and this often leads them to support political parties or movements that share their beliefs. The interplay between religion and politics is a significant determinant in influencing the range of political perspectives present within a given culture. It is likely that there will be differences in religion views, practises, and their effect on political engagement between urban and rural areas.

On the other hand, rural areas may have a more homogeneous population with a dominant religious group. Additionally, it's important to acknowledge that religious beliefs and practices are deeply personal and unique to every individual, thus

generalizing the findings might be challenging and care should be taken in interpreting the results.

The findings also show that the majority of respondents 243(48.6%) were secondary school leavers, while 11(2.2%) had no formal education among others whereas the urban dwellers the finding show that a total of 344 (68.8%) of the respondents have attained education at the tertiary level (HND, OND, BA/BSC), 119 (23.8%) have attained postgraduate education, 36 (7.2%) have received secondary school education, while only one (0.2%) of the respondents has not gone beyond primary school education. According to the study's findings, the majority of respondents were HND/OND/BA/Bsc graduates (University level, with an entry frequency of 344). Since the majority of the respondents in rural areas received secondary school education and the majority of respondents in urban areas had tertiary education, even though secondary school education is the basic education, which is a critical tier in Nigeria's educational hierarchy. Research has shown that education can play a significant role in shaping political attitudes and behaviours (Tzankova, Albanesi, Prati, & Cicognani, 2022; Stattin, & Amnå, 2022). This proposition posits that an individual's educational attainment has the potential to influence their perspectives on political matters as well as their engagement in political endeavours. Individuals with a higher level of education exhibit a greater propensity to possess knowledge regarding contemporary political matters, legislation, and the ramifications associated with political choices. Individuals with a higher level of education exhibit a greater propensity to possess knowledge regarding contemporary political matters, legislation, and the ramifications associated with political choices. Research has shown that individuals with higher levels of income, employment, and social class tend to be more politically engaged, more informed about political issues,

and more likely to vote than those with lower levels of income, employment, and social class (Walsh, Jennings, & Stoker, 2004; Melo, & Stockemer, 2014; Dalton, 2017; Bullock, 2017). The results show that people with more money, a better job, and a higher social status are more likely to be politically active and vote than people with less money, no job, or a lower social class.

This suggests that there is a potential relationship between socioeconomic differences and political engagement. Individuals possessing a higher level of resources are likely to enjoy enhanced accessibility to educational institutions, information sources, and avenues for participation in political endeavours. Additionally, this phenomenon brings attention to the possible disparities in political representation since individuals with lower socioeconomic standing may have greater obstacles to having their perspectives and interests acknowledged within the political sphere. The issue of addressing inequities in political activity is a significant challenge within numerous democratic systems. Moreover, education can also provide individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to participate in the political process, such as understanding the political system and understanding the issues at stake. Regarding urban and rural areas, it's likely that there will be variations in education levels and its influence on political participation between the two areas. For instance, urban areas may have a higher concentration of schools and universities and thus, a higher percentage of youth with higher education levels. On the other hand, rural areas may have fewer educational resources and a higher percentage of youth with lower education levels. Furthermore, it is critical to recognise that education and political involvement are heterogeneous ideas with complicated and subtle relationships.

The study's findings in rural area show that the respondents' current job status with 210 of the respondents representing 42.0% being self-employed, and 117 of the respondents representing 23.4% being employed or with a job whereas the respondents' current employment status of the study participants in the urban area, indicate that 237 (47.4%) of them were gainfully employed, 107 (21.4%) were self-employed, and the remaining 156 (31.2%) were either students or still searching for gainful employments. Current status can be defined as a combination of factors such as employment, income, social class, and occupation among others. Research has shown that individuals with higher levels of income, employment, and social class tend to be more politically engaged, more informed about political issues, and more likely to vote than those with lower levels of income, employment, and social class. In relations to urban and rural areas, it's likely that there will be variations in current status and its influence on political participation between the two areas. For instance, urban areas may have more job opportunities and more diverse economic opportunities, which might result in higher levels of employment and income. On the other hand, rural areas may have fewer economic opportunities and a higher percentage of youth with lower levels of income and employment. Additionally, it's important to acknowledge that current status and political participation are multi-faceted concepts and the relationship between them might be complex and nuanced.

The findings also indicate that the majority of respondents have low incomes; 227 of them, representing 45.4% of all the respondents, make between 1,000 and 10,000 naira per month in the rural area whereas those in urban area based on the respondents' monthly earnings, the findings indicate that the largest chunk of the respondents (N = 190, 38.0%) received N110,000 and above per month, 94 (18.8%) received between N51,000 and N100,000, 145 (29.0%) received between N10,000



and N50,000, and 71 (14.2%) earned between N1,000 and N10,000 monthly. That those employed are 237 and having 190 within the N110,000 and above monthly income is notable. This implies that there is a significant disparity in the monthly income of respondents which shows that individuals with higher levels of income tend to be more politically engaged, more informed about political issues, and more likely to vote than those with lower levels of income. Consequently, income can also affect access to political information, ability to participate in political activities and ultimately, the likelihood of participating in political activities. There is a positive correlation between higher income levels and the availability of resources such as the internet, newspapers, and cable television. This correlation implies that individuals with higher earnings are more inclined to possess these resources, granting them access to a wider array of news sources and political information. Increased income can facilitate the engagement of individuals in political endeavours that necessitate monetary contributions, such as making donations to political campaigns or interest organisations. The increased financial security associated with greater income levels can facilitate individuals' abilities to allocate time away from their professional obligations to participate in political endeavours, such as attending political rallies, engaging in political activism, or pursuing political candidature. The potential for individuals with higher earnings to exert greater influence in shaping political policies and decisions arises from their financial capacity to provide support to politicians and causes. In expressions of urban and rural areas, it's expected that there will be variations in income levels and its influence on political participation between the two areas. For instance, urban areas may have more job opportunities and more diverse economic opportunities, which might result in higher levels of income. On the other hand, rural areas may have fewer economic opportunities and a higher percentage of

youth with lower levels of income. In the same vein, people belonging to lower economic brackets may have obstacles when it comes to obtaining political knowledge and engaging in political endeavours because of income limitations. This assertion draws attention to the potential influence of wealth inequality on political participation and power within a given society, hence the necessity of addressing these discrepancies to establish a more equitable political framework. Keep in mind that both financial stability and political engagement are complex concepts whose connection may be subtle and multidimensional. Nevertheless, differences in political participation can arise due to variations in economic status, education, and social background, resulting in those from more advantageous circumstances exhibiting higher levels of political engagement. One example of how economic variables can impact the availability of political information is through differential access to news sources, the internet, and education among individuals of diverse socioeconomic levels. The propensity of individuals to partake in political activities, such as voting, attending political events, and engaging in community organisations, can be influenced by several social and economic factors. Individuals who possess elevated social and economic standing may have greater influence on the process of political decision-making, thereby potentially resulting in the formulation of policies that align with their own interests. These various causes can contribute to disparities in political representation, resulting in certain demographic groups experiencing reduced levels of political engagement. Individuals with elevated wealth levels exhibit a greater propensity to possess resources such as internet connectivity, newspapers, and cable television, affording them enhanced access to political knowledge and a wider array of news outlets. Increased income can facilitate the engagement of individuals in political endeavours that necessitate monetary contributions, such as the provision of

donations to political campaigns or interest groups. The attainment of a better income might enhance individuals' financial stability, thereby facilitating their ability to allocate time away from professional obligations for the purpose of participating in political endeavours, attending rallies, or pursuing political candidature. The potential for individuals with higher earnings to exert greater influence in shaping political policies and decisions arises from their financial capacity to provide substantial support to politicians and causes. On the other hand, those of lower socioeconomic status may have obstacles when it comes to obtaining political knowledge and engaging in political endeavours because of budgetary limitations. This assertion emphasises the potential effects of income disparity on political participation and influence within a given society, hence emphasising the necessity of rectifying these discrepancies to establish a fairer political framework.

Voting most times in national and local elections is influenced by demographic factors like gender, age, family income and place of residence (Alelaimat's, 2019). Numerous studies suggest that social and economic factors have implication on political participation (Tillian, 2011); (Dababneh, 2012); (Nahar, 2012); (Nahar & Humaidan ,2013); (Samer, 2017); (Atiyat, 2017). Such thoughts presented by Edosa (2017), Kakwagh and Ikwuba (2010), Abdullahi, Abdullah and Mohammed (2013), Obumneke (2012), Eme (2015), Lasisi and Suluka (2018) and Ezeogidi, Okezie and Okezie (2021) on the consensus that poverty and unemployment among youths must be eliminated are negated by Tables 7 (self-employed status of youths) and 8 (monthly income of ₦1,000– 10,000). Still, differences in political participation can arise due to variations in economic status, education, and social background, resulting in those from more advantageous circumstances exhibiting higher levels of political engagement. One example of how economic variables can impact the availability of

political information is through differential access to news sources, the internet, and education among individuals of diverse socioeconomic levels. The propensity of individuals to partake in political activities, such as voting, attending political events, and engaging in community organisations, can be influenced by several social and economic factors. Individuals who possess elevated social and economic status may have greater influence on the process of political decision-making, thereby potentially resulting in the formulation of policies that align with their own interests. This range of causes can contribute to disparities in political representation, resulting in certain demographic groups experiencing reduced levels of political engagement.

