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Twitter and Millennial Participation in Voting During Nigeria's 2015 Presidential Elections

Deborah Zoaka

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

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by

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MPA Walden University, 2013

B.Sc. Maiduguri University, 1989

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

May, 2021

Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological research explored the significance of Twitter in Nigeria's media ecology within the context of its capabilities to influence the millennial generation to participate in voting during the 2015 presidential election. Millennial participation in voting has been abysmally low since 1999, when democratic governance was restored in Nigeria after 26 years of military rule, constituting a grave threat to democratic consolidation and electoral legitimacy. The study was sited within the theoretical framework of Democratic participant theory and the uses and gratifications theory. It argues that Twitter is a digital equivalence of Habermas' conceptualization of the public sphere and that Twitter account holders are sentient, active, value-optimizing media users that seek to gratify communicative and psychosocial needs. The study acknowledges the inherent capabilities of Twitter as an electronic platform for multidimensional communication to foster social change, political education and engagement, civic discourses, and voter mobilization. This study adopted individual telephone and video interviews as scientific methodology for data gathering, which were conducted with selected media professionals and youth graduates of tertiary institutions in all the geopolitical regions of Nigeria.

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Dedication

This research work is dedicated to God Almighty, for supplying all my needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. It is also dedicated to the blessed memory of my late father, Ahmadu Diwa, and to my beloved mother, Kwamting Dauzen Jitau Mari Chetha Zoaka, who trained me in the way I should go. This research paper is also dedicated to my dear husband and closest friend, Dauda Birma Zoaka, for his unconditional love and support at all times. As always, you presented yourself to me during this program as a fountain of wisdom and a moral pillar. Your knowledge and encouragement enabled me to attain this lofty academic height.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

As an engaging area of academic research, participation of millennials in voting is evolving at an amazing level. Many recent studies indicated a decline in the traditional form of political participation, especially among the millennial generation in democracies across the world. According to many of these reports, this may result in a bleak future for many democracies. Traditional media (radio, television, and newspaper) no longer inspire millennials in many countries. While traditional participation in politics is declining amongst the millennial generation, findings from other studies suggested that there is a sudden rise in their engagement in political activities driven by the use of social media platforms like Twitter. These new media platforms make it easy for them to access information and interact directly with political candidates.

This study specifically focused on investigating and analyzing Twitter and the participation of millennials in voting during elections at the national level. Voting is a major activity for any democracy since governments are formed by securing enough votes cast by legitimate voters during elections (Gong & Lips, 2009; The National Conference on Citizenship, 2006; The Hansard Society, 2005). Politicians must convince more numbers of the electorate to vote for them. The canvassing for votes during electioneering campaigns by political parties and their candidates therefore is a critical activity. These campaigns are often referred to as advocacy, or as marketing propaganda, or marketing for the purpose of vote maximization (Anstead & Chadwick, 2008; Ward et al., 2008; Hill, 2009).

Various studies indicated that there has been a progressive decline in these types of political participation, particularly among the millennial generation (Andolina & Jenkins, 2002). Over the years, scholars have shown concern by investigating the reasons behind millennial participation or non-participation in political activities (Thun, 2014). These concerns are more apparent in countries characterized by a decline in the participation of millennials in political activities (Milner, 2008). As such, a study to reveal the impact of millennial voting through Twitter during the 2015 Nigeria nationwide elections to ascertain how it affects the entire electoral system, as well as assess the contributions of millennials towards online voting in Nigeria, is pertinent.

Political participation includes joining civic societies and political groups, interacting with politicians, voter's education, mobilization of the electorate, voting, signing online petitions, and participating in campaigns (Tang & Lee, 2013). These types of political activities are the foundation of a successful democracy (McManimon, 2014). Millennials, as studies have revealed, are not interested in participating in politics, are not actively involved in democratic processes (Dahlgren, 2009), and do not trust representative institutions and politicians (Blais & Loewen, 2009). Millennials' declining participation in political activities has become a serious concern to many democracies (Skoric & Poor, 2013) and needs to be addressed.

The background of the study is provided in the first chapter. Also provided is a summary of the significant literature and the presentation of a problem and purpose statement. The research question, theoretical framework for the study, nature of the study, and contributions of the study towards positive social change are also provided in the first

chapter. The first chapter is concluded with a summary and transition into the next chapter.

Background of the Study

Nigeria is Africa's largest democratic state with a population of close to 200 million people consisting of 342 tribes or ethno-linguistic groups and a democracy which is nascent and unstable (Campbell, 2014; Olumide & Ekanade, 2011; Mahmud, 2015). Among the many reasons for this instability are long periods of military rule, weak public institutions, electoral malpractices, and ethno-religious crises. The regional-religious divide creates a regional character for elections in Nigeria, pitching the so-called Christian South against a Muslim North (Campbell, 2014). Mutual suspicion and mistrust among the three dominant tribes, most notably the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo, has been a major factor during and after elections (Omodia, 2012; Salawu & Hassan, 2011). The perennial failure of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct free, fair, and credible elections has also become a major reason for political and electoral tension in Nigeria.

From a modest 200,000 users in 2000, the internet and social media use in Nigeria has grown significantly in 2015. There is a growing population who go online with smart phones. The deployment of social media platforms for elections purposes initially became noticeable in the period leading up to the 2011 Nigerian elections. There is increasing attention given to social media for its role in educating, engaging, and empowering the people. The internet has brought significant changes to 21st century mass media. The internet has made it possible to access a broad scope of information at a high speed and

low cost. This has made information accessible to more people across a wider demographic. As a result, there is more egalitarian access to the production and the consumption of news (Prat & Stromberg, 2011).

The role of social media in influencing the fairness of the 2015 presidential election of Muhammadu Buhari has been hailed internationally. The historical transfer of power in 2015 in Nigeria was achieved through social media, which had a major influence on the fairness of the election. Social media allowed for greater participation and immediacy. News and information surrounding the elections were provided for the first time in the history of Nigeria's electoral process. Such media aided voters' sense of empowerment and ability to share information easily. Social media platforms complemented the roles of traditional media to share information with the people. People are becoming more interconnected through the internet; Facebook launched internet.org, an initiative that provides global access to the most remote parts of society. Political movements use social media as a recruitment tool. Rather than getting brand messages via traditional medias' one-way communication systems, social media allows for recommendations in the form of re-shares, thus de-commercializing political messaging. It is that space which uses different tools to help raise the voices of average Nigerians. Social media played a significant role in what was arguably the most competitive election process in Nigerian history.

The growth of information and communication technology is constantly bringing different interactive platforms to the people. These platforms are providing opportunities for sharing information across societies, which, in turn, have the capability to effect

change on an individual's behavior, decision-making, and judgment (CES, 2012). By their very interactive nature, social media platforms are using user-produced content to build and maintain different kinds of relationships.

According to Eugene (2015), there is a growing popularity in the use of social media to get news about every aspect of life. A 2014 study showed that about 62% of internet users depend on Facebook for political news and information. This allows for information, whether true or false, to spread quickly and easily, especially among peer networks and across demographics. Many social media sites are enhancing participation in political activities at different levels by uniting like-minded people while reminding users to vote in elections and analyzing users' political affiliation data to match cultural similarities and differences. The impacts of social media on the creation of social and political relationships are profound. Social media will continue to grow as a hub where cultural perceptions and political affiliations are formed. As social media increases in popularity and scope, its social benefits for voters cannot be underestimated as it provides the platform for everyone to communicate and make decisions on social, cultural, and political issues in the world today.

Social media has become a powerful medium for behavior change including political engagement and decision-making. Social media allows for the cheap production of, and easy access to, information from any part of the world in a very short time and without editorial filtering (Sunstein, 2001). When disseminated properly and purposely, political information on social media can have an immensely positive result on political campaigns. Along with presenting political parties' platforms and candidates, social

media also allows prospective voters from across demographics a space to interact with one another. As such, open forums on social media can have positive or negative effects in the political sphere. Some politicians have made the mistake of using open forums to reach large audiences without considering other factors that include the fact that not every member can be trusted with information that their political opponents could use against them. Without control over the comments being posted, negative comments may damage a campaign.

Today, the world has shrunk to become a global village, thanks to social media. With the quick transfer of information, the world keeps getting smaller, acquaintances are being built and maintained, and perceptions are changing very fast (Friedman, 2007). Due to the easy access to social media, nearly every political party in Nigeria used it in campaigning and advancing its plans, sending messages and manifestos to prospective voters through advertising, fund raising, party mobilization, and campaign organizing in all 36 states of the federation. Would-be voters were informed on Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter in particular on each political party's candidate's views on national issues. The information found in social media helped voters to understand the dynamics of elections so that many voters who had been fixated on voting for a particular party or candidate began to free their minds and vote for others. Information received by a particular voter was also not static, as those who received information were quick to share through the other platforms, even without trying to verify the source and authenticity of the information.

Problem Statement

Voter apathy increased following the introduction of multi-party democracy in Nigeria in 1999 due to failures in the electoral processes. These failures and their consequences negatively affected the quality of political leadership. Voter turnout is declining due to violence in Nigeria (Collier & Vicente, 2014). Available data from the INEC showed that voter turnout is declining in Nigeria (Agaigbe, 2016).

This study filled the gap in understanding how Nigerian millennials were mobilized to participate in the 2015 presidential elections using Twitter as a major tool. The study was premised on the fact that Twitter shares many of Jurgen Habermas' characterizations of the public sphere that promotes the norms and networks that facilitate democratic actions (Habermas, 1962; Okoro & Diri, 2009).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative research was to examine how Twitter, a social media site that connects large numbers of people to share their views through tweets and retweets, defined millennial participation in voting during the Nigeria's 2015 presidential election, thereby addressing the problem of voter apathy. The findings assisted in developing strategies for effective campaigning, voting, and election of properly selected productive candidates into various positions in government offices. This study has the potential to improve the quality of elections as well as promote the victory of preferred candidates, especially at the national level. The findings may also reduce election malpractices such as fraud and the imposition of revolving candidates on citizens. I applied the qualitative method to examine how Nigerian youths in the north central

geopolitical zone used Twitter to foster voter education and mobilization during the presidential election of 2015.

Research Question

This basic qualitative inquiry was aimed at discovering how Twitter involved millennials and positively affected the election process at the 2015 national elections in Nigeria. The study was guided by the central research question: In what ways did Twitter as a social media platform define participation of millennials in promoting voter turnout and addressing voter apathy in Nigeria's 2015 presidential election?

Theoretical Foundation

This study was conducted within the theoretical frameworks of the democratic-participant theory and the uses and gratification theory (UGT). The media, according to the politico-media philosophy democratic-participant theory, entails allowing equal access to all stakeholders (Johnson, D. W & Johnson, 2013). One of the propositions of the theory, which in itself is an adaptation of the social responsibility theory, is that the media should share information on divergent views and opinions of individuals and political groupings irrespective of whether they align with popular opinions of the government in power or not. The theory underpins the significance of equality of access to the media despite the socio-economic status of citizens, while the democratic participation theory postulates that participation in good governance and cultural revitalization should not be the exclusive preserve of the elite, but inclusive of grassroots (Baran & Davis, 2012).

The UGT provides an in-depth explanation of the rationale for using media. Media contents do not have a universal appeal and uniform effect, hence, people mindful of their needs selectively accept some media programs and refuse others. As a reaction to this philosophical concept, the media, according to the hypodermic needle effect theory of the media, has an all-powerful effect on its audience (Johnson & Johnson, 2013). The theory provides that the consumer possesses the power to determine what media they consume, with the assumption that the consumer has a clear intent. This contends with the mass society theory that presents individuals as vulnerable and powerless, victims of online networking sites that are produced by big companies and industries, and the individual differences in perspectives that deduce intelligence and self-esteem above all, influences people's choice of a particular social media. My study used this theory to show how individuals make their decisions to vote for candidates based on their personal choices, resulting from the experiences from the election campaigns through twitter.

Nature of the Study

The study was a basic qualitative inquiry study (Elo et al., 2014). Individual interviews were conducted for bloggers and youths that fell into the millennial category and who participated in the 2015 presidential election process. Interviews were conducted for students in two tertiary institutions in the north central geopolitical region of Nigeria. Secondary data from various sources and documents from online groups, Twitter, and relevant online archives were examined. Additionally, relevant campaign messages online were examined. Because qualitative research is useful in exploring and gaining understanding of people's behavior, it was ideal for this study (Creswell, 2013). I sought

to establish how Twitter determined voters' mobilization, electioneering, and youth participation in Nigeria's 2015 presidential election.

Definitions

Political participation: Behavior that could affect government actions through various activities, either directly by influencing the creation or implementation of policies or indirectly by influencing the political leaders that make those policies (Yamamoto, 2014, as cited in Verba et al., 1995, p. 883).

Political Knowledge: The political information stored in one's long-term memory (Delli, Carpini and Keeter, 1996).

Political Efficacy: The belief that political and social change is possible and that the individual citizen represents a pivotal part of this change (Campbell, Gurin, and Miller, 54: 187 in Zhang and Duke, 2010:81). It encompasses two dimensions: internal and external efficacies.

Political Discussions: Conversations with political content that take place between the non-elite members of a political community (Schmitt-Beck, 2008 in Valenzuela et al., 2011: 3).

Millennial: Young people of today (born in the later part of the century), characterized as digital natives (Tapscott, 2009), wired (Sutherland & Thompson, 2003), and technologically savvy (Huntley, 2006).

Awareness: The ability to perceive events, objects, thoughts, emotions, or sensory patterns.

Election: The formal process of selecting a person for public office or of accepting or rejecting a political proposition by voting.

Facebook: An online social networking service that enables users to share and send pictures and other multimedia items.

General Election: An election in which all or most members of a given political body are chosen.

Internet: An interconnected group of computer networks allowing for electronic communication.

Social Media: Computer-mediated tools that allow people to create and exchange information, ideas, and pictures/videos in virtual communities and online networks.

Social Network: A structure made up of a set of social actors (such as individuals or organizations) and a set of the dyadic ties between these actors.

Twitter: An online social networking service that enables users to send and read short 140-character messages called “tweets.”

Assumptions

The first assumption for this study relates to the bloggers on social media who promote candidates and highlight their qualities on various online media platforms. The assumption holds that media engagements and the promotion of political candidates allow voters to choose their ideal candidates through images that portray positive social change in form of pledges to reform the society (through education, training, and provision of social benefits) if they are elected. The assumption provides the benefit for

voters across all levels of social status to make this decision without interferences for stronger forces.

The second assumption relates to the online amplifiers who disseminate information on behalf of candidates on social media by retweeting information to their followers via tweeter handles, and through paid advertisements, to solicit for supporters for their preferred candidates. It is assumed that decisions on who to vote for depend on the strength of the messages being retweeted. The last assumption is that active tweeter-voting advocates work with numbers and have strategies to multiply their followers through Twitter-based communication.