Likewise, Agu, Okeke and Idike (2013) found that age, occupation, and gender influence a youth's involvement in voting in Nigeria. Tables 1 (has the age distribution), 2 (favour men), 6 (recognise WAEC or NECO certificate holders' distribution aright), 7 (recognise those that are self-employed) and 8 (those earning ₦1,000- 10,000) as plausible. Onwuama (2019) findings which shows poverty as a stronghold that deters youths is right, in the sense that Tables 7 and 8 have again revealed otherwise. That the decline in youth voter turnout remains and has been influenced by factors like tribalism, geography, religion, educational levels, and gender are toned down by the submission in Tables 2 (male respondents having an edge), 5 (Christians being more involved), 6 (WAEC or NECO certificate holders are more involved), 28 (personal ideologies as basis for choice of vote). Several issues have been identified as contributing to the diminished involvement of young individuals in the election process. The above-mentioned reasons have had a dampening effect or detrimental influence on the involvement of young voters, rendering it a multifaceted matter that necessitates attention and resolution. A report of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) which showed that of the over 84 million registered voters for the

2019 general elections, 47.14% were women, a discord arises in Table 2 wherein men took the lead in gender distribution at 50.4%. Agbalajobi's (2021) argument for women is further buttressed by the outlay in Table 2 which submits to men's participation.

## RQ1: What level of interest do Nigerian Youths in urban areas have in politics?

The study's findings for research question one, show that most of the Nigerian youth in rural area are somewhat interested in politics as 143 (28.6%) identified that they are 'somewhat interested' while 136 (27.2%) ticked the very interested box. Respondents living in the urban areas showed similar numbers as 179 (35.8%) were somewhat interested, 68 (13.6%) were neither interested nor uninterested, 105 (21.0%) were not very interested, while 12(2.4 %) were not interested in politics at all. The survey results are in contrast with the study of Pap, Ham, and Bilandi (2018) who found that that there was low level of political interest among youths in Croatia, though youth political interest rises in proportion to the amount of time kids spend participating in political debates on Facebook. Nonetheless, analysis also indicated that, in contrast to other social media platforms, utilising Facebook for political debates significantly positively influenced youth's interest in politics. The findings support a study by Levy, Solomon, and Collet-Gildard (2016) that examined how teenagers' political interests changed during the 2012 U.S. presidential election and found that there was an increase in students' interest in politics just before and after the election. Levy et al. (2016) also revealed that some educators faced difficulties, such as one-sided political situations and students' scepticism, while directing such activities. Nevertheless, the authors conclude that presidential election seasons may provide enormous chances to enhance students' political engagement and learning, especially in a swing state where kids are typically exposed to multiple commercials, candidate

visits, and heightened political awareness within the community. These increases were also related to the general public's growing political consciousness and the opportunities provided in the classroom for students to discuss and investigate various political issues.

The findings of the study concur with Russo & Stattin (2016) that conducted a study to observe changes in political interest among youth aged 13 to 28 and found that the percentage of youth losing interest in politics was almost equal to the percentage of youth developing interest over time. The authors further stressed that youth's interest in politics is just as consistent as that of adults beginning in their early twenties. However, the youngest group of teenagers had the lowest stability rate (ages 13–15). The findings are consistent with those of Brett and Thomas' (2019) study, who found that, after controlling for background traits, participants expected future political participation was predicted by political interest, a crucial element of values, and political efficacy, which is closely related to expectancy. Dostie-Goulet (2009) took a different tack, conducting research to better understand how one's social circle affects the development of one's political interests throughout adolescence. Dostie-Goule study specifically examined the role that parental, peer, and educator political discourse plays in developing the political interest of youths. This leads the author to conclude that a youth's social network, particularly their parents, friends, and teachers, plays a significant role in shaping their political interest. Akeusola (2023) findings indicate that the correlation between participation in online activism and political knowledge is influenced by exposure to a wide range of online information sources. This highlights the significance of online platforms in facilitating the dissemination of political information and fostering political awareness. These platforms facilitate active participation in political matters and have the potential to enhance users' political

consciousness through the provision of up-to-date information and avenues for discourse. Dostie-Goule (2009) supports the findings of Zeglovits & Zandonella (2013) study who decided to compare the political engagement of 16- and 17-year-old Austrians before and after the voting age was lowered to 16. In doing so, the authors nailed down a wide definition of political interest, one that accounts for both situational and personal factors. Even the patterns of what influences individuals to become involved in politics have shifted, with the results of studies showing that parents have the greatest impact on the political engagement of youth who are not yet eligible to vote. When the voting age was reduced, youth's interest in politics was piqued by their involvement in school. This implies that respondents are generally 'somewhat interested' in politics both in rural and urban areas in Nigeria. This finding concurs with the finding of Finn, Williams, and Momani (2023), who found that Canadian Arab adolescents display a higher level of political engagement. Contrary to being politically disengaged, these individuals actively participate in Canadian society, demonstrating a keen interest and conscientiousness as citizens.

To further understand the political interested of the respondents, they were asked their disposition towards political news. Majority of respondents who live in rural area ticked others showing that they do not pay close attention to political news when it is being showcased on their chosen media (N238, 47.6%); while majority of those living in the urban area declared that they pay attention to political news whenever it is on (N335, 67%). The dissemination of information via media channels serves to educate individuals on the importance of actively participating in political parties and engaging in campaign and election activities by wearing party-affiliated attire and utilising stickers and signs (Arede & Oji, 2022).

This also supports the findings of Kaskazi and Kitzie (2021), who suggest that adolescents primarily access political information and news through digital media platforms, relying on their social networks rather than traditional media sources. This suggests that adolescents, or those in their youth, predominantly get their political information and news through digital media platforms, such as social media and online news outlets, as opposed to relying on conventional media sources such as newspapers or television. The findings align with the finding of Malafaia et al. (2021) who argued that misinformation, caused sometimes by not paying attention to political news (and sometimes by inadequate information) contributes to a lack of interest and motivation in political information. This leads the author to conclude that a youth's social network, particularly their parents, friends, and teachers, plays a significant role in shaping their political interest.

Thus, many social networks, including those coming from friends, family, and online communities, influence adolescents' political awareness and beliefs. Online sources offer immediate and convenient access to political information, rendering them particularly attractive to the younger demographic. It frequently provides interactive functionalities that incentivize adolescents to actively participate in political discourse and exchange information among their peers. The observed phenomenon indicates a departure from conventional modes of media consumption among the younger cohorts. The results of this study emphasise the evolving nature of political information consumption among adolescents, as digital media outlets and social networks have become influential in moulding their political knowledge and perspectives.



## RQ2: What is the knowledge level of youths in urban and rural areas about politics in Nigeria?

The level of political alertness among young people living in urban and rural areas can be very different, and this is due to a number of different factors. It is imperative to acknowledge that there exists a lack of homogeneity in the knowledge levels of young individuals residing in these areas. The findings in research question two shows that 120 (24.0%) of the Nigerian youths in rural area are very knowledgeable about politics, while 156 (31.2%) of the youths are somewhat knowledgeable about politics. However, those resident in urban areas have greater depth of knowledge about politics, the findings indicate that 83 (16.6%) of the respondents said they were very knowledgeable, 242 (48.4%) claimed they were somewhat knowledgeable, 55 (11.0%) were neither knowledgeable nor ignorant, 116 (23.2%) were not very knowledgeable, while 4 (0.8%) were not at all knowledgeable. The study collaborates with the findings of Pavlović (2012) that demonstrated a poor and unequal distribution of political knowledge among students. Youths residing in urban settings frequently enjoy enhanced accessibility to a wide array of information sources, surround with the internet, print media, and educational establishments. On the other hand, individuals residing in rural area may encounter restricted availability of the aforementioned resources, which could potentially have an impact on their level of knowledge. The role of education in shaping political knowledge is of considerable importance. Furthermore, the main predictors of this are interest in politics, academic achievement, gender, and father's interest in politics. In a similar vein, study revealed that learning about politics depends not only on an individual's innate motivation and aptitude but also on the nature of their informational context and access to pertinent resources. The findings support the study of Dele (2016) who found that

respondents' exposure to electronic media was a more reliable predictor of their political knowledge and behaviour than their exposure to print media. Urban youths frequently encounter a wider array of media platforms, which perhaps enhances their awareness of political advancements via television, radio, and online mediums. Social networks and cultural norms have the potential to influence young people's political awareness. Though this study has proven that a good number of young Nigerians possess political knowledge, this has not translated to political participation as 38.2% of the more knowledgeable group (those residents in the urban areas) admit to political inactivity and a further 202 respondents (nearly half of the population) confirm that they do not care about their lack of political participation. Empirical evidence suggests that lack of participation is more prevalent in developing countries, particularly in Africa, due to factors such as violent electoral processes, gender discrimination, electoral malpractices, illiteracy, ignorance, and broken promises, among others (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2018). This study also found that the age of the respondents, directly corresponded with political apathy i.e., those under 25 cared less about politics than those over 25 years old. Similarly, the study results give credence to the believe that youth's political knowledge is greatly increased by internet usage during an election campaign, and that this information boosts the possibility that youth would go out and vote. Furthermore, Ogu and Inyang (2015) lean towards unemployment and a lack of political knowledge as two of the main reasons limiting student engagement in politics. The ability to understand political matters among young individuals residing in both urban and rural areas is a complex matter that is subject to the effects of numerous circumstances, resulting in significant variations in knowledge levels among different individuals. Research studies and surveys are frequently undertaken to evaluate and figure out the distinct degrees of knowledge and patterns among young

individuals in many geographical areas. Adnanes (2004) found that young Bulgarians with a high level of formal education consider migrating partly because they perceive their participation options as limited and are dissatisfied with their political system, confirming the importance of an established institutional framework. Urban areas generally exhibit a greater concentration of educational institutions and a superior standard of education in comparison to rural locations. Hence, it can be posited that young individuals residing in urban regions are likely to enjoy enhanced opportunities for acquiring political education. The encouragement or discouragement of political conversations and awareness can vary depending on cultural and societal situations. There is a positive correlation between the active engagement of young individuals in political activities or organisations and their level of political understanding. Urban settings could provide a greater range of options for individuals to engage in political activities than the rural areas. It is also widely accepted that youth must be well-versed in and knowledgeable about politics to effectively participate in a democracy. As a result, it is equally important to examine several studies that assess youth's political literacy and the factors that promote the development of their political acumen.