Scope and Delimitations

Delimitations develop through scope limitations and decisions made during research designs (Simon & Goes, 2013). The first stage in the process of delimitation consists of identifying a particular problem, not minding the several other challenges associated with the application of online voting solicitations. Transferability was achieved during the research design through careful restrictions of the study's population (Rudestam & Newton, 2014). This study focused on the strategies online bloggers and Twitter handlers applied to gain voter support for particular candidates. The interest in exploring this voting process is as a result of the role it plays in the inclusion of millennials in the voting process due to its benefits to youths, as against participation of youths before the twitter experience.

Limitations

Being a novice researcher, this research enabled me improve my data collection and analysis skills with a view towards achieving good results in the data collection, analysis, and interpretation process. A major limitation during data collection was getting serious and intellectually driven information from online sources, as Nigerians are in the habit of being irrational and offensive while communicating on social media. Rather than having mature and productive discussions, most of them engage in wars of words.

Since accounts may be hacked or created by election touts to boost imaginary followership and attract potential voters to sites that are rich in followers, information from fake accounts may decrease the credibility of my study's results. The level of researcher interface with participants involved with the study may also have posed a limitation concern. Because election opponents are usually aggressive towards each other, and at times allow ethnic and religious differences to set in, the educational status, psychological balance, as well as language barrier was a challenge. This issue created a little difficulty in accessing precise details or expressions as originally intended, by the participant. However, more effort was put in by the researcher to gain clear understanding of the issues discussed with participants.

Though participant rapport and trust building in order to guaranty detailed and genuine responses during data collection is important, credibility in qualitative research, suitable researcher engagement, active observation methods, and open auditing processes were also required. To prevent this limitation, the researcher must advance a transparent

audit stream to indicate steps taken in data collecting to confirm its quality using controls measures such as committee member checking and peer review.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study corresponds to the positive social change that can be derived from understanding millennial participation in voting through Twitter . It is my hope that the findings of this study will develop strategic ways of coordinating voter support and campaigning, to provide the actual characters of candidates as well as their election proposals to the public in a way that the voter's choice of candidate is not manipulated by their party or the agents of the party. This can be achieved by developing software to independently access the verified profile of candidates through supervised means, education, and enlightenment of voters across the country. The study was aimed at developing ways through which the Electoral Commission may present the best candidates for election, without interference from political touts and vendors. It was also aimed at enabling voters to exercise their rights to vote and attract voters who had lost interest in participating in this important national duty because of past antecedents that brought candidates into office through illicit means (Onapajo, 2014).

Significance to Practice

Several studies on the use of social media to enhance election processes have been carried out, but little has been done specifically on the use of Twitter by millennials and how it enhances elections in Nigeria. West (2011) maintained that social media application during voting changes information delivery, business, online content, news coverage, and the manner in which prospective voters view new developments. The

actual and tedious part of the job is done before the day of the election. Promoters of candidates apply various strategies to ensure massive support is gained for their candidates to win the election.

Though current research in online voting system has focused on the motives and benefits to voters, and has provided learning opportunities for concerned agents and organizations to take part in the available knowledge offered by the study, this research advanced ways to improve the development of specifically defined roles and responsibilities for engagement, by the concerned stakeholders. The significance of this study to practice therefore was in providing the tools for cooperation among stakeholders and a better understanding of their specific roles and responsibilities in the provision of decent strategies to gain voter support and transform this support numerically to elect candidates of choice.

Significance to Theory

Notwithstanding the repercussion of electing candidates who are not credible, political parties and touts do all they can to enable their clients to win elections. This study was the first to explore the phenomenon of Twitter voting involving millennials using the democratic-participant and UGT theories. I aimed to gain the interest of millennial voters through various strategies, using Twitter and other social media platforms to select credible voters without interference from the media or political agents. The application of the two theories allows voters to exercise their powers to vote for candidates of their choice based on the powers of online media, which provides privacy and other benefits for the voter's discretion. Other media outside online platforms allow

for external control such as paying for votes and voter intimidation, which has had grievous effects on millennials and can cause citizens to discontinue participation in political voting processes. This study, therefore, is significant to theory, as it highlights the importance of knowledge through enlightenment and policies that back the two theories applied.

Significance to Social Change

Conventional voting in Nigeria has had a negative effect on the entire country, especially for millennials who are edged out of the voting process by touts and unethical practices. Situations like this ensures that candidates with some form of influence are voted in through any possible means that guarantees their entry into government. Many youths and many well-meaning Nigerians decide to stay away from politics as well as the voting itself, as the entire process has become violent. At polling centers, voters are often pressured to cast their votes for selected candidates by political touts. In some cases, votes are sold to the candidate with the highest bid. In such cases, the candidate with the best intentions and experience may not be voted in.

Social media offers a somewhat discreet online campaign to solicit support for candidates and distribute platform information. Participants willingly engage in this cultural practice. Since youths are the most active users of social media platforms, and they have the ability to disseminate information through their wide network of friends and contacts, driving a positive political campaign via these means will reach out to the millennial generation and changing their orientation towards politics, elections, and voting. An intellectual revolution to transform the political arena in the nation can

therefore begin with educating the youths and empowering them with knowledge to create positive change in society by understanding the power of the media, their rights within the social media circle, and their collaborative power to elect credible candidates.

Summary and Transition

This study explored voting by millennials using Twitter. Its intention was to see how it has worked for the nation and improved the quality and strength of voting through online soliciting as well as the benefits derived from online media voting. The study identified ways through which millennial voting can be encouraged and developed. This will encourage voting and produce quality candidates to improve the economy and society at large.

The findings from the study defined the specific role of stakeholders in ensuring that online methods of voting are developed and applied to the election process in Nigeria. It identified challenges faced by youths in the conventional election process in Nigeria. It will suggest recommendations for further development of strategies and operations aimed at promoting millennial participation in voting via Twitter and other online platforms that will bring about positive social change in Nigeria. The second chapter will comprise my literature review and justification for the use of the democratic-participant and UGT theories before providing details about the stakeholders' role in the development and implementation of new strategies to encourage millennial participation in voting via Twitter. Chapter 2 will show the problems that have mired Nigeria from effectively tackling the challenges of election malpractices and imposing candidates on citizens. It will also give reasons why election touting seems to be growing rather than

disappearing. Consequences of negative political actions on youths and the nation at large will also be pointed out. I will be reviewing the lack of empirical research available in the area of strategic planning and development in the online voting process, and how the use of political touts and the powers of the government (for incumbent office holders) have negatively affected young Nigerian voters. The chapter will end by summarizing the role of stakeholders in managing electoral challenges through strategies.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Social media is developing at such a quick pace that those who do not catch up quickly are left behind. It has influenced how people source information from what seems to be growing into limitless resources. Social media links individuals who share common interests and provides them with platforms where they can share and discuss ideas (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2012). Social media has had major effects on nearly every aspect of human lives. This is particularly evident in fields such as advertising, public relations, communications, and political communication (Husain et al., 2014). Recently, social media has been particularly effective in politics as social networking site (Facebook) and microblogging services (Twitter). Facebook and Twitter are seen to have greatly impacted political participation, especially among those who traditional media could not engage in the past (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2012). The millennial generation has been less interested in traditional media; numerous studies suggest that they are less focused on traditional aspects of politics such as voting, donating, volunteering, protesting, and campaigning in comparison to older citizens (Bauerlein, 2008; Mindich, 2005; Wattenberg, 2007).

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the current research and theoretical concepts within the field of media use and youth participation in politics. Following a brief description of the Nigerian presidential election of 2015, the section discusses the role social media played and how much it influenced political participation of the millennial (Generation Y). The section also discusses millennial political behavior

and factors that influence their participation. In summary, the review of existing literature within the field of political participation formed the basis for the research paper.

In this chapter, the strategy used in searching for reviewed literature is provided and the democratic-participant and UGT theories are outlined and applied in the case of this study. Ten peer reviewed articles related to the study are reviewed, and the chapter ends with a summary followed by a transition to the next chapter.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search strategy for this study involved recent peer-reviewed articles on online political campaigns, elections, strategies, and shortfalls. Google Scholar was used in the identification of connected articles. The Walden University Library was also used in retrieving articles. My search purview comprised of notable scholarly databases like Business Source Complete, Academic Search Complete Sage Knowledge, ProQuest Central and Walden University Dissertations. My decision to use or discard articles was made by categorizing and saving articles of relevance in the Google Scholar library. Articles were critically reviewed for significance, identification of research methods, validity, reliability, data collection methods, and findings.

The article search keywords included *acceptable internet usage policy enforcement, internet filtering and monitoring, twitter, social media, and millennial voting*. In addition, keywords such as *Independent National Electoral Commission , political parties, bloggers, political violence, vote purchase, democratic-participant theory, and uses and gratification theory* were also used. Generally, this literature review covers research conducted on youth motivation in online communication, marketing

strategies applied by bloggers and social media organizations, and the benefits of online marketing (soliciting) in election process, with a focus on millennial participation.

Theoretical Foundation

This study was carried out within the theoretical frameworks of the democratic-participant and UGT theories. In view of the factors that are responsible for attracting millennials to gain political interests through media solicitation, it was critical to apply these theories to understand the meaning, motives, and benefits of millennial voting through social media platforms.

Democratic Participant Theory

The democratic-participant theory is a politico-media philosophy and stresses that the media is at its best if its access to stakeholders is democratized (Johnson & Johnson, 2013). In Nigeria, military rule had been the system of government for most of its political administration since its independence in 1960. While transiting to democratic rule, lingering anxieties surrounding the freedom of speech and the right to be independent in political decisions remained. Because of this, voters avoided open voting, as opposition parties supported by the military or by violently endowed opponents may cause physical harm. The evolution of social media in Nigeria changed politics, as citizens could air their views and select candidates from a safe location. They can take part in conversations regarding the benefits and weaknesses of different candidates. This encouraged millennials to participate in the electoral process. In the past, to avoid violence and victimization, millennial voting was minimal or completely absent. Johnson and Johnson (2013) noted that the democratic participant theory is an adaptation of social

responsibility theory that posits that the media should share varying ideas and opinions of individuals or groups regardless of their political inclinations.

Young people are no longer as interested as they were in radio, television, and newspapers. Pre-internet forms of mass media have a weakening influence over young people, so it is very difficult to use them to increase the interest of millennials in politics (Dong, Toney, & Giblin, 2010). Traditional media like newspapers and radio provides limited space that is quite expensive. Such communication forms made it difficult for young people to express their views, share their opinions, or participate in politics. This limitation has been largely bridged with the coming of social media that in recent years has brought about new political interests and increased millennial participation (Wynyard, 2012). The proliferation of social media such as Twitter has tremendously changed the paradigm of political participation.

The change in the paradigm of political participation underpins the significance of unprecedented equality of access to the media, irrespective of socio-economic status or racial background (Baran & Davis, 2012). The democratic participation theory postulates that participation in good governance and cultural revitalization should not be exclusive to the elite, but inclusive of grassroots (Baran & Davis, 2012). The theory is used to advocate for the democratization of ownership of media organizations and reject the centralistic and monopolistic nature of press ownership, which stifles dissenting voices through rigid editorial control (McQuail, 2005). It also posits that pluralism of views and voices are not guaranteed in a democracy where there is a monopoly in the ownership of media organization.

Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT)

UGT explains the motivation that drives people to use social media. Media programs do not have a universal appeal and uniform effects. Mindful of their needs, people selectively accept some media programs and refuse others (Anaeto, Onabanjo, & Osifeso, 2008). The theory evolved as a reaction to the hypodermic needle effect theory of the media, which claims that the media has all-powerful effect on its audience (Johnson & Johnson, 2013).

In the past, Nigerians consumed only what they were given by the media and had very few choices. This was partly because of fear of being victimized or fear of the unknown since one may not know who a political opponent is merely by interaction. Officials with different political views than their superiors could be denied promotion or even lose their jobs. Now, a citizen can sieve what the media provides, chose what he/she wants, and decide who to vote for without having to voice an opinion.

There has been a decline in traditional forms of political participation by young people in the developed as well as in developing countries. The traditional participation, which is largely driven by the traditional mass media including radio, television and newspapers, do not succeed in stimulating the millennial. However, there has been a resurging interest in politics among these same groups of people and this is attributable to the rise in the use of the different social media platforms that are available. These platforms provide the millennial with information and the opportunities to interact directly with political parties and their candidates.

The theory challenges previous theories which view the people as victims of large companies, holds that the consumers have the power to determine what they consume. This theory also challenges those that hold that intelligence and self-esteem are the drivers of an individual's media choice. This theory will be used to show how individuals make their decisions to vote for candidates of their choices based on their personal choices, resulting from the influences from the election campaigns through twitter.

According to Baran and Davis (2003), the foundation of the UGT is often credited to Herta Herzog by establishing that Herzog's article, "Motivations and Gratifications of Daily Serial Listeners" was the original researcher who conducted an in-depth study of media gratifications. According to Sweetser and Kaid (2008) the theory, which has a long history of interrogating political information seeking motivations, has been more recently used to determine the gratifications of entertainment media.

Blumer and McQuail (1969) found that gratifications clustered into three groups. The first group is a cluster driven by political reason such as reinforcement or vote guidance; the second is a cluster driven by surveillance for keeping up with issues; and the third is the cluster driven by excitement such as seeing which political party would win. Over time, researchers began to apply the gratification perspective while seeking for political information online. The primary motivations, according to Kaye and Johnson (2002) are guidance, information seeking and surveillance as well as entertainment and social utility. These scholars attribute political attitudes to media use stating that advanced levels of self-efficacy are linked with information seeking and surveillance and

higher interest in politics is associated with accessing political information online for social utility and information seeking surveillance.”

Anaeto, Onabanjo and Osifeso (2008) are concerned primarily with what people do with the media rather than what the media does to people. They argue that consumers of content influence the effect of the mass media on themselves; that media consumers are not passive but are actively involved in determining how they use the information. Folarin (2005) holds that it is for the perceived gratifications that consumers are exposed to and retain media messages. This is very relevant to this study because social media users are very likely to satisfy their curiosities by meeting their information needs on these platforms thereby participating actively in the political communication process with the ability to connect to political activity within and outside their physical locations.

Political Trend in Nigeria

Like other countries coming out of Colonial administrations, Nigeria has gone through many experiences since the attainment of Independence in 1960. This includes political turbulences, which forms a major part of a nation that is unprepared for democratic rule. After its independence was declared, Nigeria boasted of having proven reserve of oil, which could sustain the nation and its development without dependence on foreign powers (Onigbinde, 2014). Its ensuing history however, is one of economic strains, political violence, and poverty.

Geddes (2010) highlights how Nigeria, one of Africa’s largest countries, has an estimated population of 202 million people with an average annual population growth rate of 2.60 per cent (World Population Review, 2019). He also identifies that there are

over 400 languages and dialects spoken, and over 250 ethnic groups in the country. The major languages spoken include Hausa, Fulani, Igbo, Yoruba, Edo Urhobo, Efik, Ijaw, Tiv and Kanuri. About 65 per cent of the population is made up of the Hausa-Fulani, the Yoruba and the Igbo, and the country is also divided between the Moslem north, estimated to be between 51 and 57 per cent of the population, and the Christian south. These ethnic and religious divisions have had its way in determining the results of political elections, from the first republic until the present day. Because these groupings have their strength in numbers, it is easy to win an election if two of these groups merge to oppose the one left out. Other factors also play significant roles in deciding which way elections go in Nigeria. They include the ability to gather crowds of supporters for a candidate by offering cash for their votes, at polling stations. Another factor is the effect of touts of candidates. This applies by the number of voters these tout scare away from voting, and the number of ballot boxes that can be snatched away from polling units where the touts believe their opponents have an upper hand.

Until 1962, in spite of a number of rebellions and turmoil involving minority ethnic groups in the three regions resulting from the obvious political effects of being a minority, the federal and three regional governments, through key supporters, sustained the political control of their respective territories. This saw the federal system setting up national and regional politicians against each other. The 1983 elections which were the first since the military handed over power to an elected civilian government, was marked by high level irregularities which led to intimidation and violence which was a replay of events of the 1964 and 1965 elections. After the military took over power in 1984, there

was evidence as well as *anger* over the corruption, violence and mismanagement that characterized the Second Republic democracy (Danjibo & Oladeji, 2007).

A trend of corruption and violence in the political circle had begun to establish itself, with the belief that you can only secure socio-economic benefits if you have your 'own men' in government. As such, various ethnic groups in the country closely monitor government decisions in the siting of industries, the construction of roads, award of scholarships, and appointments to public service positions. This explains why factions get dirty in the political game to ensure that they gain victory and acquire these benefits.

Geddes (2010) argues that the past years have not produced a thriving multi-party democratic nation, and that Nigeria has been bedeviled by continuous ethnic crises and political and economic upheavals, and government domination. Even at this, the political actors seem unaware of its negative effects on the nation and its polity, and continue to display the same acts at every election, subsequently. Adedokun (2014) poses that, just like other Third World nations, Nigeria has witnessed continued ethnic and religious conflicts which are harnessed to politics, and has led to the inability of the government to establish legitimacy and credibility among the Nigerian population, especially within the millennial range.

Violence and Election Challenges

Kwarkye (2019) argues that elections in Nigeria present a battleground for the control of power and the nation's resources. He also posits that this is the foundation for electoral and crisis before, during and after the election process. Usually, the presidential race features more than 70 candidates but the competition is between the two major

parties; the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the opposition, People's Democratic Party (PDP). Again, a repetition of the pre and post-election violence resulting in fatalities as seen in those of 2011 and 2015 are normal occurrences in Nigeria. The foundation for election violence is usually built on the foundation of inflammatory comments by politicians, allegations of intimidation, partisanship by members of the security forces, as well as favoritism on the part of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), illegal voting and results rigging. This has formed the template for any opposition party, especially those that are more likely to be defeated.

Candidates of political parties just before elections are held and a commitment to peace by the political actors, followers as well as their thugs often sign peace accords, especially building up to election. Politicians have used their political thugs who develop disparaging strategies to disrupt the process once it appears that it does not favor their candidate. In 2011, approximately 800 cases of fatalities were recorded resulting from post-election attacks across the country. In 2015, not less than 100 cases of fatalities were recorded. While the commitment for peace through peace accords is important, the foundation for violence are set for use, and guided by political parties, their agents, and individuals (International Republican Institute, 2015).

One of the main reasons for the desperate act is the perception that the office provides easy access to the accumulation of wealth, which the control of state resources and the domination productive resources provides for office holders and their cronies. Since the federal government solely administers the revenue from oil, the political class indirectly controls most of the country's economic activities while private sector players

are made to survive on political patronage. Government contracts and procurements, at all levels form the major bulk of business and employment in Nigeria. These are funded with oil money, so the ability to win government contracts depends almost entirely on political influences. For most political candidates, politics is the only means they know to improve their lifestyle and personal prestige. As such, those seeking economic gains from these political offices see winning elections as the only option and are willing to do anything to win at all cost even if it means fueling violence to achieve it.

Kwarkye (2019) further argues that political candidates and their financiers invest in elections and hope to make huge economic gains when they win. The stakes are usually high so even when peace accords are signed by all the parties to reduce the heat, such accords are often not enough to prevent violence before, during and after the elections. Certain primordial sentiments as well as the religious and ethno-regional tensions, which have been established over time, add to the heat to make elections in Nigeria a battleground for the control of resources. This battle for political supremacy and resource control among Nigeria's intricate ethnic groupings has always served as a recipe for violence and disaster. The frequent usage of inflammatory rhetoric as a campaign by candidates to cause division between different ethnic groups and religious organizations fuels violence during elections. The safety of the citizenry is dicey as the security and law enforcement institutions are viewed as being influenced by political control. Since the inspector general of police, service chiefs and other heads of law enforcement agencies are appointed by the president and can be removed at will, their loyalty in providing safety or insecurity, depending on how it serves the interest of the

incumbent political party is guaranteed. This puts citizens on edge and creates fear among those who intend to vote legitimately as security and law enforcement personnel are viewed as being loyal to the present administration and they can therefore be used for the intimidation of opponents.

In light of this, Kwarkye (2019) and Obasi (2015) both argue that during the campaign season, politicians from different parties always air their distrust of the military and law enforcement agencies, as they are accused of being partisan. This growing distrust heightens tension as opposing sides resort to recruiting political thugs to perpetrate violence and intimidate opponents.

Elections and Voter Apathy

Democracy has become the most accepted system of government globally. It is characterized by citizens' involvement and participation in civic duties and political matters such as campaigning and voting for suitable candidates to fill political offices at different levels. Akinyemi (2019) argues that citizen's involvement in governance is an instrument used to sustain a democracy, although Nigeria is far from achieving this in her political scene.

Since the return of democracy from years of military rule in 1999, Nigeria's election process has been branded by voter apathy. Because of this, rather than voting candidates by the majority of the citizens eligible to vote, candidates are voted from the majority of the few that participate in voting. Of the 200 million populations in Nigeria, 82.3 million registered as voters in 2019. Out of this number of registered voters, 28.6 million, representing 35% of the registered voters actually voted (Independent National

Electoral Commission, 2019). This indicates that between the time of registration and the time of voting, 53.7 million registered voters declined from participating in the elections.

The turnout of voters in the 2019 election, compared to that of 2015 indicates that voter apathy had set in. Because of the corruption, reckless spending and level of insecurity prior to, and at the time of the 2015 elections, citizens were frustrated with the government of Goodluck Jonathan. Most citizens believed that time that change was eminent. The social and economic atmosphere in the country at that time provided the ingredients for voter apathy, and the result was a massive turnout of voter to ensure that the corrupt government of Goodluck Jonathan was voted out. Although the usual political gimmicks of corruption, rigging and truancy existed during the election, the volume of voters against the regime was too large for election malpractice to overshadow. In this case, one can say that voter apathy positively affected the expected result of that election (Owen, 2015).

As the new government became more and more unpopular, voter turnout during elections diminished. After the very poor performance of the Buhari administration in his first term, which ended in 2019, voter turnout further diminished, and the presidential elections recorded the lowest voter turnout since 1999. With only 35.66% of registered voters turning out for elections, the result of the presidential election was determined, meaning that those that failed to vote indirectly transferred their voting rights to the few that voted, thereby empowering them to make elective decisions on their behalf (Akinyemi, 2019).

Akinyemi (2019) posited that voter apathy in Nigeria is attributed to several factors that include bad governance, religious affiliations, political violence by candidates and their thugs and lack of trust for the government organization responsible for elections. This has led to the government being labeled as deceitful, and being unable to fulfill promises mostly made to the citizens by politicians, during their campaign in preparation for election into political offices. Akinyemi (2019) stresses that this has led to a lack of trust in elected officials who fail to perform their responsibilities due to high levels of corruption. Religious affiliations have led to voters tilting towards candidates of the same religious beliefs with them, believing this may bring some form of benefits or religious freedom.

Political violence on the other hand discourages voter turnout at elections because political thugs create unsafe environments for citizens who genuinely come out to vote. Deaths occur, and severe injuries from stampedes that occur during snatching and burning of ballot boxes. For youths that intend to vote, this usually, is a huge hindrance, as parents would always prevent their wards and children from going to unsafe voting centers. The worst of them, according to Akinyemi (2019) is rigging, as he stresses that this act insults the citizens of a country who go under stressful and harsh conditions with risks to their lives, for voting. After going through these tough conditions, results are carefully and easily rigged, and the candidate who wins the rigging game is elected into office. This has made citizens ask themselves the reason for going out to vote, and would rather sit indoors to accept whatever result is generated at the end of the elections. Since the conduct of electoral processes and governance in Nigeria do not provide confidence,

most citizens are discouraged and kept away from elections. This low turnout of voters reflects a general lack of enthusiasm and trust for the system as well as for the candidates, as some Nigerians are also concerned voter apathy is reflecting a growing disillusionment with democracy.

Credible elections are fundamental to the consolidation of any democracy and every eligible citizen has the right to vote and be voted for (Osho, 2009). Participation in the electoral processes is a basic component of every good democracy. Agaigbe (2016) postulate that “Since Nigeria’s return to democracy in 1999, electoral processes have been characterized by high level of apathy by the electorates and this, impacts negatively on the nation’s democracy.” Yakubu (2012) suggests that the indifference of the people to participate in electoral processes especially voting is best described as voter apathy. Cloud (2010) notes that, duly registered voter’s exhibit disinterest by failing to cast their votes due to voter apathy. There are many causes of voter apathy in Nigeria. Agaigbe (2016) suggests that voters believe that their votes will not count due to the preconceived idea that the results of most elections are fraudulent. The phenomenon of vote and violence is another factor why voter apathy is widespread in Nigeria (Collier and Vicente, 2014). Agaigbe (2016) posits that superimposition of candidates and the lack of internal democracy in political parties leads people into losing confidence in the electoral process that leads to voter apathy.

Political Representation and Good Governance

According to Boyte (2004:114), democracy is a lifestyle that involves more emphasis on the capacity of citizens, which include habits, skills, confidence, as well as

citizens' influence and rights. This means that the negation of democratic principles hinders the power and authority of citizens to participate in government. Democracy that is the foundation for development in any society has its emphasis on the citizens. Prolonged periods of military rule deprived Nigerians of this benefit (Adejumobi, 2004). Citizens in developing countries suffer from lack of direct access to government affairs as they are denied participation in the policy-making processes as well as in the choice of policies to be executed (Gberevbie & Olawuyi, 2006).

Badru (2005:77-101) sees democracy as an improvement in citizens' political equality and equity in terms of their participation in the society, and argues that democracy is a system of government that allows both the leaders and the people to be conscious of what is required, and accomplish political, social and economic development for the advancement of their society. Democratic societies should be predictable in terms of expectations from its leaders on the one hand, and the citizens on the other. It can therefore be seen as a system of government that gives the people the opportunity to question decisions made by government, either directly or through their elected representatives.

Democracy has some basic features, which are universal, notwithstanding where it operates. These features include equality of voters and their votes, universal adult suffrage, fundamental human rights, press freedom, and mechanisms that allow citizens to influence major policies of government through the elected representatives of the people (Gberevbie, 2010). Ihonvbere (1999); Boyte (2004); Guseh & Oritsejafor (2005:121-137) point to the fact that democracy, good governance and development are

all interrelated. However, there is nothing concrete that supports the claim that any country that operates a democratic system of government automatically enjoys development. In other words, it is possible for a country to claim to be democratic, owing to the fact that the people elected its leaders, yet its citizens experience bad governance resulting in underdevelopment. While good governance may not necessarily be the result of democracy, it is a condition for development if a good leader is in place.

Kofi Annan, a former United Nation's Secretary General has submitted that charities aimed at developing nations will always fail as long as good governance and the rule of law are not in place. He also added that to legitimate power and responsive regulations are important prerequisites for being on the path to prosperity (cited in Adejumobi, 2004:11). Ogunjobi (2004:9) argues that good governance is aimed at creating a capable and effective country as well as a supportive environment in which public and private sectors play their separate roles in mutually reinforcing poverty alleviation as well as sustainable growth and development. The condition for good governance largely depends on the existence of democratic physiognomies, meaning that the more democratic a society is, the more the chances of experiencing good governance.

For the society to enjoy these benefits, they must be sure that those to be voted into political offices must have the traits and characteristics of good leaders, as earlier described. This means a lot of background checks must be done on candidates with detailed emphasis on their achievements in private and public spheres. This can be done successfully through the media, especially if it is online. As there are no interferences on the social media, it usually serves as a convenient medium for checks and discussions of

characters to be elected. In most cases, the true picture of candidates would have to be gotten on self-decision, as fans as well as opponents of the candidate would have a lot to say in support, and against the candidate.

Good governance is crucial in the election of candidates. As such, agents for the candidates provide evidence of their competences and allow the voters to check and decide. This only happens in the case of online campaigning where there are no political thugs to enforce a candidate on voters. Accountability is the requirement that makes public officials responsible for their actions and renders account of their stewardship to the public, more especially to the constituency they seek to represent. Although democracy stimulates good governance, the fact remains that good governance is actually a function of sustainable leadership. According to Gberevbie (2004:224-231), meaningful developments cannot take place in any society without good leaders. Gowon (2006:1718) refers to viable leadership as “opportunity, situation or location that inspires, enables and empowers the individual to exercise control, vision, direction and solution to complex or particular situations”. He suggests that performance should reveal the quality of leadership if governance is hinged on performance.

Election Campaigns and the Mass Media

Before and during elections, the candidates and their political parties transmit campaign propaganda through various media platforms, to a large number of people. The broadcasts report directly what those campaigning say through the media and space sold to campaigners for intended offices, and highlighting their intentions if voted in. This makes it possible for the political candidate to reach more intended voters quicker,

though the print and electronic media in the past were very expensive. Through these platforms, the media transmits propaganda selectively, depending on factors such as provision of funds by the highest bidder or government influence, if there is an incumbent in the contest.