The finding reveals that Nigerian youth's resident in urban areas get politically educated via Newspapers. Answers to the question shows that 22 (4.4%) of the Nigerian youths use radio to find out information about politics, 30(6.0%) of the Youths use television to find out information about politics, 169(33.8%) of the youths use newspaper as source of information about politics, 23(4.6%) of the youths use social media as source of information about politics, 117(23.4%) of the youths use friends, relatives, work colleagues to find out information about politics, while 139(27.8%) of the Nigeria youths in the rural areas use other sources to find out information about politics. The findings of the study contradict with the findings of Dele (2016) who found

that respondents' exposure to electronic media was a more reliable predictor of their political knowledge and behaviour than their exposure to print media. The influence of electronic media on the formation of an individual's political knowledge and behaviour is substantial. The potential reason for this finding may be attributed to the captivating and interactive characteristics of electronic media, which have the ability to engage the audience and deliver immediate information. Electronic media frequently offers immediate updates on political events and matters, rendering it more appealing and timely for individuals who desire to remain well-informed through social media. This platform enables interactive engagement with political content, fostering discussions and information sharing among users. Additionally, it provides access to a diverse array of news sources and perspectives, thereby contributing to a greater awareness of political affairs. This exemplifies the surfacing media landscape, wherein digital and electronic platforms have a pivotal role in influencing public perception and political participation. The results also show how important media literacy and the ability to think critically when evaluating information from electronic media platforms. The findings are consistent with the findings of Oluwatosin, Olusoji, Olusola, and Popoola (2020) who found that among undergraduates in Ibadan, Nigeria, traditional medium of communication like Newspapers and radio remain the primary source of political information. Within this particular context, it is seen that young individuals residing in rural areas have a notable inclination towards relying on well-established and reputable sources of information, such as newspapers and radio, when actively seeking political news and updates. Insistence of the traditional media as not powerful as assumed as it is vastly controlled by the government, especially in developing countries (Johnson, 2003; Dumitrescu and Mughan, 2010; Kuebler, 2011; Schroeder, 2018) is not true as Tables 40 (finding political messaging useful), Table 11

(newspaper as source of information), 42 (reading *This Day* Newspaper), 41 (reading the newspaper every day), but 45 (listening less than once a month to radio) , 47 (not having trust in the news heard from the media) is another flip. Whereas Tables 11 (point to newspaper as preferred source of political matters). Conroy, Feezell, and Guerrero (2012) dug a little further by doing research to find out whether and how joining a political organisation online changes the traditional ways youth participate in and learn about politics found that engagement in online political groups is associated to traditional forms of political activity in the real world, but not necessarily to greater political understanding. The authors stressed that since joining a Facebook group has no impact on a youth's level of political literacy, the authors conclude that doing so does not boost the level of political engagement among youths.

The authors acknowledge that the number of people participating in Facebook groups plays a prominent role in influencing the political engagement and literacy of young individuals. These factors include the quality of information, educational options, and individual motivation. The findings of the authors underline the significance of enhancing tactics and interventions to foster political engagement and literacy among young individuals, as the act of merely joining a Facebook group may not be adequate.

Similarly, it is worth noting that digital platforms, such as Facebook, may possess some limitations with regards to their influence on political engagement and literacy. Consequently, it may be necessary to explore alternative techniques that are more inclusive in nature. The results indicate that although the act of joining a Facebook group can serve as a means of engaging in online political activities, it does not, in isolation resulting in a substantial enhancement of political awareness and involvement among young individuals. There is a range in how well online platforms

encourage political participation, which is why we need to think about the factors and methods that can help young people learn about politics and get involved. The authors stressed that since joining a Facebook group has no impact on a youth's level of political literacy, the authors conclude that doing so does not boost the level of political engagement among youths. On the other hand, as of the urban dwellers social media platforms are the most often used media sources of information about politics given that 360 (72.0%) of the respondents used the platforms. Similarly, 62 (12.4%) of the respondents mostly used television, 15 (3.0%) used radio, 14 (2.8%) used newspaper, 37(7.4%) used friends, relatives, and work colleagues, while 12(2.4%) used online media sources that are not social media-based to get information about politics. This backs up the finding of researchers that claim digital devices have changed the way political information is shared and received (Ragnedda and Mutsvairo, 2018; Sang, Lee, Park, Fisher and Fuller, 2020) is supported by Table 11 (social media as source of political information). The assertion contends that the emergence of digital gadgets has had a profound impact on the dynamics surrounding the dissemination and reception of political information. The proliferation of digital devices, such as smartphones and computers, has facilitated convenient and widespread access to a diverse array of political information. This includes news articles, social media updates, and multimedia content. The platform has facilitated the dissemination of up-to-date information regarding political occurrences, enabling individuals to remain well-informed as events transpire. This is made possible by the provision of a wide range of political sources and perspectives, affording users the opportunity to engage with diverse point of view. Moreover, digital devices play an essential role in promoting active involvement with political content, allowing users to engage in activities such as commenting, sharing, and participating in online discussions. These activities have the

potential to influence public discourse by enabling the customization of political content, as algorithms are employed to deliver information that aligns with an individual's specific interests and preferences. Although digital gadgets provide a multitude of advantages, they also give rise to certain difficulties pertaining to the dissemination of false information and the imperative for individuals to possess media literacy skills. This expression of views suggests that digital gadgets have had a significant impact on altering the way political information is disseminated and consumed. The aforesaid trend has significant ramifications for individuals' political engagement, the rapidity of information diffusion, and the dynamic nature of political communication. The findings also show the respondents' perception of political messaging- in the rural area 394 (78.8%) of the respondents hold that political messaging is useful, 31 (6.2%) opined that political messaging is not useful, while in the urban area 241 (48.2%) believed political messaging from political parties in Nigeria are irrelevant and unnecessary and does not produce knowledge. The contention suggests that there exists a perceived disparity between the substance of political communication and the informational or knowledge requirements of the Nigerian public. This implies that political messages may lack depth and fail to adequately address the urgent issues or concerns of the populace. The notion that political messaging is inconsequential and superfluous could potentially foster scepticism towards political parties and their endeavours in communication.

The finding shows how often the respondents' read the newspaper., 203 (40.8%) of the respondents read the newspaper every day, 56 (11.2%) read the newspaper most days, 19 (3.8%) read the newspaper once a week, 87 (17.4%) read the newspaper a few times a month, 33 (6.6%) read the newspaper once a month, 66 (13.2%) read the newspaper less than once a month, while 35 (7.0%) of the

respondents indicated that they never read the newspaper. From the result, one can say that majority of the respondents read the newspaper every day. The result of the finding construed with the finding of Ogu and Inyang study found that the majority of the youths use newspaper as source of information about politics especially in rural areas. The prerogative argues that in rural areas, conventional media outlets like newspapers retain their credibility and significance as a reliable source of political information for youths. Newspapers can serve as a more accessible and readily accessible medium for political news in rural areas as compared to digital or electronic media platforms. The media consumption patterns exhibited by rural adolescents may be shaped by their level of media literacy as well as their familiarity with and preference for newspapers as a trusted medium for accessing news content. Newspapers situated in rural areas have the potential to offer a more concentrated and pertinent stand on political matters, hence potentially captivating the attention of youthful readers. This implies that the availability of political information in rural areas, particularly among young individuals, is influenced by the media environment and the newspapers' role in disseminating such information. The findings found the enduring relevancy of newspapers as a main conduit of political knowledge for young individuals residing in rural areas. The study augment Oluwatosin, Olusoji, Olusola, and Popoola's (2020) study on Nigerian university students' media consumption habits and political knowledge, which examined how participants' understanding of current events and politics was influenced by listening to the radio, watching TV, reading the newspaper, and using social media in the urban area. Diverse media outlets offer disparate viewpoints and forms of information. Adolescents who depend on a variety of media platforms may possess a more extensive and well-rounded knowledge of contemporary events and political matters. Every form of media, including radio,



television, newspapers, and social media, possesses distinct advantages and disadvantages. For example, the radio medium enables the provision of auditory analysis, whereas television provides both visual and auditory coverage. The knowledge of individuals can be shaped by their preferred media. The way information is selected and presented via different mediums has the potential to influence the individuals involved. Newspapers frequently provide comprehensive analysis, although social media platforms can offer immediate updates and a wide range of perspectives. The utilisation of social media platforms facilitates active participation and meaningful interaction with political content, hence potentially shaping individuals' level of engagement and emotional attachment to ongoing societal matters. The trust that young individuals place in the information they receive can be influenced by the trustworthiness and credibility of various media sources.