The media also exercises their discretion in their sales of airtime and space to political groups, and have refused or can refuse to accept advertising by minor parties or major opposition parties, competing against the interests of the media houses. The fact that media personnel have the ability to determine content makes them to become political actors as well. They transmit propaganda in conventional formats. While newspapers present campaign propaganda as news items, in columns or as features as well as through advertisements, and as full transcripts, the electronic media such as television and radio broadcasts them in newscasts, standard time periods offered for sale and interviews. The electronic media also broadcasts such messages through documentaries, panel shows, and debates. Magazines also feature periodic summaries, interviews and picture stories.

The materials are largely those generated and provided by these organizations based on their opinions on who they believe should win. Their opinions on public policy issues, campaign methods, personality of candidates as well as discussions on who, in their opinion is winning and the reasons why they think the candidate will win are often projected to prospective voters. The media coverage of elections creates a semblance of importance and paints the picture of politicians listening to the pulse of the electorate. In Nigeria unfortunately, though the candidates appear to be concerned about what the

voters think, the truth is that behind the scene, politicians play dirty and come up with results that do not portray what voters think about the candidate, or if voters actually voted the candidate of choice.

While the he elites understand that votes do not need to be sold, the less educated or less privileged citizens appear to sell their votes publicly, for stipends, as a means of surviving the hard times the politicians have meted on them. In Wicks (2009), Joseph Klapper summarizes some of the findings of that research as one-sided, and argued that conventional media was more effective in converting the poorly educated and favoring the advocated views of such citizens in voting for leaders. Unlike the effects of the influence of media on the attitude of people on the electoral process, the influence of the media on voters' choices has stirred many research interests. This may have been so because the significance of this influence is noticed as it is determined by who wins and who loses the elections. Under normal circumstances, a person casts votes based on party affiliations and perceptions of the interest of the group the voter identifies with. Unlike in many other cases, politics and elections in Nigeria do not operate that way. Media houses choose a candidate of their choice, promote that candidate, and broadcast media attacks on opponents. Such attacks include insults, accusations and reports on past activities of their opponents, be it true or false (Onapajo, 2014).

The mass media plays critical roles in the electoral process. These roles are often not limited to the impact on the attitudes of voters but it sets the narratives in favor of political parties and spread negative information on those who do not share the same ideals. Politicians have taken this seriously and they do all they can to gain access to as

many media organizations as possible, as this usually has a way of providing some form of exposure and fame over other candidates. Using the media to generate propaganda against other candidates, it becomes easy to prey on the weaker candidates during elections and violently take advantage of the situation, to gain victory. To win an election, the campaigner must appear to have an intention to make marginal changes. This is what realistic campaigners attempt to do by trying to increase the enthusiasm of the candidate's supporters in an effort to increase the number of citizens that go to the polls in his favor. In realizing these objectives, the politicians and their media houses, work to reach out to large audiences knowing that the size of the audience they reach is important to them as the more the audience they reach, the more likely it is to beef up the candidate's support base and ensure electoral victory.

The Influence of Social Media on Youth

Social media can be referred to as a program with multifunctional applications and websites or blogs that allow people interconnect through the internet, chat, and share content and video calls around the world. Interested users often sign up to such platforms before they can sign in to access or share information on the same social media platform. Some of the most widely used social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Snapchat.

Social media have achieved tremendous growth and fame worldwide over the years. Researchers now find interest in learning more about the effects of these social media platforms on communities. Of all the users of the social media platforms, youth and teenagers are the most addicted as they are found on the social network even in the

most unlikely places including classrooms and worship places (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). In light of this, researchers have realized that the social media sites in every society have a significant influence on the lives young peoples. These interactions on social sites have been influenced in both positive and negative ways, and affect the moral standards, behavior and education of these young people.

Mageto (2017) reveals that the positive impacts of social media on young people include updating them on global trends and events and enabling them to network and stay connected with others around the world, without having to meet physically. He further states that it bridges gaps between friends as they can stay in touch with each other, not minding the distance between them. This helps in consolidating relationships amongst classmates during and after finishing school, even if most of them relocate to different parts of the world. Young people create groups and pages on various social media platforms based on their professions, focus, beliefs, and political interests, leading to more connections and more opportunities for their respective disciplines and mutual benefits. Young people around the world have benefited immensely from this in ways, which include employment opportunities, participation in politics and information that lead them to make informed choices in casting their votes during elections. Social media platforms have made life easier more efficient and more enjoyable for young people and for many of them, it has become a lifestyle.

While it is true that social media connects people and provide them with up-to-date information, it also leads to leads to social isolation (Hobson, 2017). With the increase in virtual interactions, physical (face-to-face) interactions have reduced

considerably because young people spend a lot more time online than they do on physical basis. Research reveals that social isolation may give rise to the development of certain issues, which may lead to some physical, emotional, mental and psychological problems, in these youths. These problems could result in depression, anxiety and many other challenges. Because of the commonly used abbreviations on social media, misspelling and misuse of words and tenses may be developed by users and may create a negative impact on students, as it may affect their language articulation and lead to low grades in languages.

Spending long hours posting items and chatting on social media sites may decrease youth productivity in certain areas but can be used positively in some other areas. Though it creates opportunities for cyber theft, bullying, identity theft and many cyber-crimes, it affords youths the privacy and opportunity to make decisions on political issues of concern (Laroche et al., 2013). It provides a platform to discuss political candidates, look into their history and competencies, and determine if they are good for the job or not. As youths form a huge percentage of voters, through the social media, they can influence the direction that politics and elections may go. Social media can encourage the spread of correct and useful information, or wrong information and news mainly aimed at tainting the images of people or groups of interest such as political or religious groups, and may have serious effects on the way an election process may go. Though Mageto (2017) argued that the use of social media by youths is more detrimental to them, Laroche et al., (2013) argued that the way social media is used might determine its strength towards positivity. The Nigerian electoral process is an example of how useful

social media may be in youth participation in politics, and how the nation can have elections without interferences and imposing candidates on the citizens. The social media provides enough privacy and power to take decisions based on its content and the forces driving the online campaign.

Youth, Social Media and Politics

The digital media has played a major role in the development of the social lives of those born after 1994 since this was after the launch of some of the widely used social platforms and applications. Lenhart (2015), in his research, discovered that many of teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17 years use the internet every day. Twenty-four percent of these numbers are reported to be online almost consistently. In addition, the percentage of youths between the ages of 18 and 29 on social media has risen quickly in 2015 (Perrin, 2015). Social media activity is found to be changing young people's involvement in and with politics. Generally, the Internet now exists as the leading force regarding how funds are raised for campaigns. The internet is also the world's leading source of information and social media via various platforms provide access to information, allows for discussion, sharing of perspectives and thought and has become the most potent tool for mass mobilization for political action. Now, social media drive every youth movement. Black Lives Matter and The Dreamer Movement are examples of this (Elliot and Earl, 2018). In Nigeria, the youth participation in politics is attributable to their engagement with social media. The information that comes to them instantly has made it increasingly difficult for candidates to be imposed on them and they enjoy the freedom to voice out their opinions in their own private space.

Boulianne (2015) discovered that current research on youth participation in politics via the social media indicates that most of the studies examined shows that there are positive social benefits in social media use and participation in politics. Zheng (2014) argued that whether usage of the social media is for news or social interaction, both have greater political participation, offline and online.

He opines that online participation revolves around an individual's interests such as music, sports, games, and crafts. Participation in many cases involves sharing information, perceptions, and online content and creation of media such as blogs and podcasts by participants in online forums or groups related to the users interest.

Social Networking Sites (SNS) are the interface that provides people from across the world to engage with social media. This definitive social media technology is increasingly providing more and more platforms and these platforms are increasingly becoming the major tools for engaging with the internet. These platforms are user friendly and user oriented. They are constantly providing users the space they need to develop products, share products, ideas and information as well as communicate and connect with both old and new acquaintances, allowing for a wide range of practices that engender practices from those that empower users to those that enable creative productions especially amongst the young people. These platforms also provide space where activism can thrive. Some of the highly recognized SNS brands in the market include sites like Facebook, Twitter, We Chat, and many more, which host millions of users who engage their services to build connections, stay in touch, as well as find support and answer questions, reinforce common ideas and values. These platforms also

provide opportunities for users to share information and for entertainment (Jenkins et al., 2013; Hinton and Hjorth, 2013).

Social Networking Sites are fast becoming an intrinsic part of human identity owing to the growing indispensability of the internet in everyday life. The changes in the mode of communication have moved steadily from the physical to online interactions where information travels around the world in split seconds. These interactions have provided users space for social and political engagements and have succeeded in creating awareness and getting people, especially the young ones, to participate in politics and other activities that concern them (Benkler, 2006). Some scholars revealed that mutual benefits occurred from the usage of social media and political engagement by means of political interest (Boulianne, 2009). Conversely, the Nigerian youths' interest for politics is diminished based on factors like violence from political parties and thugs of candidates before and during elections that are themselves, shared on the same social media platforms. Election violence has caused many deaths in Nigeria and this face of Nigerian elections is beamed across social media platforms to reach people all over the world. Because of this, many young people are forced to stay away from participating in politics (Human Rights Watch, 2003). Despite these challenges, social media platforms have increased the participation of millennial in politics due to the popularity of these sites.

The social media space is populated by youths who provide their contributions by making their voices heard. This has a way of either promoting a candidate or reducing the chances of winning, in the case of a candidate that is not promoted by youths in Nigeria. Their campaigns are done via group chats on Facebook, WhatsApp, and other platforms.

Blogs are also populated, and tweets are generated and circulated with information that may trigger a widespread support or rejection. This has a huge impact on the way politics and election goes because of the numbers that youths can represent in terms of votes.

Twitter Evolution and its Spread

Twitter is one of the most popular SNS platforms, an internet based social medium with combined aspects of mass and interpersonal communication, which was launched to the public in October 2006 (Williams, 2007). Generally, Twitter is known as a micro-blog, a website for publishing and disseminating short messages of 140 characters or less, with others within a user's social network (Murphy, 2008). An internet connection or a mobile phone is all one requires connecting to twitter through text messaging, a web browser, and a variety of mobile and desktop applications. Ease of use perceptions are positively related to increased use of a technology (Davis, 1989; Schepers & Wetzels, 2007; Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). Twitter is very accessible and easy to use and these attributes are contributing to its success (Middlebrook, 2007). Between February 2008 and February 2009, Twitter experienced extensive growth in its number of unique web site visitors, with more than half of it occurring between December 2008 and February 2009 (Compete, 2009). As of December 2008, great number of people are using Twitter or similar services to share and read updates of others (Lenhart & Fox, 2009).

The new trend of the way people are connecting and interacting with each other on the internet is typified by Twitter's growth and popularity. Internet users are giving up the use of emails in favor of social networking sites and blogs (Nielsen, 2009). At least the potential impact of new internet mediums on society is illustrated by McLuhan's

(1964) statement that “the medium is the message.” The consequences of the introduction of twitter are succinctly captured in this message.

Studies have shown that despite the fact that individuals purposely use social media to fulfill certain needs, these needs are not always met (Palmgreen, Wenner, & Rayburn, 1980; Rayburn & Palmgreen, 1984). Satisfaction is crucial to the sustained acceptance of any medium. Users will always seek out alternatives when they find that a particular medium, due to their experiences, does not meet their needs (Rosengren & Windahl, 1972). Satisfaction is the level to which users believe that their expectations are being met.

Twitter and Millennial Participation in Elections

Twitter is now playing important roles that are often referred to as the “migration process” where there is millennial active participation on the site with a focus on political activities (Waller, 2013). There has been an increasing trend of the millennial using Twitter to effect social and political change (Chan & Guo, 2013) and thus, promoting new forms of political participation (Dhaha & Igale, 2013). These findings are raising questions such as: What has changed the attitude of the millennial on political participation? How is twitter influencing the young people to participate in politics? In a bid to provide answers for these questions, it is important to examine certain factors including Twitter's features such as its usage patterns, its network structure of friend and its interaction with political actors (Tang & Lee, 2013).

Unlike the traditional media with its cumbersome nature and outrageous political advertisements, Twitter is open, participatory and interactive. Millennials find convenient

use new participatory skills provided by this medium to interact with candidates and their political parties. Such interactions with politicians increases political awareness and therefore lead to an increase in political participation (Tang & Lee, 2013).

According to UNESCO, youth (in this context millennial) is any person between the age of 18 and 35 years. This age bracket represents the most active Twitter users around the world. Research on this demographic with regards to twitter use is very important as political behavior is developed at a young age.

Various scholars have recognized the role of twitter as one of the most popular social media applications for political organizations. Twitter has been a tool for political organizations as a means of sharing information and for interacting with their followers online (Ihejirika et al., 2015). It has also been used to educate voters on the activities of political parties and their candidates prior to the Nigeria's general elections in 2015. This study will also focus on Twitter and the followership of the two major political parties in Nigeria: the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC), and its main opposition party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP). My reason for focusing on the two major parties is that most of the other parties lack infrastructure and organization, and were not visibly present in the digital media-scape in Nigeria (Ihejirika et al., 2015).

Effing, Hillegersberg, and Huibers (2011) observed that political organizations tried to keep up with the changing media and social environment by employing the use of mobile internet to boost the use of social media in getting across to the prospective voters. The researchers further suggest that most of the parties are struggling to manipulate social media to their benefits. This view has greatly evolved, as political

parties are deploying different strategists to maximize all the social media potentials. Consequently, compared to 2011, political parties were expected to encounter fewer challenges regarding the understanding and implementation of strategies for their online presence, in 2015.

Introduced in 2006, Twitter offers its users a platform to send short messages (tweets) to a network of non-reciprocal followers. The platform allows users to connect and share information with other users (Bruns & Burgess, 2012). @mention tweets specifies a user name preceded by the @ character as a clear address to other users, While individual interpretations of the meaning ascribed to this as well as other uses of Twitter vary (Driscoll & Walker, 2014; Gerodimos & Justinussen, 2014), @mentions are generally interactions with the mentioned user. While retweets involve users, redistributing tweets initially provided by another account, undirected messages can be understood to be one-way communication. Beyond these three categorizations, tweets can also contain so-called hashtags, where the # sign is employed in combination with some keywords.

While previous studies into Twitter use during elections has approached the subject by studying the Twitter accounts of politicians or political parties, (Svensson, 2011; Vergeer and Hermans, 2013; Kalsnes, Krumsvik and Storsul, 2014), this research makes attempts at viewing it from what is referred here as the hashtag approach which makes attempts at detailing activities of all Twitter users employing specific keywords. (Bruns and Burgess, 2011; Jungherr, 2014).

Effects of Twitter on Elections in Nigeria

The use of internet and social media on the African continent in the past decade has recorded some amazing growth. Social media have been applied in various situations such as elections, natural disasters, and political crises. It is important that the use of social media for politics be examined to identify the benefits as well as the challenges, with a view to developing this medium for the benefit of political development in terms of the electoral process used in voting delegates into political offices. Schreiner (2018) discussed the content analysis of Twitter and qualitative expert interviews and found the main use of Twitter was for political debate and mass mobilization. During elections, the network is used by groups of active citizens and bloggers, operating as opinion leaders, to provide information and support for those who are interested in politics, and especially for those who are indecisive as regards picking a candidate of choice, to be voted for. A vital finding about Twitter and elections is that while Twitter served to verify information and throwback rumors, it was also used for disseminating false information as well as for expressing various degrees of verbal violence.

In most cases, during elections, press freedom through conventional media outlets decreases significantly. Conflicting parties are seen using the media as a tool for propaganda. Political opponents also receive death threats while some even are assassinated (Reporters Without Borders, 2011c). With the introduction of the Twitter phenomenon, an online community of well informed and connected interconnected Internet users join others with less exposure and opportunities, in airing their political

views and freely adding their voices to the electoral process, in a more conducive and some worth free space (Brou, 2012).

According to ITU (2016), the use of the Internet and social media has grown with tremendous speed in the past decade. Today the number of Africans that have access to internet is higher, compared to those that had access in 2010. In 2015, Facebook identified 120 million active users across Africa, out of which many have accessed to the platform through their mobile devices (Shapshak, 2017). With an estimated 1.6 billion tweets sent from Africa, in 2016, Twitter had about the largest share of social media engagement within that period (Portland Communications, 2016). From monitoring elections to hounding political opponents, social media have been used for political gains around the world. While some authors point out that social media is used as a means of spreading propaganda by political opponents, (Douai & Olorunnisola, 2013), others refer to social media as “liberation technology” as a result of their ability to empower citizens to confront, contain, and make decisions to vote unproductive and progressive candidates (Diamond, 2012, p. XI).

Twitter’s global reach and public reflectivity positions is ahead of other social networking services. With over 500 tweets sent daily with many of them originating from mobile devices makes twitter a widespread platform for political campaigns, instant reporting of breaking news during elections, and a frequently studied object during crises. Twitter has been used for political campaigns, debates, crowdsourcing, verifying information and providing humanitarian help to gather support in exchange for votes, to express verbal violence, and to spread false information and rumors. This medium

provides a clue to the potentials of twitter for opinion-building, development of democracy, and limited media freedom in regions where freedom to vote for a desired candidate are hampered by violence. Information via twitter is much faster than on traditional media, (Shklovski, 2008) in contrast to other social media platforms. Due to its speed, immediacy as well as its being easy to use via hash tags, Twitter global reach adds to these to make it the preferred social media site for a large majority of internet users (Oh et al., 2011; Shklovski, 2008).

Twitter undoubtedly has had a tremendous impact on how information is spread and the sharing of different opinion on a matter or subject, and has broken the restrictions and limitations that characterized the traditional media limited, during elections. While it played its complementary role, Twitter has almost successfully replaced traditional media in their societal functions of information, opinion building, criticism, and watch. Although the high number of illiterate citizens as well as the existing media use habits that has allowed the older generation favor traditional media such as radio and television exists, the effects of twitter in positively or negatively influencing elections has been massive (Kruikemeier, 2014).

Summary and Conclusions

This study seeks to fill the gap in understanding how Twitter was used to mobilize the millennial to participate in voting during the 2015 Nigerian Presidential Elections. It is premised on the fact that Twitter shares many of Jurgen Habermas characterizations of the Public Sphere. Habermas conceptualization of the Public Square is a deliberative arena that promotes the norms and networks that facilitate democratic actions (Habermas,

1962; Okoro & Diri, 2009). Twitter has been largely successful in bridging many gaps. It has made information availability and sharing very easy, especially among millennials. The prevalence of Twitter, its accessibility, user-friendliness, cost-effectiveness, immediacy of data processing and sharing, and user-generated content has changed the dynamics of information flow to promote public debate, especially among millennials (Lilleker & Jackson, 2010; Jungherr, 2012; Okoro & Nwafor, 2013; Ajayi & Adesote, 2015).

This study seeks to investigate the role Twitter played on the turnout of millennials during the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria. It also seeks to understand how Twitter was used to address voter apathy among young voters in Nigeria. Chapter 2 reveals substantial findings of relevance, connected to the reviewed literature, and creates a direct link between the theoretical framework and the problem statement. However, the coming of Twitter has re-kindled political participation among millennials, little or no research has been done on how the use of Twitter and the nature of network of friends on the platform are influencing their participation in politics (Muntean, 2015).

This chapter provides a summary of literature related to Twitter and millennial participation in elections in Nigeria. The literature review provided detailed information on topics such as political evolution in Nigeria, election processes from the first republic, violence and election challenges, voter apathy and presidential elections. Others are, election campaigns and political leadership, the role of mass media in the Nigerian political scene, the influence of social media on youth, youth, social media and politics,

and twitter and millennial participation in elections in the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria.

A link between the research problem, the theoretical foundation, and conceptual framework used in the study is made, and the chapter offers the reasoning for using a social basic qualitative inquiry, a theoretical framework that draws from democratic-participant and, uses and gratification theories. In the third chapter, the research design of the general study will be discussed, and the rationale behind the selected design approach, the role of the researcher, the participant selection process, the data collection, instrumentation, and management processes, and the data analysis plan will be provided.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

This was a qualitative phenomenological and exploratory research on Twitter and millennial participation in voting during Nigeria's 2015 presidential election. It aimed at discovering how behavioral activities like tweeting and retweeting on Twitter's virtual platform increased millennial participation in the 2015 presidential election. It was also aimed at discovering how this may be used to positively change the electoral system of the nation and increase millennial participation in the electoral processes based on my inductive analysis.

A number of factors obstructed millennial voting in Nigeria. With the introduction of social media in politics, and the assumed strength that Twitter has in creating voter privacy and authority, this may be a new twist in encouraging youth to vote and field a candidate of their choice, in order to bring political change to Nigeria. As such, it is important to gain a different perspective on the perceptions and experiences of millennials who participated in the 2015 presidential elections in Nigeria, with a view to multiplying voter participation by youth.

The concern for this research resulted from the lack of research literature on Twitter and millennial participation in politics and voting, especially in Nigeria, as noted in Chapter 2. For the focus of this study to be achieved, I developed a qualitative research strategy that supports the exploratory reason for the research. A phenomenological approach is used to explore an aspect of human experience not constrained by time or location by using first person sources. In Chapter 3, the overall study's research design,

basis for the design, role of the researcher, management processes, participant's selection process, data collection, instrumentation and data analysis plan will be discussed.

Research Design and Rationale

The use of media in influencing voters and the perceived freedom and autonomy available for users of social media platforms involved in voting informed the use of the chosen design. The central research question for this phenomenological exploratory research study was: How did Twitter as a social media platform define participation of millennial in promoting voter turnout and addressing voter apathy in Nigeria's 2015 presidential election? The research question was intended to capture the perspectives, experiences, and knowledge of participants connected with the study on the scope of the problem.

The central concepts of this study examined strategies and efficacy of using social media in political elections, as well as the involvement of millennials in the electoral process in Nigeria, using twitter as a platform for youth mobilization. While the democratic-participant theory is a politico-media philosophy, which asserts that when media access is democratized, it will be at its greatest in serving public interest (Johnson and Johnson, 2013), the UGT explains why people use the media and accept some media programs and refuse others (Anaeto, Onabanjo, & Osifeso, 2008). For this study, a qualitative research approach was chosen to explore the central issue surrounding Twitter and the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria.

Qualitative Approach

The qualitative approach was used for this study and acted as the method of the inquiry as it provides an effective way to discover the mental impression people have about particular issues. Qualitative research is used to observe and describe how groups understand a wide range of policy-related issues. Khan (2014) argued that qualitative research methods provide a complete framework that allows for in-depth questioning of intricate issues that relate to human behavior, perception, and lived experiences. Because quantitative methods do not allow the researcher to gain realistic views of participants' lived experiences and provide an all-inclusive description of the subject under investigation, it was unfavorable to use in this study.

One of the challenges with using quantitative research method is its emphasis on establishing the connection between variables in a population, finding the nature of the variables, and making validations about knowledge. In addition, the quantitative method is dependent on the use of structured processes for the collection of data, which relies on objective rather than subjective methods of comprehending the world in which we live. This was an exploratory study on the perceptions and lived experiences of participants with experiences in social media involving politics and electoral processes in Nigeria. This involved the use of flexible and non-deviatory processes to collect data, as techniques practiced in the authentication of knowledge in qualitative research contains the use of logic in expressing accurately the ideas presented, or by learning from experiences about factual incidences (Bendassolli, 2013).

Phenomenological Method

Studies in qualitative research apply several methods in data collection that include: detailed interviews, surveys, focus group interviews, use of social media, direct observation, and document analysis (Patton, 2014). Prior to the selection of the phenomenological process ideal for this study, research methods other than the customary qualitative research methods were considered. Standard qualitative research methods may serve as realistic options when the research topic does not correctly link with the conventional qualitative research methods (Percy, Kostere, & Kostere, 2015). In consideration of the appropriateness of phenomenological methods for topics examining attitudes and beliefs, Percy et al. (2015) opined that the researcher should focus on the internal rather than external scopes of reasoning processes surrounding the experience being studied. Instead, a generic qualitative method was ideal for the subject. Phenomenological inquiry entails genuineness and evocation as it is used to examine intuitive understanding (Küpers, 2014). D'Angelo, Milliken, Jiménez, and Lupiáñez (2013) recorded two classes for human attention as the slower meticulous processing and the fast and impulsive, automatic processing. This study's aim was to disclose human experiences derived from perception, and did not seek to reveal shared experiences ensuing from the human interface of participants, which is one of the fortes of descriptive qualitative research (Willis, Sullivan-Bolyai, Knafl, & Zichi-Cohen, 2016).

To permit the narrative of one aspect of human experience not controlled by time or location, the phenomenological method was selected. Phenomenological qualitative research comprises of two approaches of inquiry: hermeneutical and transcendental.

Hermeneutical phenomenology comprises of the logical interpretation of participants' individual experiences to divulge the impartial nature of a topic under investigation (Van Manen, 1990). The transcendental phenomenological method trails the lived experiences described by participants. This method was adopted for this study to reveal the meaning ascribed by participants to their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Through this method, participants with political media experiences as well as conventional media practitioners with experience in elections and politics provided genuine and specific data concerning electoral practices in Nigeria.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, I directly handled the collection, collation, and analysis of data, with a focus on gleaning the participants' level of use and influence in relation to the research topic. My role entailed the identification of implausible information and evaluation of my insight of the subject. I familiarized myself with the Twitter platform to fully comprehend its workings.

My professional background in human resources management and my penchant for ethical standards informs the research approach for this study. My professional background avails me the capacity for better investigation of the research topic. It helped me get a broader picture regarding social behavior relevant to the research topic.

The typical nature of synchronous communication allows for the advantage of social cues such as facial expressions, body language, voice tone and pitch, and emotional signals (Opdenakker, 2006). These cues from participants offered me an advantage of gleaning additional information from non-verbal communication. All

information gleaned from non-verbal communication was written down during the interview process. In addition to open-ended questions, I utilized voice recording devices while conducting the semi-structured interviews to prevent data loss and misinterpretation. Furthermore, to prevent the loss of data that may occurred due to device failure or damage I also utilized a secondary voice tape recorder.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

This study's population of interest included bloggers, online media personalities, youth that participated in the 2015 presidential elections in Nigeria via online campaigns, and individuals that monitored the elections as either independent observers or staff of the National Electoral Commission who are willing to grant interviews. It is a common trend among qualitative research participants to base collection of data on the experiences of between 5 and 25 participants (Polkinghorne (1989). For qualitative research the actual data evolved from about half of the recommended sample size of 20 (Cleary et al., 2014), thus I decided to use samples from 16 participants.

The research study design ensured that a sampling strategy including a possible sampling frame that draws from the criterion-based sampling procedure was developed. This decision is to allow applicable and prearranged criteria form the basis for the selection of cases. This study explored how millennial participation in voting through twitter, affected the 2015 presidential elections in Nigeria. This was a predetermined standard for participant selection. As recommended by Patton (2014), criterion sampling

allowed the identification of cases having experience with the subject by first, using standardized questionnaires, followed by thorough interviews.

Instrumentation

The phenomenological data collection method helped to induce the participant's description of lived experiences of the phenomenon, and for the participant to present the data in its actual form, without insinuations, generalizing or adding anything to the experience. For assurance of data accuracy conformation with principles of phenomenological inquiry, the researcher avoided all assumptions about the phenomenon. Epoche, which is a vital component of the phenomenological inquiry technique, required the acceptance of a researcher's attitude that avoids any preconception on a phenomenon. To allow a neutral and accessible mind that aligns with the reasons behind participant experiences, this process involved the averting of suppositions on the phenomenon (Berdychevsky & Gibson, 2015; Moustakas, 1994).

Social sciences and the qualitative inquiry provide an important element of data collection methods via interviewing (Patton, 2014), with its focus on participant's experiences and the meaning ascribed to these experiences (Seidman, 2013). Video and telephone interviews were conducted with a semi-structured interview format, open-ended questions and digital recording devices that aided in capturing participant's voices. The significance of this was to support the description and interpretation of a research process (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). Participants were all provided with an option to be interviewed via Skype, zoom or telephone.

A flexible questioning format was provided by a semi-structured interview plan to provide the participant with freedom to express impressions, and experiences with the phenomenon (Patton, 2014). During the interviews, a digital audio recording device was used in documenting all discussions, to provide precise and useful extracts of the interview for data analysis (Given, 2008; Gubrium, Holstein, & Marvasti, 2012). I also introduced interview journaling to support the interview method and enrich the quality of research analysis. Clarity and accountability was given through insightful journaling, while reducing the difficulty associated with examining recorded answers on a participant's experiences (Janesick, 2011). Preset open-ended questions served as a guide for the interviews, and a margin for further probe and clear responses on the phenomenon where provided (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruitment strategy for this study involved a preliminary participant screening process for bloggers, youths and media personality involved in online participation and monitoring of elections in Nigeria, and were recruited by direct sourcing via the internet. After the pre-screening of potential candidates, a letter by email soliciting participation in the study was sent out to them (see Appendix B). To ensure anonymity, audio recordings of verbal consent were made for those who prefer telephone interviews. Some social media platforms were also used to connect identified participants, to build a rapport prior to the actual interviews (Lunnay et al., 2014). This promotes the facilitation of mutuality, sharing of information, relationship building, participant engagement, and interview scheduling for qualitative researchers. To ensure comfort of the participants with this

process, the objectives of the study were provided to participants by the interviewer who also highlighted the steps to be taken in ensuring confidentiality.