Media literacy is crucial in shaping the way young individuals perceive and engage with political information emanating from diverse sources, as they employ critical analysis techniques. Individuals who possess a high level of media literacy, particularly those who are young, are likely to exhibit greater discernment in their comprehension. The suggestion is that the selection of media within an urban setting has a substantial influence on the extent to which young individuals engage with and are interested in contemporary events and politics. This utterance highlights the need to consider the dynamics of media consumption and its influence on political knowledge and views. These consequences have significant implications for media organisations, policymakers, and educators that seek to foster informed citizenship and enhance media literacy.

The findings shows the respondents' consistency in listening to radio program, 74 (14.8%) of the respondents listen to the radio every day, 36 (7.2%) listen to radio

most days, 26 (5.2%) listen to radio once a week, 96 (19.2%) listen to radio a few times a month, 34 (6.8%) listen to radio once a month, 120 (24.0%) listen to radio less than once a month, while 114 (22.8%) of the respondents noted that they never listened to the radio. From this result, it can be concluded that majority of the respondents listen to the radio less than once a month. As a result, Oluwatosin, Olusoji, Olusola, and Popoola (2020), examines whether radio is the primary source of political information for undergraduates in Ibadan, Nigeria found that social media was the most widely used form of media, followed by radio, television, and newspapers. It implies that media outlets and political commentators use social media to increase youth political knowledge.

The finding shows the respondents' view about the news they hear from the media, 198 (39.6%) of the respondents said yes, which implies that they trust the news they hear from the media, while 302 (60.4%) of the respondents said no, which means that they do not trust the news they hear from the media. From the result, one can conclude that majority of the respondents do not trust the news they hear from the media. The absence of trust in media stressed a possible degradation of credibility on both traditional and digital media platforms. The findings have noteworthy consequences for the media's function as a reliable and trustworthy source of information, which results in a decrease in public knowledge, impeding democratic engagement and the process of decision-making. The diminished trust among young individuals can be attributed to media polarisation and the widespread occurrence of confirmation bias, wherein individuals actively seek information that reinforces their preconceived notions. This observable fact has the potential to exacerbate societal divisions. In instances where confidence in the media is diminished, individuals may seek out alternate sources of information that are frequently characterised by a lower

degree of reliability. This trend has the potential to facilitate the dissemination of deception and misinformation. The significance of fact-checking organisations and attempts to authenticate the precision of news reporting is diminished by the prevailing absence of trust in the media. The findings have the potential to initiate dialogues regarding the necessity of implementing media reforms and upholding ethical journalistic practices as a means to restore confidence in the media. The respondents' lack of trust in the news they receive from the media highlights a complex and wide-ranging issue that has significant ramifications for journalism, informed citizens, and the democratic process. Attar-Schwartz & Ben-Arieh (2012) found that Palestinian teenagers exhibited higher levels of political trust, political knowledge, and political opinion formation. Jewish youth, on the other hand, were more invested in political institutions than their Palestinian counterparts.

With political knowledge comes the challenge of fake news and the survey asked how the respondents detect fake news. Rural responses show- N60 (12.0%) of the respondents detect fake news through verification, N72 (14.4%) detect fake news through investigation, N55 (11.0%) detect fake news through fact checking, N140 (28.0%) detect fake news through others, while 173 (34.6%) of the respondents noted that they don't detect fake news. Individuals residing in rural areas may exhibit a heightened vulnerability to misinformation and disinformation owing to limited access to resources that facilitate the discernment of fraudulent news. The dissemination of inaccurate information in rural communities has the potential to magnify, shaping individuals' frame of reference and attitudes and ultimately impacting their decision-making, including their political preferences. When individuals are exposed to misinformation, they may acquire a sense of scepticism towards the media sources responsible for disseminating such content. From these findings, it can be concluded

that majority of the respondents in rural areas are not able to detect fake news. Media trust and warped media coverage as limitation to youth activeness in the political sphere by (Hari, 2014; Uwalaka, 2016; Uwalaka & Watkins, 2017; Adegbola and Gearhart, 2019) is negated by Table 41 (Reliability as reason for reading newspaper of choice).

### RQ3: What forms of political participation do Nigerian youths in urban and rural areas engage in?

The survey asked respondents how they participate in politics. The responses show that respondents who have less access to social media (represented by those living in rural areas) went out to vote in 2019 (N226, 45.25 table 22); vote because they like the candidate (table 24); are not consistent with voting mainly because they are scared of violent acts (tables 25 and 26); vote the same party always because they believe the party policies align with their personal ideologies (tables 27 and 28); are very active in their political parties (table 31); volunteer to help during elections (table 32); and their preferred form of political participation is engaging in political discourse (table 33, N469, 93.8%). Urban respondents (those who have more access to social media) have a greater percentage of those who have never voted (N207, 41.4%) while 103 (20.8% of the respondents always vote; they vote the party who they believe has more advantage to the country (table 72); are largely not consistent with voting mainly because they do not have their voters card (table 74); majorly vote the same party always also because they believe the party policies align with their personal ideologies (table 75 and 76); are mainly not active in their chosen political parties (table 79); volunteer to help during campaigns majorly by participating in online campaigning (tables 80 and 81).

The findings show that those in rural areas turn up to vote more than those in urban areas and with Afolayan's (2018) study who calls on Nigerian youths with access to social media to reorient their attention away from the get-rich-quick mentality and the supporting roles (online campaigns) they currently play and move toward more active forms of participation i.e., voting to achieve the desired changes in Nigeria. This can be effectively accomplished by employing strategic messaging and targeted campaigns that are tailored to align with the ambitions and concerns of the Nigerian youth demographic. This essay aims to underscore the significance of active political engagement, particularly through the act of voting, in fostering enduring enhancements in individuals' lives. The task at hand involves the identification and collaboration with young representatives who possess relatability and can effectively act as role models and spokespersons for the cause. These representatives can leverage their social media presence to establish connections with individuals within their peer group. Propose innovative social media challenges with the potential for widespread popularity, focusing on fostering civic engagement. In a similar vein, promoting the active participation of young individuals in expressing their voting experiences, articulating their perspectives on political matters, and evaluating the ramifications of governmental decisions. Facilitate the mobilisation of youthful activists to engage with their peers and acquaintances towards promoting and fostering discussions regarding the significance of voting and the merits of active engagement in defining the trajectory of the nation's destiny. Dagone, Karick and Abubakar's (2013) explanation of over 60 million eligible voters in Nigeria, and 43 million of them are estimated to be online is as shown in Table 1 (wherein 162 respondents have the lead presentation). However, Table 12 (having youths talk about politics to others) counters. On declining political participation by (Karpf, 2010; Drumbi, 2012; Lim, 2013,

Pontes, Henn and Griffiths, 2018), the survey shows reasons why young adults believe voting is not profitable. These reasons are- lack of interest (Tables 9); nothing changes (table 14) Corruption and the needs of the average young adult in the country not being prioritised (table 19) and the believe that voting and politics generally is an old people game (table 16). Youths with access to social media, partook in more modern forms of political participation like- using social media for political advocacy, political campaigns, communicating with politicians, discussing politics, monitoring, and reporting electoral malpractices, holding public consultations, joining interest groups that lobby, blogging about political issues, and writing letters to public officials (table 81). This suggests that those in the younger demographic who have the means to use social media platforms are actively participating in modern forms of political engagement. Social media platforms are being utilised to partake in many political activities, including the promotion of political agendas, bolstering political campaigns, establishing communication with political figures, and participating in discourse surrounding political matters. This implies that social media has emerged as a prominent and powerful platform for political involvement among young individuals, facilitating their active participation in the political sphere through novel and dynamic means.

The study results imply that youths with less access to social media are more politically active than urban youths who have more access to social media (contrary to the postulations of the digital divide theory). This study suggests that there could be a direct link between the rural areas having more self-employed citizens who are more in control of their time and their turning up to vote, while those in urban areas are employed and probably are in less control of their time. In a like manner the findings also show that 115(23.0%) of the youths are not active in politics because they believe

politics causes a lot of conflicts, 46(9.2%) of the youths don't have time to do politics, 99(19.8%) of the youths are of the view that there is no point as nothing changes if they are active in politics. At the same time many youths in urban areas are politically inactive because they believe their political activeness won't change anything (N = 150, 30.0%), or because politics causes a lot of conflicts (N = 142, 28.4%). Besides, some of the respondents do not have time for political activities (N = 51, 10.2%), believe that politics is not for people like them (N = 31, 6.2%), do not understand politics (N = 30, 6.0%) and care less about political issues (N = 63, 12.65). More so, some of the respondents are politically inactive because they think that Nigerian politics is ridiculous and/or because politicians make the political system too complicated for new entrants. This implies that the respondents' lack of active engagement in Nigerian politics can be attributed to their poor impressions of the political environment. The individual perceives Nigerian politics as "ridiculous," suggesting a potential perception of corruption, inefficiency, or the presence of factors that deter their active participation. Some individuals may hold the belief that politicians have contributed to the excessive complexity of the political system, hence creating challenges for newcomers in knowing and actively participating in it. This perception may discourage individuals from pursuing a career in politics. Hence, it can be inferred that the lack of political engagement among the respondents can be attributed to a blend of scepticism regarding the current condition of Nigerian politics and the perceived obstacles to participation arising from the intricate nature of the political framework. Nevertheless, a total of 17 (3.45%) respondents noted that they had no hindrance to political activeness. This means that both rural and urban youth are inactive for a variety of reasons, including conflicts, killings, and political hijacking, among others. The findings are consistent with Kimberlee (2002), Hooghe, Stolle and

Stouthuysen (2004), Fieldhouse, Tranmer, and Russell, (2007), Cross and Young (2008), where perception is based on trends such as voting in elections, where young adults have the lowest rates, and these rates continue to reduce just as youth membership in political parties is declining. This implies that individuals in the young adult cohort exhibit the most minimal levels of engagement in political activities, and furthermore, these levels are experiencing a decline. Moreover, it establishes a relationship between the fall in youth involvement in political parties and the general decline in political engagement among those in the young adult category.