Eligibility criteria for participants indicated that potential participants must have participated in online voting or monitoring during elections in Nigeria (see Appendix D). Once responses signifying willingness to participate were received from potential participants, a questionnaire and the informed consent form were emailed or read out on phone, based on the choice of communication selected by the participant. Prior to the commencement of data collection, all participants were required to submit an informed consent form

Options for participants to end the interview at any time of their choice was emphasized in very clear terms, to ensure the researchers' comfort with the data collection process. A follow-up by telephone conversation followed the pre-screening process to finalize the participant selection process. The data saturation concept applied and this process assisted in identifying the point where no new information surfaced, during data collection.

Data Analysis Plan

The data analysis plan for this study was aimed at emerging analytical findings on the elements resulting to participation of millennial voters during the 2015 presidential elections in Nigeria, and how twitter as a social media platform defined millennial participation in the election processes as well as voting and results. The data analysis process for this study drew from the modified Van Kaam method, outlined in Moustakas (1994) with the researcher using hand coding for analysis, and the NVivo 11 software for

data storage and management. The Van Kaam method proved to be ideal for qualitative phenomenological data analysis because the technique focused on revisiting an individual's encounter with the phenomenon before forming descriptions used in representing the essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). The Van Kaam process included grouping, reducing, thematizing, and identifying logical units of information that previous researchers have established their criteria for its use.

Van Kaam's method comprises of three essential processes to help in the unraveling of knowledge. They are: (a) the Greek word *epoche*, which means stay away from or refrain; (b) transcendental phenomenological reduction, which is avoiding themes such as prejudgments and describe events as they happen; and (c) the imaginative variation of bracketing (Moustakas, 1994). These three processes together, involve deliberate acts to avoid judgment about issues, gather true essence about the phenomenon based on participant's descriptions, and different thematic variations concerning the phenomenon. The main features of the interpretive analysis process are:

- Listing and grouping of relevant responses from participants.
- Identifying in inconsistent features of participant's responses.
- Grouping and labelling of unchanging elements of participant responses.
- Validating unchanging elements and development of themes.
- Developing individual and bonded texture descriptions using transcendental phenomenological reduction.
- Developing individual structural and bonded descriptions of meanings that participants ascribed to their personal experiences, using ingenious variation.

- Formation of composite descriptions of meaning participants ascribe to their experiences.

Making meaning of text-rich qualitative research data requires thorough processes during the manual gathering and forming of the data (Hilal and Alabri, 2013). The researcher conducted an original coding scheme that linked different terms and data units, decisively sorted out of the large data. Coding processes related to qualitative research involves using either manual hand coding or software coding methods. The study made use of the manual hand-coding method through the data reduction process, to screen data and prevent the omission of important information. It is of great importance to read and understand the different groups of data collected during qualitative data analysis (Maxwell, 2013).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

To establish credibility, the researcher required obtaining reliable results in the findings of research participants. Deficient data collection methods, conceptual frameworks, and description of results affect a study's trustworthiness negatively (Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen, & Kyngäs, 2014). Focus for this study was made on guaranteeing credibility through data triangulation, applying processes such as using various data collection mediums which include interview transcripts, interview journaling, and documented details of the modified Van Kaam method, for data analysis. Patton (2014) suggests that credibility in a qualitative study involves researcher

proficiency, emphasis on detail and substantiation of evidence gathered from different sources, with suitable observation, engagement, and open auditing.

Participants for this study in addition to having participated in the 2015 elections were Nigerian Millennial active voters and journalists working with media agencies that follow the electoral process in Nigeria. This allowed the researcher to gain several views of the subject in focus. The different types of data collected allowed the researchers' authentication of the data collected for accuracy, thus excluding the possibility of false depiction. The provision of detailed documentation of all the procedures that aid the unraveling of knowledge, using the modified Van Kaam method of data analysis shows transparency and increases credibility.

Transferability

Recent research on voting via social media has not examined the use of twitter particularly, and the involvement of millennial in voting with twitter usage, as well as its effects. This study therefore focused on the significance of millennial participation in voting through Twitter in the 2015 Nigeria presidential election. Knowledge of this subject was a prearranged criterion for selection of participants. The population of interest for this study included individuals that have been involved in election processes and monitoring via social media and the conventional media. Participant recruitment was by soliciting individuals identified from media databases and independently identified bloggers, following all valid and approved ethical procedures.

Transferability can be confirmed through the researcher's responsibility in providing detailed descriptions of the context of the research study. Detailing the

investigation's transferability, Burchett, Mayhew, Lavis, and Dobrow (2013) revealed that a consideration of results, methodology, and design was irrelevant while setting, researcher experience, simplicity of application, and adaptation of methods were important considerations.

Dependability

Establishment of dependability in qualitative research exists when the researcher is required to confirm the application of reliable and stable processes throughout the entire study. Criterion-based sampling method was identified, to increase the uniformity of measures and provide suitable selection of respondents. One-to-one semi-structured interview was employed, digital audio recording device, and open-ended questions helped participants describe real and lived experiences via synchronous communication. For audit and member checking, the researcher provided detailed procedures, and described methodological prudence for the study. The audit trail documented the entire research work, from its developmental stages up to the presentation of investigation outcomes. Member checking measures delivered details of the steps taken in data collection, to permit clarification by participants, and to avoid falsification.

Methodological consistency guaranteed congruity between the research questions, various units of data gathering as well as the analysis process. Exploring the gravity of participant's responses allows the researcher to check for reliable and trustworthy answers during data collection (Aust, Diedenhofen, Ullrich, and Musch, 2013). The appropriateness of sample sizing that was used in this study augmented the adequacy and

comprehensiveness of the data collected. To conceptualize the research problem, the researcher ensured theoretical balancing to reflect helpful ways to boost dependability.

Confirmability

This process entailed satisfactory measures to ensure that results are confirmable and can be authenticated by others. Baskerville (2014) defines Confirmability as a confirmation process that needs suitable documentation of the different steps of an inquiry, beginning with the knowledge advancement phase to the completion of the research. During the inquiry, the researcher provided suitable and correct answers to ensure that all decision-making processes met the research design standards.

Concurrently collecting data and providing its analysis during the study permitted iterative processes connecting the technical steps used in investigating the subject with the vital conceptualizations. Uniformity of procedures used for data collection and analysis were ensured by using initial and follow-up interviews, as well as a reflective journal to allow the researcher monitor evolving themes and concepts with participants.

Ethical Procedures

Safeguarding the data collection process is essential, to avoid impediment of participant's rights, values, and needs. The researcher was mindful of her responsibility to ensure that adequate ethical considerations were given during the research processes. This comprised of the solicitation of participation, developing measures for protection to prevent the harming of participants, and treatment of data with firm confidentiality. To prevent ethical or legal issues concerning the data collection processes, the initial steps for ethical control provided for the study involved gaining authorization from the Walden

University Institutional Review Board (IRB), to guarantee compliance with institutional and federal guidelines.

Agreements to Gain Access to Participants

Obstructions and challenges in accessing participants and gaining their consent have some significant considerations. Jones (2014) noted that selection of participants should be made through a well-planned selection strategy through social networks. This study took adequate consideration of the ethical concerns regarding situations involving challenges of access based on religious, cultural or traditional values expected in some parts of Nigeria. Email invitations were sent out to likely participants for this study, courteously requesting participation and preparedness to share their honest experiences.

First step towards gaining access to participants was to send letters by email, soliciting participation in the study (see Appendix B). Sending of consent forms for participants in the study was also be done. Steps for the documentation of participant access, and discussions about their consents throughout the inquiry process was also be taken. A dedicated email address was activated for all email communications between the researcher and respondents.

Treatment of Participants

For qualitative research, a substantial role for the participant-researcher relationship and the use of more intrusive and personal methods during the inquiry is required. Treatment of participants during research studies delivers specific responsibilities for researchers towards their participants. Responsibilities include ensuring voluntary involvement, obtaining informed consent, and ensuring participant

confidentiality and secrecy throughout the study. Expert conduct was provided by the researcher, and emphasis were made on the option for participants having trouble to stop the interview and decide to end it at any time. A remarkable characteristic of this study was fairness during participant selection and other facets of the study. As a result of the COVID 19 pandemic which prevented participants from meeting the researcher in person, telephone interviews and video calls were used as options for interviews.

Treatment of Data

Work experience of the researcher and knowledge in dealing with people at work and in the field boosted participants understanding of their personal experiences in relation to the subject of study. Following the suggestion of Jones (2014), the role of a researcher was grounded in self-regulation concerning setting standards for ethical behavior. As such, the researcher disclosed familiarity with the research topic and explained the need to put aside any assumptions while collecting data. A combined usage of manual and electronic data management systems like note cards, binders, audio recorders, computer-recording devices were applied. The NVivo 11 software program served as the main storage for data.

Summary

The focus of this study was to explore the use of twitter as a social media platform, used by millennial in voting at the 2015 presidential elections in Nigeria. Its aim was to determine the benefits of millennial participation in voting, the role of social media in promoting millennial participation in the election processes, as well as understanding millennial experiences during and after the 2015 election. Though voting

during elections is the responsibility of every eligible citizen of Nigeria, the process and the zeal to vote are hampered by unethical behavior, which discourages voters, especially youth. It was therefore important to gain views on the insights and experiences of the participants, as a way to develop the Nigerian electoral system through social media involvement in politics and elections. To validate the choice of qualitative research strategy used for this study, Chapter 3 discusses the research design of the entire study. It contains the rationale for the design, the role of the researcher, participant selection process, data collection, instrumentation, the data management process, as well as the data analysis plan.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This study focused on exploring the centrality of Twitter in Nigeria's media ecology within the context of its capabilities to promote millennial participation in voting. Because of the necessity to include the youths in the political and election processes in Nigeria, understanding the strategies applied in the inclusion of youths in voting through the social media enlightenment and promotion, especially through Twitter, fills a gap in existing research on millennial online voting. To divulge the mental impressions of participants on the subject, a qualitative research approach was used as the primary technique for this study. The central research question for this phenomenological research study was: in what ways did Twitter as a social media platform define participation of millennials in promoting voter turnout and addressing voter apathy in Nigeria's 2015 presidential election? This chapter describes the research setting, participant demographics, participant recruitment, data collection, data analysis process, and methods for ensuring trustworthiness. The chapter ends with a summary of the results and findings and is followed by an outline of Chapter 5.

Research Setting

Because of the COVID 19 pandemic affecting the free movement and interaction of people at the time of my data collection, telephone and Zoom interviews were used for the process of data collection. Interviews were planned for 16 participants, but only 10 interviews were conducted with those that signified interest in participating in my study. This followed my initial contact of each participant through various social media

platforms and subsequent emails. By choice, three participants were interviewed via telephone while the other seven were interviewed via Zoom. All interviews were conducted allowing convenience and comfort for the participants as they all chose the most convenient times for the interviews, when they were seated in private enclosures. This setting allowed for privacy, eliminating forms of distraction and interruption. Telephone calls, email exchanges, and Zoom meetings that enabled participant transcript reviews and member checking of data interpretation were part of the follow-up processes.

Participant Demographics

The population of interest for this study was Nigerian millennial active voters or journalists working with media agencies that follow the electoral process in Nigeria, as well as political online bloggers. The 10 participants met the expected criteria of age group, gender, and involvement with millennial voting in Nigeria. Participants cut across different geographic locations, tribes, and religions, and included youths who were actively involved in partisan politics in Nigeria, former political office holders who were directly involved in policy making, and journalists, youth leaders, political scientists, researchers, and bloggers with political interests in Nigeria.

The years of participants' experiences ranged from 12 to 21 years. Participants worked or had worked as politicians and media practitioners in Nigeria in reputable media exchanges. Prior to the interview, I had no knowledge of any participant, and had no personal or official relationship with them. The average interview time was 26 minutes, and the participant demographics are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1*Demographic Table of Participants*

Participants	Occupation	Years in Role	Function in Nigerian politics at various levels	Experience in online political campaigns and voting process	Gender
P1	Politician	13	Yes	Yes	Female
P2	Blogger	12	Yes	Yes	Male
P3	Blogger	14	Yes	Yes	Male
P4	Journalist	20	Yes	Yes	Female
P5	Youth leader	17	Yes	Yes	Female
P6	Researcher	21	Yes	Yes	Female
P7	Politician	19	Yes	Yes	Male
P8	Researcher	12	Yes	Yes	Female
P9	Political Scientist	15	Yes	Yes	Male

Participant Recruitment

Approval was received from the Walden University Institutional Review Board prior to initiating the recruitment of participants (IRB approval number 08-19-20-0306553). The process for recruitment focused on enlisting participants using Google, LinkedIn and Facebook search engines. An initial participant screening process for Nigerians interested in online voting and millennial participation in Nigerian politics published online by news agencies in Nigeria, provided 16 potential participants. Contact was made with all potential participants, and an invitation to participate was sent using LinkedIn, Facebook, and email-messaging systems (see Appendix B). No pressure was exerted to participate. I reached out to potential participants a maximum of two times to avoid disturbing them with unwanted solicitation. Follow up emails were sent 2 days

after sending the initial invitation, and 16 potential participants responded, indicating their interests, in response to the invitations sent via the various online messaging platforms. A pre-participation email was sent to potential participants (see Appendix D) to confirm suitability to participate in the study. Eligibility of participants to partake in this study was determined based on the following standards: politicians with knowledge in youth participation in Nigerian politics; journalists and online bloggers that have keenly followed politics and youth participation in Nigeria; youth leaders involved in politics; and researchers with a focus of politics or youth participation in politics in Nigeria.

No major difficulty was met during participant selection as all except one intending participant who responded to the eligibility email questions met the requirements to participate. The one in question requested for financial compensation and was consequently eliminated from the list. During the phone conversations prior to the interviews, all the participants showed keen interest in the topic and looked forward to participating in the study.

Data Collection

The data collection phase of this study occurred at the end of August 2020 and lasted 2 weeks of interviews with participants. Authorized research methods used included interviewing by telephone and Zoom for data collection and reflective journaling (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013; DeFelice & Janesick, 2015) for bracketing personal bias. I used this journal to record the research processes from the research design to the research conclusion stages. To suspend personal interpretations regarding

the topic and increase my understanding of the participants, I practiced bracketing (epoché) as prescribed in Moustakas (1994) before proceeding with the process of data collection. To clear my thoughts of past knowledge or experience, I concentrated on the image and sound of responding participants rather than my inner assumptions.

All participants gave their consents before the interviews commenced. Data collection was concluded in line with the instrumentation procedures and ethics procedures mentioned in Chapter 3, using a semi-structured interviewing plan with open-ended questions and prompts designed to encourage in-depth answers from participants. Although saturation point was reached after seven interviews, 10 interviews took place. I used a professional voice-recording device to record interviews, and I saved the recordings in MP4 file format.

All interview questions were linked to the central research question and were intended to incite participant's memories of and feelings about the subject (Jamshed, 2014; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). For the documentation of methodological variations during data collection, a reflective journal was used. Transparency in the research process was improved through my documentation of the data collection and analysis processes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013).

After the interviews, participants were allowed to correct inaccuracies caught in their transcripts. After the data analysis was also completed, participants were further given the opportunity indicate perceived misconceptions of meaning ascribed to their roles. A few amendments were made and all participants finally responded to the last review of interview transcripts without corrections. Participants also verified and

established the exactness of the meaning each of them credited to the topic under examination, following the completion of the data analysis. To improve the dependability of the research results in any phenomenological research, it is significant to obtain participant feedback about the cogency and comprehensiveness of summaries reflecting participant experiences (Sandelowski, 1993).

Data Organization and Management

Since I carried out the data collection and analysis, I am solely responsible for determining the suitability of participants, their recruitment, collecting their informed consent, and endorsing the precision of the interview transcripts. As described in Chapter 3, all the data collected for this study has been securely kept with strong passwords, on computers and other electronic devices used in filing all digital and text data. Regularly updated anti-virus protection will be installed in computers and devices used in the storage of digital and text data. Access to these devices would be strictly restricted to only the researcher and data will be kept for at a five-year period, as required by Walden University.

Data Analysis

The primary focus for the analysis of documented data collected for this study is to advance methodical outputs on the lived experiences of participants recruited for this research, and identify what helps to achieve positive outcomes. The data analysis procedures relied upon the modified Van Kaam data analysis technique, as defined in Moustakas (1994). This involved the use of transcribed participant responses and a mixture of hand coding and coding, using NVivo 11 Pro software to upturn its validity.

NVivo 11 Pro software program further functions as the dominant source for data management and storage. The data analysis methods formed two data coding cycles while triangulating with the improved Van Kaam data analysis method.

Hand Coding

The capacity to advance understanding of the data is one benefit of applying hand coding for data analysis, and to development a general image offered by participants (Basit, 2003; Stuckey, 2015). Because hand coding permits the researcher to get direct engagement with the data and push the analysis process (Klenke, 2016), I began with hand coding for the data analysis, to highlight intricate parts of the interview transcripts. An intense process involving reading and re-reading transcripts multiple times, to improve understanding of the participant's individual responses on their experience with the subject matter.

In helping to understanding the ideas surrounded in the raw data during data content analysis, the open coding method was applied in emerging codes (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2011). Horizontalization, making use of participant interview transcripts to list and cluster relevant participant responses was used for hand coding. The cut-and-paste method (Basit, 2003) for the horizontalization process was applied, and a list of noteworthy participant responses were put in a table to enable extracting and tagging. Identifying the static mechanisms in participant responses regarding experience needed the listing and grouping of important stated accounts, and reduction or removal of inessential statements (Moustakas, 1994, p. 120 - 121).

One hundred and ninety eight exact significant participant responses were identified, stating invariable features of participant's experiences. The careful examination of significant participant's responses to help the grouping of the static features of participant's experiences into themes followed. The grouping of these responses involved a detailed method used to detect and organize ideas and perceptions within participant responses. As opined by Moustakas' (1994) modified Van Kaam method, precise words and phrases to understand participant's moods and insights concerning their role in online and millennial voting were identified.

The final stage of the hand coding process ensured the authentication of all fixed features and themes prior to the creation of individual textural images for each participant. Further advancement of the different textural images using creative disparities were made and structural descriptions for each participant mixing the invariable elements and themes were created. Combined descriptions of meaning for participants as a group, resulting from their experiences were created, and the descriptions for evaluation of results from coding using software were stored.

Coding Using NVivo 11 Pro

In using the NVivo 11 Pro software package, the first phase in the data analysis process involved several steps used in cleaning and rearranging the data in readiness for uploading into the software program. The data cleaning method involved eliminating all inessential information in the interview transcripts and creating pseudonyms for each participant. Adu (2016) recommended that it is essential to clean transcript data when using NVivo 11 for data analysis, to help the researcher eliminate irrelevant information,

produce new participant identities, and save the prepared transcripts before its introduction into the software program. The research question, interview questions, and participant responses were all studied before saving the cleaned interview data in readiness for importation into the NVivo 11 Pro software program.

The next step was the transfer of the cleaned interview data into the NVivo 11 Pro software program. The data was restructured into the two key storage files in the software program; case groupings and case nodes. Case groupings permit the creation of classification names using pseudonyms assigned to each participant with their demographic characteristics. Case nodes were introduced as an observation element, to code relevant information concerning each participant's responses. After the importation and restructuring of the data, simple queries to advance a better perception of information contained in the data were conducted. As an example, information from the word frequency query was used in highlighting recurrent words or concepts in the interview transcripts (see Figure 1).

Following the isolation of emergent patterns and labeling new emergent themes, a description of each of the emergent themes was established. Next was the ensuing data analysis phase. This involved verifying the data to confirm that it observed the modified Van Kaam method of phenomenological data analysis, as defined in Moustakas (1994). The leading cycle coding procedure accepted the horizontalization, reduction, and elimination of varying elements from the complete participant responses, as regards to their experiences. The next cycle coding method allowed the grouping and thematization of same elements of participant responses concerning their experiences.

After sorting and synthesizing the data by classifying codes, emergent themes were established from relationship, frequency, and meaning. To additionally eliminate any irrelevancies to participant experiences resulting from a lack of clear expression or compatibility, a verification process was used. Part of the analytical process involved comparing descriptions established using hand coding, with descriptions created using coding software before emerging the completed and merged descriptions of participant experiences.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Proof of trustworthiness in qualitative research is essential to ascertain the internal constancies used in the establishment of accuracy in research processes, and in the delivery of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A documentation plan was established and used in highlighting the procedure for participant selection (triangulation), peer debriefing (with dissertation committee), engaging the use of conservative research methods and a firm description of topic under investigation. Strength was given to the

quality of my research instrument through discussions with experienced faculty and research committee members the before the commencement of data collection.

Fusch and Ness's (2015) acts as data saturation guidelines for researchers without strong experience. The exact interview questions with probing questions intended to boost in-depth responses from participants were used for all questions. All personal beliefs regarding the issue were put off, and my feelings to participant's state of mind about the issue was intensified. In addition, by applying Brod, Tesler, and Christensen's (2009) data saturation grid, I recognized data saturation after the first seven participant interviews as I identified and documented the replication of information insufficient to develop new categorizations. To confirm that no emergence of new information during interviews occurred, two additional interviews after the first seven that indicated no new information were conducted.

The importance of interviewer sensitivity to internal variations during research interviews demanding the use of probing questions to clarify discrepancies in interviewee responses. To avoid inconsistencies generating from possible misunderstanding of interview questions, probing questions meant to gain clarification on any discrepancies identified in participant responses were used during interviews (see Appendix E). Using follow-up questions for qualitative interviews allows the researcher to expound initial responses or offer additional details.

Using digital audio recording devices, all interviews were recorded before transcribing responses from each participant. Although the initial interviews gave comprehensive responses from most of the participants, some varying responses during

data analysis required additional sessions to elucidate meaning. Supplementary sessions were therefore set with these participants immediately after completion of data analysis, to confirm the precision of findings. During these sessions, varying interpretations arising from the initial interviews were faced by asking more probing questions to surge further details, and to clarify contradictory statements.

First steps taken in my data collection sequence involved a bracketing method (epoché) as set by Moustakas (1994), to recall and disband any personal beliefs, and upsurge my feeling to participant sensitivities regarding to the topic. I carefully recalled personal experiences before deliberately disconnecting mental dialogs related to personal experiences, to aid my focus on participant responses.

Credibility

Ensuring researcher transparency on the research processes, and thorough steps that safeguards the quality of results are taken guarantee credibility in qualitative research. These steps involve using well-established research methods, knowledge of the participating research environments, random sampling of participants, triangulation, ensuring internal uniformity of participant responses, discrepancy case analysis, and peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Shenton, 2004).

Specifics of the actual processes that allowed the unraveling of knowledge with the use of the modified Van Kaam method for data analysis to validate transparency were delivered. The data analysis process also involved using a balance of two theoretical outlines to interpret and support the data. Further steps were taken to ensure credibility was achieved by application of eligibility criteria designed to confirm participants'

willingness to share truthful experiences and prompts during interviews. This assisted in clarifying participant responses with discrepancies. During data collection and analysis, peer debriefing was carried out with guidance from dissertation committee, experienced faculty members, and peers.

I increased my decision-making capacity by working with experienced researchers and peers, and my research lens was enhanced through learning from shared experiences and insights on the courses of action, development of ideas, and analysis. Green (2014) submits that peer debriefing should be used in enhancing researcher's critical thinking skills and research integrity in qualitative research. Through cautious steps taken to familiarize the researcher with the collected data, cases with inconsistencies involving responses that were unexplainable by interpretation and member checking were identified during data analysis. Member checking were therefore conducted to help eliminate discrepancies in the responses of participants during the data collection phase.

An ending part of the authentication process used for qualitative research involves member checking to endorse the precision of interpretation (Colaizzi, 1978; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All participants who were interviewed accepted the follow-up member checking periods and a copy of the interview transcripts was provided for each participant to confirm accuracy. Sequel to this, deliberations on the clarifications that evolved during data analysis to confirm the exactness of meaning were made. Random selection of participants was done by reaching out to pre-screened prospective participants using the LinkedIn.com, Facebook and WhatsApp messaging systems, to

send invitations to participate. All participants undertook to participate, and to add to the improvement of new knowledge, by providing useful data.

Transferability

Showing how the results of qualitative research are applicable to wider populations presents heavy challenges for the researcher because of the small number of participants and research settings. Shenton (2004) suggested avoiding a concern with transferability. He proposed a focus on providing contextual information on particularities connected to the research environment and population. This study offers the details of the number of participants, period of data collection, lengths of interviews, and the demographics of interviewed participants. This information therefore, allows readers to recognize limits of the study, and adjust transference of results.

Dependability

The use of reliable research processes that display the possibility of reproducing the study in a comparable setting is a determinant for dependability in qualitative research studies. Elo et al. (2014) noted that even in diverse conditions, asserting participant selection criteria and demographics increases dependability of qualitative research, leading to established data. This study provided the use of criterion-based sampling method, telephone and video interviews, semi-structured interview format with open-ended questions, and described methodological uniformities. Detailed descriptions on modules of the research design, data collection, and analysis procedures, data management and storage procedures to offer future researchers suitable information to permit reproduction were all provided.

Confirmability

In qualitative research, suitable steps regarding confirmability are essential to guaranty provable results that can be validated by others. Miles et al. (2013) emphasized the fact that an important element for achieving confirmability in qualitative research is providing meticulous accounts of methods and procedures that allow scrutiny by others. It must also allow the safeguarding of data, which should be available on request for re-analysis. This study established a semblance of procedures for data collection and analysis with the documentation process using a reflective journal with analytic memos and the NVivo 11 Pro software program in taking and recording practical steps, decision rules, and analysis operations. An audit stream detailing all research procedures, emphasizing on changes that emerged during the iterative research as well as the reasoning behind such changes was made accessible.

Results: Emergent Themes

The gap identified in the participation of millennial voters in election processes, and restrictions on online voting in Nigeria were the motivations for this study, which focused on gathering the lived experiences of participants involved in Nigerian politics, media and online voting, at various levels. The results presented in Chapter 4 agree with the research question; In what ways did twitter as a social media platform define participation of millennial in promoting voter turnout and addressing voter apathy in Nigeria's 2015 presidential election? Following the wide-ranging analysis of participant interview transcripts, development and categorization of nodes, and the development of the main themes summarizing the meaning of participant experience, four major themes

and seven subthemes on participant experiences surrounding their roles in millennial participation in online voting in Nigeria were developed (see Table 2).

Table 2

Emergent Themes, Nodes, Sources, and References

Emergent themes	Nodes	Sources	References
Understanding millennial participation and online voting	Millennial knowledge in local politics	9	18
	Barriers to participation in millennial voting and politics	5	15
	Lack of required resources to create positive impact	6	21
	Professional enhancement for social development	6	19
Government collaboration	Creation of policies to encourage millennial participation in politics	6	11
Corruption	youth coercion resulting from poverty	5	16
Youth revolution	The need to work with reality	5	13

The four major themes are: understanding millennial participation and online voting, government collaboration, corruption, and youth revolution. Collectively, seven subthemes emerged and include millennial knowledge in local politics, barriers to participation in millennial voting and politics, lack of required resources to create positive impact, professional enhancement for social development, creation of policies to

encourage millennial participation in politics, youth coercion resulting from poverty, and the need to work with reality.

The applied theoretical framework combined democratic-participant and, uses and gratification theories to enable the delivery of responses to the central research question, by recognizing participant's perspectives relating to the collective and strategic grounds surrounding millennial participation and online voting in Nigeria.

Emergent Theme One: Understanding Millennial Participation and Online Voting

Theme 1 *understanding millennial participation and online voting* emerged as the most substantial role activity for participants. Youths in Nigeria have in the past, been unexposed to politics as it has been a coveted project for elders. The political scene has been jealously guarded by elites who have spent decades of their lives as politicians and work against having the younger generation compete against them. Modern ways to communicate and discover information has also been scarcely available to Nigerian youths, except for the privileged few. In the past, the internet and mobile communication were termed luxury items and were made unreasonably expensive. This social defect created a gap in communication, especially for the youth and kept them from knowledge that expose them to political development and their participation via online platforms. The major issue therefore, was the lack of knowledge and understanding that there is power in the media and that the voices of youths (which their strength can also be drawn from) can be heard. The lack of knowledge deprived them of the understanding of their rights and benefits in participation in politics.

When asked to give account of their experience in all participants noted that the

most important factor of political participation is equipping them with effective and adequate tools and providing significant support to give the needed knowledge, understanding and power for role activities in realizing effective performance. As revealed in table 1, all nine participants gave responses with 18 references. During the interview, one participant described his feelings in the following way:

My role with millennial participation in voting online is to educate the youth and empower them with knowledge of the rights and roles in politics, to enable them carry out their tasks in bringing the nation out of political darkness. The problem is the long period of military rule and the oppressive democratic experience we have had, which relegates the youth in Nigeria to the back stage.

Another participant describing his role stated that;

My contribution is to bring the youths of this nation together. As a youth leader, most of my colleagues depend on me to gather facts and deliver to them for developmental purposes. This does not exclude political participation. As such, I gather facts on the rights of youths and on the strength that we as the most active section of the population can bring forward, to achieve a positive change in the political scene in Nigeria.