In essence, it seems that a decrease in youth participation in political parties is correlated with a fall in their total involvement in political endeavours, including but not limited to voting, campaigning, and engaging in political advocacy. This observation suggests a potential lack of alignment between young adults and conventional political institutions, hence implying the necessity for implementing tactics that might effectively involve and activate young individuals in the realm of politics. "Youth are less concerned with politics, less politically knowledgeable, do not participate in social or political activities, are more apathetic, and have low levels of political interest," (Quintelier, 2007, p. 165). The findings also support Quintelier's (2007) findings that youths and adults have similar political attitudes, with the exception that youth have fewer opportunities to participate politically. Based on these findings, Martikainen, Martikainen and Wass (2005) claim that because today's young adults are less active, they will never achieve the level of political participation that previous generations did. One reason is that today's youth are having difficulty meeting adult years benchmarks (Arnett, 2014; Tagliabue Lanz & Beyers, 2014), resulting inside an irreversible delay in political participation. Despite a decline in youth political participation, research shows that youth are increasingly organising more informal movements and activities



on their own (Akinyetun, 2021). This suggests that although conventional modes of youth political engagement, such as voting or affiliating with political organisations, may be diminishing, young individuals are actively involved in political activities through informal and non-conventional channels. The younger generation is demonstrating proactive engagement in political activities, especially in the absence of endorsement from existing institutions. Individuals are actively seeking methods to assert their opinions and exert influence over political transformations. The emergence of informal movements and activities signifies the capacity of young individuals to adjust to modern forms of political engagement. Individuals may employ various strategies, such as utilising social media platforms, engaging in grassroots organising efforts, or employing alternative and non-traditional methods, to articulate their political viewpoints and catalyse transformative shifts in the social and political landscape. These informal social movements have the capacity to engender significant transformations, potentially exhibiting greater receptiveness towards the distinct problems and objectives of young individuals. This implies that despite the decrease in conventional political engagement, the youth demographic can still have considerable influence in shaping the political environment through non-traditional avenues. The suggestion is that the involvement of young people in politics is undergoing a transformation, and although it may not conform to conventional modes of participation, it continues to exert significant influence in defining political discussions and priorities.

The findings also show how respondents feel for not being politically active, 193(38.6%) of the Nigerian youths in rural areas feel guilty for not participating in Politics, 198(39.6%) of the Youths are worried for not being politically active, 82(16.4%) of the youths don't care about being politically active. Notwithstanding,

regarding the effects of political inactiveness on youths, in the urban areas the findings indicate that most of the respondents do not care at all about the consequences of their political inactiveness (N = 202, 40.4%), some feel worried (N = 160, 32.0%) and others feel guilty (N = 51, 10.2%). This activeness informs an 'I don't care' posture with 202 respondents so affirming. In terms of the perception of participation in Nigeria politics, it is submitted that: Nigerian politics is not just for men (197 respondents), Nigeria politics is not only for older people (199 respondents), and the notion of Nigerian politics being only for the wealthy is squashed by 144 respondents. Ajodo-Adebanjoko (2018) found a high level of political apathy among youths because of the failure of major societal institutions such as Independent national electoral commission, political movements, the media, and the relatives. This observation underlines the fact that a substantial number of young individuals exhibit a lack of interest in or apathy towards political matters. Individuals may exhibit a lack of involvement in political processes, refrain from engaging in political discourse, or demonstrate a disinterest in political events. The absence of trust among young individuals has been engendered by the inadequacies of institutions such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), political groups, the media, and even the impact of familial connections. These individuals might perceive these establishments as lacking effectiveness, being plagued by corruption, or exhibiting bias, thus diminishing their will to participate in the political framework. The inference might be made that the younger generation perceives these institutions as lacking in their efforts to address their issues or adequately represent their interests. This notion additionally enhances their indifference. To really fight political apathy, we need to think about how to fix and improve institutions so that young people can trust them again and get involved in politics.

In brief, the argument contends that a prevailing sentiment of disillusionment and scepticism towards prominent societal establishments has engendered a state of political disinterest among the youth demographic, potentially impacting the robustness of the political framework and democratic principles.

The finding shows respondents' perception or opinion about Nigerian politics is just for men that 56(11.2%) of Nigerian youths strongly disagree that politics is just for men, 207(41.1%) of the youths disagree that politics is just for men, 110(22.0%) of the youths neither agree nor disagree that politics is just for men, 64(12.8%) of the respondents agreed that politics is just for men, while 63(12.6%) strongly agreed that politics is just for men. Yet, in the urban area the findings indicate that the majority of the respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed that Nigerian politics is exclusively for men. They also refuted the statement that politics in Nigeria is meant for older people or that Nigerian politics is meant for wealthy people alone. People's perceptions of politics, especially those who believe they are political gladiators, contribute to the widespread misconception that politics is only for men, the elderly, and the wealthy. It clearly seen from the result therefore that politics is not just for men, older and the wealthy. Both the state and society benefit when citizens actively participate in society through local associations and movements within the state (Bolarinwa & Osuji, 2022). Engaging in active involvement within local associations and movements has the potential to foster social cohesiveness and cultivate a sense of belonging among individuals within a community. It facilitates the unification of individuals towards shared objectives and cultivates a heightened sense of communal identity. Individuals who engage in local associations and movements demonstrate a higher propensity for active participation in civic endeavours, including but not limited to volunteerism, community development, and local governance. This observable fact enhances the

vibrancy and active participation of civic society. Local associations and movements frequently endeavour to tackle certain issues or concerns that are prevalent within communities. When individuals within a community engage in active participation, they possess the ability to make valuable contributions towards the resolution of problems and the identification of solutions to difficulties that are specific to their local environment. Increased government accountability can be a result of citizens' active participation in local associations and movements. Increased community engagement is positively associated with a greater likelihood of individuals holding public authorities accountable for their actions and decisions. Active participation plays a pivotal role in enabling individuals and groups to exert influence over their immediate surroundings and exert a direct impact on policies that have a bearing on their lives. In précis, this suggestion posits that the presence of a robust and engaged civil society, marked by the involvement of citizens in local organisations and social movements, yields advantages for both the government and broader society. The previously mentioned event has the potential to result in enhanced governance, increased social cohesiveness, and the advancement of community development. Regardless of the importance of female political participation and representation, they have faced challenges in the twenty-first century in countries all over the world, severely limiting their participation (Kumar, 2018). Several authors have found gender issues in Nigerian politics, such as the gender dimensions of controversy and disparities (Meissner, 2019; Mlambo & Kapingura, 2019); the role of women as participants, providers, and promoters of social activism; and the relationships between gender, political participation, and citizenship (Olugbemi & Osuji, 2021; Edema & Igwilo, 2020). This could be attributed to previous studies that concentrated on how the interconnection of cultural and socioeconomic norms places women on the political

periphery (Arowolo and Aluko, 2010; Okoosi-Simbine, 2012; Pogoson, 2012). Furthermore, Ette (2017), the news media reinforces patriarchal framing of politics, undermining women's participation. As Mufti and Jalalzai (2021) pointed out, even in Pakistan, where parties play a role in nominating women to run for office, selection processes frequently reflect patriarchal values. This implies that, if given the chance, women can actively participate in politics as well. Ette and Akpan-Obong (2022) found that highlighting the resilience of women in contexts where electoral dynamics undermine their participation and make access to political space a privilege. The finding shows that 119(23.8%) of the Youths disagree that politics is for wealthy people, 114(22.8%) of the respondents agreed that politics is for wealthy people, while 127(25.4%) of the youths strongly agreed that politics is for wealthy people. It is evident from the result therefore that politics is not just for wealthy people. Nigerian politics being for the rich and poor) is truly determined. This implies that even poor people can participate actively in politics. The affirmation in question highlights the significance of inclusion within democratic societies because citizens from diverse economic backgrounds possess both the entitlement and the capacity to participate in political affairs. The proposition is that irrespective of an individual's economic circumstances, it is imperative that all members of society are afforded an equitable chance to exercise their right to free expression, participate in political discourse, and exert influence over the mechanisms of decision-making. The inclusion of individuals from various socioeconomic origins enhances the political dialogue by introducing a diverse array of points of view and lived experiences. Promoting political engagement within impoverished or marginalised communities can effectively mitigate social and economic inequalities by affording these groups the opportunity to influence policies and activities that directly impact their well-being. The assertion suggests that enabling

citizens, irrespective of their socioeconomic standing, to actively participate in political affairs can result in a political system that is more comprehensive and representative in nature. In brief, it can be inferred that the inclusion of individuals in political engagement should be accessible to all, regardless of their economic conditions, with the aim of upholding democratic values and fostering a society that is characterised by fairness and equality.

The finding shows the problems and issues Nigerian youth face in rural areas, 158(31.6%) of the youth face unemployment problem, 120(24.0%) face bad leadership problem, 80(16.0%) face corruption problem, 86(17.2%) of Nigerian youth face poverty problem, while 56(11.2%) of the respondents face other challenges. Consequently, youth in the urban areas face myriad challenges that fall into the broad categories of economic, political, social, educational, security, cultural, and religious problems. As observed by the respondents, unemployment (N = 326, 65.2%) and poverty (N = 308, 61.65) are the largest economic challenges facing youth in Nigeria, just as they are beset by unfriendly business environment (N = 196, 39.2%) and inadequate support for entrepreneurial activities (N = 252, 50.4%) and low paying jobs (N = 107, 21.4%). On the political challenges facing young Nigerians, the data presented in Table 17 suggest that the challenges of political exclusion/marginalisation (N = 312, 62.4%), corruption (N = 287, 57.4%), God fatherism (N = 271, 54.2%), and political apathy (N = 253, 50.6%) are some of the major problems facing youth in Nigeria. About the social challenges militating against Nigerian youths, the respondents listed the lack of basic amenities like inadequate power supply (N = 203, 40.6%), poor healthcare system (N = 165, 33.0%), inaccessible roads (N = 112, 22.4%) and the quick rich syndrome (N = 98, 19.6%) as the major social problems. Among the respondents who identified challenges in the education sector, the poor state of the Nigerian education system (N

= 171, 34.2%), the recurrent strike by university workers (N = 83, 16.6%), and harassment from lecturers (N = 76, 15.2%) are the major issues to contend with among others. All of these tend towards apathy as a result of poor leadership. The presence of ineffective leadership inside government or other positions of authority exerts a substantial influence on the political ideologies and behaviours of the broader populace. The potential consequences include disillusionment, frustration, and a decline in trust in the political system. This assertion emphasises the significance of leadership in influencing the political atmosphere and the importance of holding leaders responsible for their actions, or lack thereof, by proposing a causal connection between ineffective leadership and the variables that contribute to indifference. However, better leadership might be able to fix the problems that make people not care about politics, which would lead to more participation and trust in government institutions. This implies that the presence of ineffective leadership is a contributing factor to a range of issues within the political sphere, subsequently leading to a lack of engagement in politics among the youth. The revitalization of civic involvement and the restoration of trust in government may necessitate a concentrated emphasis on matters pertaining to leadership. Muse and Narsiah (2015), on the other hand, argued that corruption, particularly electoral and political corruption, may result in undesirable elements becoming entrenched, limiting the space for participation even further. As a result, the prevalence of poverty has a negative impact on the socioeconomic development of most families and communities, resulting in a lack of interest by citizens in public participation as they struggle with extreme poverty daily, leaving no room or interest in participation (Muse & Narsiah, 2015). Such is the observation by Ajodo-Adebanjoko (2018) and Isiaka, Ibrahim and Kolawole (2021) that deduced a high level of integrity demonstrated by INEC and good governance required to make

youths interested in voting and politics again in the country, which Tables 19 (unemployment) and 21 (the political elite barely listen to the opinion of the masses) raise questions. Thus, Muse and Narsiah (2015) stated that to realise the dream of a perfect election system in every way, the current level of unemployment, particularly among the youth, must be addressed quickly, as a significant proportion of these youths are viewed as political thugs who rig elections, snatch ballot boxes, and incite all forms of political violence. In addition to eradicating poverty, Onwuama (2019) argues that the Nigerian government's core values should be equality, justice, and freedom of expression (unemployment as reason posed), Since the youth desire change at all levels, they do not want to rely on their leaders' empty promises that produce no results (Hilal, 2016). This signifies the proactive approach used by youths in their pursuit of constructive transformation within their communities, society, and government. The statement posits that there is an increasing erosion of confidence in political figures who make commitments but ultimately fail to fulfil them. The absence of trust could perhaps serve as a motivating factor for the younger generation's aspiration for societal transformation. The younger generation is expressing a strong desire for leaders to be held accountable. The preference lies in observing tangible measures and substantial advancements rather than placing exclusive reliance on verbal expressions. The inference might be drawn that young individuals seek leaders who actively engage in addressing pertinent concerns rather than only expressing verbal pledges. The assertion suggests that the inclination of young individuals towards change can result in heightened involvement in civic affairs, as they are more inclined to engage in activities that directly contribute to the desired transformations. This suggests that the younger generation is driven by a profound aspiration for substantial transformation and is no longer satisfied with hollow assurances from its



political representatives. The individuals are seeking concrete outcomes and measurable progress across various domains within society.

Nevertheless, findings show that the respondents' views on whether their problems are given attention by the political elites and political leaders in rural areas in Nigeria, 412(82.4%) of the youth agreed that their problems are given attention by political elites, while 88(17.6%) of the youths disagreed that political elites pay attention to their problems. Meanwhile in the urban areas most of the respondents believe that the myriad challenges facing youth in Nigeria are not being given the desired attention by the political elites and political leaders in the country (N=450, 90.0%), while the remaining 50 (10.0%) of the respondents think the challenges are being given adequate attention. In Nigeria, God fatherism is primarily blamed for politics. Youth are not inspired by older political parties, and the old political class doesn't seem to be making way for the younger generation. God fatherism has made it more challenging for youth to participate actively in politics. Bolarinwa and Osuji (2022) affirm that political elitism fosters poor relations, impedes economic development, and sustains fragile citizenship. The present study contradicts with the study of Onyishi (2018) that political elites have played a significant role in the complete breakdown of Nigeria's political structure and governance. Consequently, building a human civilisation free of political animosity and modern-day bundled atrocities is essential; poor leadership leads to bad laws. Despite this, a previous study found that politicians are not always aware of what their constituents want, Bergan (2009), and Butler and Nickerson (2011), and others, as well as by projecting their desires onto some of their constituent elements, to fill in the blanks. The findings also show the reasons why political elites don't pay attention to the problems of Nigerian youths in Rural areas, 19(3.8%) of the youth are of the view that political elites only

help people that are close to them, 17(3.4%) said the political elites don't pay attention to the problems of the youth because of selfish interest, 14(2.8%) said the political elites see the youths as people who do not have money and knowledge about politics, 26(5.2%) stated that the political elite barely listen to the opinion of the masses. Hence, 207 respondents completely abstained from voting. In terms of party choice in the 2019 presidential election, 151 respondents indicated leaning for People Democratic Party (PDP) because candidate's/party's relative advantage was put forward with 116 as respondents' aggregates. Again, 366 respondents insist they do not vote in every election; especially premised on not having voters' card which 193 respondent's chorus. In contrast, voters report that they tend to switch parties frequently, according to 225 respondents. To vote, candidates' policies and manifestation (which 261 respondents take to) was put forward as justification. 459 respondents maintain non membership of political parties, which in turn indicate some number as not at all active. However, 256 respondents inform of their volunteer disposition; this may have informed 218 respondents' activism of online campaign during elections of interest in that 94 respondents announce they send bulk messages, yet, not specifying (by 256 respondents) the location of respondents volunteering activities. Of concern is that no specified time frame (by 222 respondents) was admitted to being spent on political activities per week. At these, 385 respondents explain they were not contacted by political campaigns. Political messages were however viewed as dishonest by 301 respondents. For emphasis, 175 respondents stated that they never read newspapers. On the other hand, 201 respondents hint at preference for the *Punch* Newspapers: as it is connected to being reliable by 185 respondents. As another mass medium, 144 respondents confirm they watch television programmes, especially comedy (301 respondents), and for relaxation (341

respondents). Listening to radio is on the position for newspaper, yet 154 respondents take to Wazobia FM because they have a great music selection (326 respondents). At these, 281 respondents do not trust media news and 263 stated the ability to detect fake news is their natural ability, as such are verified/fact-checked by 173 respondents. Regarding media consumption, the prevalence of radio listening is comparable to that of newspaper reading, implying that individuals exhibit similar propensities to utilise both radio and newspapers as mediums for accessing information, news, and enjoyment. This highlights individuals' decision-making process in information-seeking, suggesting that they may opt for either radio or newspapers based on their personal tastes and specific requirements. This observation accentuates the wide range of media choices accessible to the general populace and the various methods by which individuals obtain information and consume content. It suggests that radio and newspapers continue to hold significance within the media landscape, notwithstanding the proliferation of digital and online media platforms. Hence, radio and newspapers persist as extensively consumed media platforms, occupying comparable places within the audience's media preferences, thereby exemplifying a diverse media ecosystem.

## RQ4: How do Nigerian youth in urban and rural areas use social media in politics?

The survey responses showed that social media was being used more by those living in urban areas (N360, 72%) compared to those living in rural areas (N23, 4.6%). This study argues that this could have roots in the vast difference of economic status of the two groups of respondents as seen in tables 8, 58 and 105. 314 respondents living in the urban area report that they spend between 0-20% of their monthly income on purchasing internet connections and this is expensive and would be almost life

changing for those in rural areas who earn about 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the average salary of those in urban areas. In a related studies younger citizens are more likely to engage in online political participation, while older, more educated, and male citizens are more likely to engage in offline political participation (Hoffmann and Lutz, 2019). Because of their better familiarity with digital tools, youths are more likely to use online platforms and technology to get involved in politics. People who are older, better off educationally, and male are more likely to participate in more conventional political activities, including going to rallies, meetings, and volunteering. This emphasises generational inequalities in political engagement strategies. The older generation may prefer tried-and-true ways. Attending events, giving speeches, and organising at the grass-roots level are all forms of offline political participation, while the younger ones are more likely to favour cutting-edge technology. Political engagement follows clear generational, educational, and sex lines, with younger, less-educated, and more-feminine residents preferring online to offline channels. As a result, this may affect how political campaigns and public organisations interact with various communities. Self-efficacy fully mediates the effect of education and gender on Internet use and online political participation. Thus, Internet use simultaneously amplifies and mitigates pre-existing participation divides, depending on users' cognitive dispositions. According to (Boulianne, 2022) low-income earners are not likely to engage in online political participation hence use more of offline political participation, while those with a better income are more likely to engage in online political participation digital (Morales et al., 2016). The digital divide in participatory politics may also arise due to a lack of skills to use the internet. Hence those with technical knowhow may have access to the online political participation while those with no technical knowhow will use more of offline.

As mentioned in RQ3 above, social media is being used in new forms of political participation like- canvassing for votes online, political discourse, mobilization amongst others. Hassan, Allam, Azni, and Khamis (2016) found a link between the amount of political information obtained through social media and the amount of online political activity. The analysis showed that the political interest of youth is the primary motivator for their involvement in online political engagement, rather than their demographics. From this, the authors draw the conclusion that although social media may be offering a new outlet for certain youth, it is not re-engaging the young adults who have already lost interest in politics and that social media can be used to obtain political knowledge most frequently during political activities, among other things. Kirigha, Mukhongo, and Masinde (2016) found that Facebook is the preferred platform for educated urban youth seeking political news and information. Users perceived social media as a safe space where they could freely express their political views without fear of repercussions (Kirigha et.al, 2016). As a result, the authors found that there is a positive relationship between youth social media usage and political engagement, implying that youth who use social media are more likely to become politically involved. Omotayo and Folorunso (2020) explored the level of political engagement through social media among youths in Oyo State, Nigeria. The findings of this study contribute to our understanding of how and why social media use will function in motivating citizens to participate in political activities, which is especially relevant in the context of media's increasing popularity and penetration and the way it influences people's lives. The social media informed the basis of political information with 360 respondents indicating such. The finding is congruent with the study of Ogbemudia, Clement, and Ajibola (2021) where the authors draw the conclusion that the use of social media can be beneficial and very successful for young mobilisation

in election campaigns. Keating and Melis (2017) looked at how often young individuals participate in "traditional" forms of political participation (such as discussing politics or following campaigns) on social media. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube becoming popular means of interaction as supported by Table 58 wherein Whatsapp takes the lead. In the same manner was Facebook argued for (Dagona, Karick and Abubakar, 2013; Oyesomi, Ahmadu and Itsekor, 2014; Omotayo and Folorunso, 2020). WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter and Yahoo followed in that order (Omotayo and Folorunso, 2020).

Onyechi (2018) looked at how students at the University of Ibadan used social media and how active they were in the 2015 Nigerian election cycle. The authors concluded that social media provides the students with an open forum in which they meet and network with other youth, and in turn become involved in politics. Students have the opportunity to network with peers from all over the world and all corners of the country through the use of social media, opening up a forum for the discussion of political problems. Students' interest and participation in politics might be sparked through online contacts with their classmates. Through their online communities, they can learn more about current political events, issues, and campaigns. Informally participating in politics through social media might include things like having conversations, sharing political content, and joining digital campaigns. For some students, this may be the impetus they need to get involved in politics. The statement implies that social media empowers students to have a voice in political discussions and enables them to engage in the political process, even if they are not of voting age yet. Students can use social media to organise and mobilise their peers to address specific political concerns or causes, providing a forum for youth-led political activities. There is evidence to show that students' participation in political activities and

conversations is influenced by their use of social media. It's a great example of how social media can inspire and involve young people in politics. Schafer's (2015) position that digital public sphere is a space provided by different social media platforms where people of different backgrounds to meet, discuss, voice their opinions freely, and exchange ideas just as they would in face-to-face settings, without repercussion is supported by Tables 58 and 32. Summarily, the result can be interpreted that majority of the respondents believed political messaging via social media is useful. The findings are in consonance with the finding of Ogbemudia, Clement, and (2021) that looked at the efficacy of social media platforms like Facebook and the instant messaging service WhatsApp as instruments for getting youth involved in politics. The authors draw the conclusion that the use of social media is beneficial and very successful for young mobilisation in election campaigns. The middle ground effect by Kalsnes (2016) on the difference between the cyber optimists and pessimists are very connected to Tables 30 (volunteering to help during political campaigns), 31(Online campaign as activities during election campaigns) and 41 (reliability establishment as reason for reading newspapers of choice). These are in line with allowing individuals to learn all about politics at their own pace, and more importantly, politicians use it to communicate with prospective voters by (Loader and Mercea, 2011; Halpern and Gibbs, 2013; Postill, 2018; Gray and Gutierrez-Mannix, 2021).

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENATIONS

### 8.1 Summary

With the rise of social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, people now have more opportunities than ever to connect with one another and share ideas and opinions. Digital technologies are being embraced by politicians and voters alike as a means of swaying votes, especially among politically apathetic youth and young adults. In addition, there is data to support the claim that it drives current political discourse. The academic discourse on the impact of social media on political communication has yielded two primary schools of thought. The first school of thought is made up of "cyber optimists," who believe that the proliferation of political discourse on social media will strengthen democracy. However, the second school of thought, made up of cyber pessimists, argues that social media sites lack the power to effect political change. The "middle ground," on the other hand, involves recognising the significance of social media and technology in the current world and using these tools, along with others in the areas of politics and culture, to bring about constructive social change.

Many Nigerian scholars have studied the issue of youth political involvement, and their conclusions corroborate those from throughout the world: we need more youth to become involved in politics if we want democracy to continue. Accordingly, three main lenses have been used to study youth's involvement in politics. It has been argued that young Nigerians were already active in politics before the country was colonised. Another school of thought contends that youth in Nigeria have lost interest



in and participation in politics since colonialism. Finally, some scholars argue that thanks in large part to social media, there has been a rise in involvement in Nigeria since 2015.

In fact, it has been argued that citizens' active engagement in the political process is crucial in the modern world. An indicator of this is the rapid evolution, over the last decade, of conventional methods of civic engagement. Youth's political participation leads to increased physical civic engagement because it instils in them a sense of civic responsibility and provides them with the tools to carry it out. Youth need to be politically active so that they may be prepared to take on leadership responsibilities in their own countries when the time comes. The young, however, have been "singled out" as a troublesome category, showing low levels of voting participation. In comparison to other generations, today's youth are less engaged in society, and particularly in politics. Meanwhile, some scholars contend that youth are still politically engaged, although in unique ways, such as via online political involvement. Also, these unconventional strategies often include actions like online activism, community service, consumer politics, and demonstrations. This, according to several scholars, is because older methods of involvement don't adequately address the problems that young cultures face. As a result, it has been supplanted by more recent forms of democratic engagement driven by contemporary concerns and niche interests.

The rise of social media has also changed the status quo by giving more individuals a platform to air their political views and rally support from others. The social media are offering a forum for voice and mobilisation for historically marginalised populations disenfranchised due to the elite control of the conventional media. Youth's participation in politics around the world has sparked conversations on

a variety of factors, including the urban-rural divide. Hence this study which investigated youth political participation in urban and rural areas in Nigeria

The quantitative survey research was adopted for selection of respondents in both rural and urban of Nigeria. One thousand youth were selected from the rural and urban area, (500 were representative of youth living in urban areas, while the remaining 500 were representative of youth living in rural areas using a multistage sampling.

Results indicated that both urban and rural youngsters had admirable political interest. It was found that both rural and urban teenagers were interested in the political events taking place in the nation and took part in a variety of political discourses that satiated their cognitive demand for knowledge. Findings, however, showed a gap in youth's understanding of political engagement, favouring youth in urban areas. As shown, youth in urban regions have higher levels of knowledge than those in rural areas. One explanation is that youth in metropolitan regions have easier access to information than those in rural areas. The "digital divide" theory is relevant in this situation since social media and other digital sources account for most of the informational consumption.

Finally, research showed a considerable difference in the political attitudes of young Nigerian people living in urban and rural regions. As indicated, despite being more conservative in orientation, dissatisfied with the way democracy is working in their country, and being less likely to trust the political system, youth who live in rural areas are noticeably more likely to participate in the political system, particularly by voting.

## 8.2 Conclusion and Recommendations

Youth political participation in Nigeria is an important topic as it has a significant impact on the country's political landscape. In urban areas, youth tend to have more internet usage and have more opportunities to engage in the online political process. Additionally, urban areas tend to have a higher concentration of educational institutions which provide youth with the skills and knowledge necessary to participate in the political process. In contrast, youth in rural areas tend to have less online presence and the data analysed above has shockingly shown they are more politically active. Though there remains a lack of resources and infrastructure in rural areas such as schools and universities, civic organizations, and internet access; this has not deterred them from participating in politics. Additionally, traditional cultural norms that limit political engagement for women may be more prevalent in rural areas, which can further limit the participation of female youths in political activities. The contemporary period of online activism may be considered a primary explanation for why youth in urban regions seem to- and have been acclaimed as- more politically involved than their rural counterparts; but the data disagrees with this claim. Nevertheless, the digital gap that separates these two sets of young adult needs to be bridged. This study also reveals that factors such as education, income, and access to resources and opportunities play a significant role in shaping political attitudes and behaviours among Nigerian youths. However, in the case of rural areas, these factors are often limited, which can affect the level of political education and participation among youth in these areas. To combat the above challenges, this study suggests the need for job creation in Nigeria particularly among youths. The government should be devoted in creating new jobs for their young adult citizens, empowering those already self-employed and

those who would want to start businesses would further ensure more people are gainfully employed.

Findings reveal that both urban and rural youth exhibit praiseworthy interest in politics, suggesting that serious effort should be aimed toward maintaining and preserving the level of interest among youth in politics. Some of the problems that lead to youth disinterest in politics may be alleviated if all relevant sectors, at all levels of government, worked together to help youth. The responses cite- corruption, lack of voter's card, political bullying, violence, tribalism etc (see tables 19 and 67). This could be accomplished by a combination of sector-specific policies e.g., eradicating laws that stop women from political participation, and integrated youth initiatives. Young adults' involvement in the planning, execution, monitoring, and evaluation of tools, strategies, and programmes may help sustain and grow this enthusiasm. The Nigerian police can be sensitized to care for the citizens and curb election violence. The Nigerian government should also invest in functional technological infrastructure like working electronic card readers. Technology has come to stay in the world and Nigeria would benefit from a technological upgrade.

Based on the results of this research, which reveal that youth in urban regions have a greater degree of awareness about political engagement than youth in rural areas, it is important to make an active effort to mobilise youth for voluntary participation in politics. Nigerian youths need to exhaust the already established routes of talking to others, talking to friends, building interest, volunteering, voting, and sticking with certain parties. Additionally, we need to be open to the possibility that there is a middle possibility, a "middle ground," between cyber optimists and pessimists. The "middle ground" would include accepting the need for contemporary

technology and social media and using them, together with other resources in the fields of politics and culture, to bring about beneficial social change.

Based on the tenets of Afrokology, this study recommends politicians and political enthusiasts are encouraged to embrace a multi-media approach to mobilising youths, who constitute most of the population, towards politics, in view of the obvious differences and preferences in media use between the rural and urban populations. Findings show that youths in rural areas rely heavily on newspaper as a vehicle for mass information, mass education, mass sensitization, and mass mobilization. A possible reason could be the cost advantage that newspaper has over other channels as it is quite affordable. As explained in chapter one of this research, recent years has seen political communication targeted at the youths moved to social media but responses from RQ2, the population of youths who dwell in rural areas in Nigeria would not be politically educated if all efforts at political communication are done via social media. The idea that youths do not read the newspapers as seen in Delli Carpini (2000) is an Americanized concept and does not apply to Nigerian youths. On the other hand, according to the findings of this study, the youth of urban areas are susceptible to social media, which has gained more popularity and penetration in recent times. Hence, to ensure a comprehensive and more balanced approach to the political mobilisation of youths, a multi-media approach suffices. In this case, all forms of media should be adopted in political communication aimed at improving the level of political participation among Nigerian youths.

The researcher believes that the application of any of the above suggestions, would cause Nigeria to achieve its aim of increased young adults' participation in politics that would lead to increased voting, guarantying a continued democratic rule in the country.

## 8.3 Limitations of the study

1. Because political interests can be influenced by distinct local and national contexts, the findings of this study may not be generalisable to other countries or areas.
2. The study appears to be entirely quantitative in nature. Interviews questions that provide qualitative data could provide a more in-depth understanding of the factors influencing youth's political involvement.
3. The conclusions are based on self-reported data, which may not always be totally honest regarding respondents' level of interest in politics. Some respondents may overstate or underestimate their interest for a variety of reasons, affecting the accuracy of the results.
4. The rural respondents gave short response when asked open ended questions while respondents who live in urban areas expanded more on their responses, making the data analysis and discussion sometimes seem more favourable to urban dwellers. For example, direct quotes were lifted to showcase the strong beliefs of urban dwellers and sadly this was not possible for the analysis of the responses received from youths' swelling in the rural areas. Table two is a great example of this- urban respondents gave so many responses to the questions asked, the researcher had to group the responses into themes; that was not possible using the responses from those in rural areas.



# APPENDIX I

## INFORMED CONSENT

Hi,

I'm Azubuike Chidinma Chidubem, a Doctoral Researcher at Northumbria University, Newcastle. I am conducting a piece of research titled "***Youth Participation in Politics: A Comparison of Nigerian Youths Resident in Rural and Urban Areas***".

The research aims to understand how Nigerian youths chose to participate in politics. To achieve this aim, I need your assistance.

Kindly answer the questionnaire below. I designed the questionnaire to be short and straight to the point. It would take you about 25 minutes to complete. I implore you to be patient and give your honest response to aid me achieve my goal. Please note, your acceptance to continue with the questionnaire is your consent.

Thank you for participating in my survey.

Azubuike Chidubem Chidinma

# APPENDIX II

## QUESTIONNAIRE

**PLEASE TICK THIS BOX TO SHOW YOU CONSENT FOR YOUR RESPONSES TO BE USED FOR MY PHD**

### **PART 1- DEMOGRAPHICS**

1) How old are you?

16-20

21-25

26-29

30-35

2) What is your Gender

Male

Female

3) What is your state of origin?

4) Where do you reside?

5) What's your religion?

Christian

Muslim

Other religion.....

6) What is your highest academic qualification so far (what level of education are you in currently)?

No formal education (never been to school)

Primary school leaving certificate

WAEC or NECO (Secondary school)

HND/OND/BA/BSc (University level)

Msc/Phd (Graduate School)



7) What do you do currently?

Unemployed (Job seeker)

Employed

Self Employed (Businessman or woman)

8) How much Naira do you earn monthly?

1,000- 10,000

10,000-50,000

51,000-100,000

110,000 and above

## **PART 2- KNOWLEDGE AND INTEREST IN POLITICS**

9) Are you interested in or care about politics?

Very interested

Somewhat Interested

Neither interested nor uninterested

Not very interested

Not at all interested

10) How knowledgeable are you about politics?

Very knowledgeable

Somewhat Knowledgeable

Neither knowledgeable nor ignorant

Not very knowledgeable

Not at all knowledgeable

11) Which of these do you use most often to find out about politics?

Radio

Television

Newspapers

Social media

Friends, relatives, work colleagues

Others (please state)

12) Do you talk to other young people about politics?

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

13) Are you politically active?

Very active

Somewhat Active

Neither active nor inactive

Not very active

Not at all active

14) What stops you from being politically active?

I don't care about politics

I don't understand politics

Politics causes a lot of conflicts

I do not have the time

There is no point as nothing changes

I think politics is not for people like me

Others (please state)

15) How does not being politically active make you feel?

Guilty

Worried

I don't care

Not applicable (I am not politically active)

***To what extent do you agree with the below statements***

16) Nigerian politics is just for men?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

17) Nigerian politics is only for older people?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

18) Nigerian politics is only for the wealthy people?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

19) What issues and problems do you think that young people in Nigeria face? Please list them all.....

20) Do you think the issues you listed above are given attention by the political elites and political leaders in Nigeria? Yes/No

20b) If no, why not?

**PART 3- POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

21) Do you vote?

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

22) At the last Presidential election what party did you vote for?

22b) Why did you vote for this party?

23) Do you vote in every election?

Yes

No

Other (please specify)

23b) If you don't vote in every election, why not?

24) Do you switch between parties or usually vote for same party?

I switch between parties

I vote same party always

25) Which of the following affects why you vote and who you vote for? Please tick all that apply

- Your personal Ideologies
- Candidate's policies and manifestoes
- Candidate's personality
- Religion
- Ethnicity
- Zoning (***Zoning is a political practice in Nigeria under which political parties agree to split their presidential and vice-presidential candidates between the north and south of the country and also to alternate the home area of the president between the north and south of the country***)
- Other

26) Are you a member of a political party?

Yes

No

26b) What political party are you a member of? PLEASE STATE

27) How active are you in your chosen political party?

Very active

Somewhat Active

Neither active nor inactive

Not very active

Not at all active

28) Do you volunteer to help during election campaigns?

Yes

No

29) What do you usually do to help the campaigns? *For example- Organise meetings, get out the vote, canvassing, etc.* **Please list all you do to help**

30) What other political activities do you engage with? *For example- Volunteer with political campaigns, send letters, organise rallies, outreach with other young people, other.* **Please list all you do to engage in politics**

30b) Where do you undertake these political activities?

At work

School

In the workplace,

On the street,

Within my family and relatives

Others (please state)

31) How much time a week do you spend on political activities?

20+ hours

11-20 hours

10-5 hours

4-1 hours

Less than 1 hour

None

32) Have you been contacted by political campaigns during an election?

Yes

No

33) How were you contacted?

In person

Call

Email

Text

Facebook

Instagram

Twitter

I have not been contacted

Other

33b) Which election?

Presidential

Governorship

Senate/House of Reps

Other

34) What do you think of political messaging during election campaigns? For example, do you find it- useful, confusing, etc. Kindly give details

#### **PART 4- MEDIA CONSUMPTION**

35) How often do you read the newspaper?

Every day

Most days

Once a week

A few times a month

Once a month

Less than once a month

Never

36) What newspaper do you read often and why?

37) How often do you watch television?

Every day

Most days

Once a week

A few times a month

Once a month

Less than once a month

Never

38) What kind of television programs do you watch?

39) How often do you listen to the radio?

Every day

Most days

Once a week

A few times a month

Once a month

Less than once a month

Never

40) What radio station do you listen to and why?

41) Do you trust the news you hear from the media?

Yes

No

42) Are you able to detect fake news?

Yes

No

42b) If yes, how are you able to detect fake news?

43) Do you pay attention to political aspects of the news or do you ignore it?

Pay attention

Ignore

Other

**Can I please take your name, email address, and phone number so I can contact you if I need to ask further questions about the responses you have given?**

Name.....

Email.....

Phone Number.....



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