A third participant stated;

My job is to disseminate information to encourage the youths to participate in politics. Online information is the fastest and most effective means of communication in Nigeria. It is a powerful tool that affects the nation positively

and negatively. As such, I use this tool effectively to bring youths in politics together.

A fourth participant described his experience when he stated that;

Lack of education and exposure is a huge problem and has contributed to the lack of understanding of the youth's position in the politics of our nation. The youths are focused on irrelevant subjects such as "Big Brother Nigeria" whereas the society is falling apart. If the energy they put into irrelevant programs is invested in their future, by understanding the role they are meant to play in politics, and by playing the role effectively, the effects of their participation in politics will yield fruitful results.

Another participant explained how his knowledge in tweeting and retweeting has given him understanding on how online voting can generate millennial participants. She said;

The normal tweeting and retweeting of stories on tweeter helps to pull crowd because of the nature of the application which has numerous followership attached to individual accounts. This is the fastest way of doing successful campaigning and voting for the right candidate based on what you see people write about him or her. You can make your choice based on people's arguments and comments about such a candidate.

As participants described their experiences, they all agreed that their roles required more prolific actions aimed at ensuring effective performance through adequate dissemination of information and knowledge to enhance the massive engagement of youths in politics, and focusing on online voting as a means to wave the barriers

encountered in the past. The data backs Ryan and Deci's (2000) form of motivation that requires a driving force with persons acting to fulfill the requirements of an external source. In the case of participants who are bloggers, the ability to provide useful and attractive information to boost the morale of Nigerian youths of voting age, serves as the stimulus for their performance.

Some participants acknowledged that their role required active cooperation and engagement with youths, beginning from tertiary institutions, to nurture good performance. The fifth participant described his experience with older politicians, through actively engaging with them in the following way;

The older politicians in Nigeria try all they can to prevent the younger generation from becoming politicians. They prefer to oppress them, using money to control the way they think and act. By this, it is difficult for the youths to stand up to their own thoughts and intentions especially as the funds are not available to match up with actions against these older politicians.

Each participant understood the facts about motivating and enlightening youths, and the importance of their involvement in participating in politics and online voting. This thought backs Campbell et al.'s (2016) view that leaders (which in this case are the youth leaders) have an obligation to protect the interests of their subjects, and provide the knowledge that they require to succeed. Unfortunately, in Nigeria, some leaders go against this principle and work with those who destroy the democracy in the nation, for financial benefits. In most cases, the youths are the ones used as political thugs and instruments to cause mayhem during elections. For those who are educated, they are used

to recruit and entice members of the public who may have needs and seek to take advantage of the financial rainfall that comes with accepting politicians with no concrete objective. A sixth participant stated;

My experience with youths is that people weigh what we know versus what they expect before presenting it to the public, especially where youths are concerned. A simple information may be misunderstood and may cause a devastating effect on the nation if youths decide to go on a rampage based on information they have received from the media or any other source. The youths have their strong hold in social media and online news platforms and this may go in either way for them. It may go negative if the information is not passed properly, and it may go positive if the information is passed meaningfully. In essence, the message of millennial participation must be explained thoroughly to the youths for proper understanding, to enable them have knowledge of how they should, why they need to participate, and the effect of their participation especially with the online strength, which they possess.

Participants all agreed that various means could be used to enlighten youths across the nation on ways they can participate in politics peacefully, and how online voting can influence their choice candidate thereby providing political strength for them. Another participant stated,

The truth is that twitter has become a very powerful tool to spreading information, be it true or false. The fact that these information can be generated and disseminated from private sources, gives individuals enough courage to pass out

whatever information they feel like. We have had troubles come of such publications but in Nigeria, this is not taken seriously. This means that the weight of information passed may be weak due to lack of credibility. This may affect the way knowledge is being passed on the issue of educating youths on this subject matter. I believe that professional and compulsory education on youth participation in voting online should be given to our youths.

Some probing questions were asked during interviews, to further prompt clearer descriptions to help in providing rich and brief responses to the research question of lived experience about youths voting the conservative way, beginning with political rallies. In a situation, I asked, 'can you tell me how exposing you to older and crude politicians has affected you'? To incite a deeper response, the participant answered;

In such a situation, we are at the mercy of these crude politicians. You know that if we do our rallies online via twitter, we are safeguarded by our privacy and we can protect ourselves from any form of danger. This is not the case with the exposure of youths to politicians and their touts. Many emotional and physical damages have been done to youths in that past, which make them shy away from politics completely.

Participants expressed a level of concern regarding their preparedness and interest in participating in politics in Nigeria in the same and usual political setting. However, one participant described that based on his experience in blogging over the last nine years; he believes that Nigerian youths are yet to fully understand how they can achieve their political desires through the power of online media. The participant stated;

I have seen many Nigerian youths who participate in online news and blogs. Most of them only come out to insult the government or people in politics, and that is where it ends. A lot of them fail to realize that rather than focusing all their energy on fighting the system and politicians online, they can generate power together, to form the kind of government they want through their massive participation in politics by online promotions and voting.

The results of this study support these statements, as all participants agreed that it is essential for youths to understand politics in detail, and to understand how they can gain strength in politics through youth participation in online campaigns and voting. All the participants gave a detailed summary during member checking, of their feelings about the importance of understanding, literacy and knowledge, to stir up good support and strength for performances in their role activity.

Viewing the data from a democratic-participant theoretical perspective, a part of the theoretical framework for this study is shaped by the provision of equal access to all stakeholders. This is essential to provide the moral support and the technical empowerment obtainable in political settings, to allow youths gather the strength to effectively work towards their political choice, with the same opportunities provided to every voter and candidate. Understanding millennial participation and online voting in Nigerian politics is essential for effective building of political strategies towards the success of millennial voters in an online voting exercise, through Twitter and online boosting.

Drawing from the uses and gratification theoretical perspective also, the powerful effect of the media on its audience will create a more realistic outcome in online campaigns and elections since online media audience have full privacy of their decisions, reactions and actions towards voting.

From these viewpoints, the conventional political styles of coercion of voters through touting and hooliganism, supported by trading votes for money at polling stations can be averted and replaced with online political activities that protect the voters from exercising their rights to vote and choose an ideal candidate. Participants displayed distrust for and fear of older politicians who they described as diabolic and evil, and feel these politicians can do anything just to stay in power.

Emergent Theme Two: Government Collaboration

Theme 2 *government collaborations* supports participants belief that the Nigerian governments closeness to youths and the positive things that they are attracted to, will provide a machinery for the amendment of the political atmosphere in Nigeria. It will also direct the way elections are carried out with the heavy presence of youths, voting through online mediums to enhance the efficiency of their mitigation efforts towards non-participation of Nigerian youths in the electoral process of the nation. With the collaboration of government, an inclusion of a strategic electoral plan, the involvement of youths, and the development of the electoral process through technological inputs focusing on online voting, the government electoral agency can manage a successful process. Rahimnia and Mazidi (2015) noted that managerial vicinity positively affects the chances of supervisory use of verbal impact and influence. This can either be presented in

ways that will gather support of the electoral process from the youth or allow the youths and the entire political scene distrust the system. Owing to the fact that the government has all the tools available to create a strong political atmosphere with the support of youths, adding online techniques to voting in Nigeria will be a positive strategy to gain support of the youths towards this process. As government and individuals operate Twitter accounts and information is received from both ends, it may be worthwhile for the nation to connect its electoral machinery and procedures to the social media, to achieve the benefits of fast, central and numerical participation across the country as well as all eligible voting age groups.

When asked how government collaboration affected the success in their role involving millennial voting in 2015 Nigerian election, participants stressed the fact that government has sidelined the youths from having a say in Nigerian politics as the highest bidder or the strongest godson to a political godfather always have their way. One participant said,

Government has allowed the rich and powerful take over the political scene in Nigeria. These politicians just keep rotating and coming back or bring their children to take over from them as if political offices are owned by them. Policy makers in this nation ignore the fact that people rely on policies to achieve change. They ignore these changes because of their personal and selfish interests, believing that the youths can be bought over with stipends. I blame the government for these lapses because they are part of the system failing.

Another participant said,

The government is scared of anything that involves technology, which can be accessed. The fact that online voting will be visible and accessible to the world is enough reason for the government to discourage it. The government is brought in through the same fraudulent electoral processes, and do all they can to protect the system that brought them in. It is difficult for the old system and the new system to blend. What I mean by this is the mixture of the old and new generation in politics. If online voting is introduced in Nigeria, the old generation will have no place in politics. As such, they will do everything possible to frustrate the effort of youths in attempting to introduce it into politics in Nigeria.

A third participant expressed concern that only policies that do not affect politicians are changed and upgraded. The participant stated,

Policy makers are not interested in coming up with good policies that affect the political scene and process in Nigeria as the changes may affect their political parties or the politicians, directly. For this reason, there are no available policies that deal directly with the improvement of electoral processes or in upgrading the process to involve youth participation that has less of government control.

Government, politicians and touts control the manual kind of voting while the voters mostly control the online voting, especially if it is done through Twitter and the entire world sees what is happening.

Fitzgerald et al (2016) opined that citizen and government involvement in decision-making is important in guaranteeing effective acquiescence of policies. A

participant was also concerned about neglect of youths in Nigerian politics. The participant stated,

If youths are completely ignored in Nigeria politics the problem it will create is producing inexperienced politicians in future. Government should come up with policies that support the inclusion of youths in every area of politics and should discourage the older generation from participating in politics after a certain age. If this is done, youths that are vibrant and full of ideas will take over the political scene. I believe this is what the government and the older politicians are scared of.

Similarly, another participant noted the fact that politicians neglect youth after using him or her for political gains. She said:

The youths have also sold their birthrights to politicians. They allow themselves to be used as touts by these older politicians, after which they are dumped and older allies of the politicians are appointed into political offices and have no plans for the youths other than preparing to use them for the next elections. The youths themselves should put a stop to this, and present themselves as responsible citizens of the nation who have a role to play in the nation's development.

One participant acknowledged the benefits of having government collaboration and interaction with the youths in politics. The participant described a case where things in Nigeria went wrong by ignoring youths and taking decisions that were beneficial to older politicians. The participant ardently stated,

In the past, the government of Nigeria has been taken over by young men in the military because of older politicians running down the nation's economy and

infrastructure set up and developed by the British during the colonial era. If not for the fact that other nations do not support the military ruling this nation, I believe the military would have taken over again. The neglect of youths and collaboration of government with youths affects them negatively as well. It can clearly be seen from many decisions being taken by civilian politicians and the military older generation. For example, the old politicians in power have kept older military men who are supposed to have been retired over five years ago. This decision has destroyed the careers of many young military officers who because of this enforcement of older expired military officers, they have been denied of producing military Service Chiefs of a new generation.

A follow-up session afforded the participant the opportunity to restate how lack of government collaboration with youths negatively affected a large percentage of youths that were interested in politics and nation building. Their general belief is that government was on the side of the old politicians who brought them into power, and will continue to dance to the music of these politicians, disregarding the importance of youth participation in politics, and the technological development of the political scene in Nigeria.

No new data was generated during member checking as all participants accepted that the genuine and strategic collaboration of government with youths would influence their role performance in millennial participation in politics and online voting. Observing the data from a critical theoretical viewpoint, which forms the framework for this study, participants came up with a deduction that the impact of lack of collaboration with youths

by the government is because of the relaxed norm in the Nigerian society, and a seeming culture in the government and political scene of the nation. This supports Blumer (1969) ground, which states that social interaction offers quality to the meaning that people have about a subject.

Emergent Theme Three: Corruption

Theme 3 *corruption* emerged as an outgrowth of perceptual discussions through which participants described their experiences working in a corrupt society. Participants are all of the opinion that the Nigeria would have been a better nation if the interest of the nation were put first, before personal interests. They all believe that as long as the politicians and policy makers continue to think of their personal gains rather than the benefits of the nation, development in the political scene of the country, involving youths and technological development for the electoral process may be far cry from reality.

Participants believed that corruption of public officers, politicians and the larger part of the society is directly responsible for the inability of policy makers to draft policies that ensure the inclusion of youths, and the development of technology in the election process in Nigeria. Participants also reported that a large number of youths have also been corrupted by politicians who offer them stipends to snatch ballot boxes and manipulate results during elections. All the participant's descriptions centered on how various levels of corrupt practices before, during and after elections, lead to the appointment of wrong candidates into public offices. These candidates are the same who guard their positions jealously by preventing the youths from active participation and by thwarting genuine attempts to develop and advance the election process. As participants

reported their experiences, they signified that open and physical interactions between government, politicians and the youth might eradicate corruption if these interactions result in youth inclusion in politics, and the use of means to create transparency in election processes. One participant asserted,

Politics in Nigeria is known for enriching a selected few and causing poverty to the majority. Even the electoral process itself has these same characteristics as politicians roll out money for their campaigns and for the elections proper. As some individuals and groups enjoy the benefits of acquiring wealth through touting and rigging, others are impoverished. The youths in Nigeria are divided into two segments when it comes to election; the touts and the excluded. While the touts are satisfied, with whatever stipends they get from older politicians, the excluded and younger people who are interested in being included in the politics of the nation, either to contribute in nation building or to act like the older politicians who are known for corruption and greed.

Another participant shared online links pointing at the repercussions of corruption in the nation, and the results of youth exclusion in politics. The participant stated,

These old politicians know what they are doing. They are the ones with the money so they know how to make the youths poor, and then use their money to entice them to do things that are beneficial to the politicians in power. The politicians do not want these young men and women to share the nation's wealth with them so they have kept the Nigerian youths far away from things that can bring them to political limelight. The older generation understand the power that

online media, marketing and voting can cause to older politicians so they will do everything in their power to fight against policies that tend to include these youth-based political tools.

The initial response given by this participant required another session to elucidate meaning. The participant reiterated that his knowledge of the acts and tactics of politicians has given him enough experience to know that without proper strategies and formation of policies, the youth will never have place in politics. He confirmed that the media is kept away from active youths who voice out on the issues affecting their involvement in politics. The media is paid by politicians to distract the public from progressive news while various acts bantering that tend to attract public attention are being sponsor, to occupy the media space. This response aligned with UGT provides an in-depth explanation of the rational motivation of why people use the media (Anaeto, Onabanjo, & Osifeso, 2008). Another participant stated that corruption in Nigeria is thickly grounded and will take very strict sanctions against perpetrators, to end the practice. The participant stated,

Corruption is not only when public officers steal money from their Agencies.

When politicians pay votes to be counted in their favor, it is corruption. When the media and press are paid to either spread news or keep news away from the public once the act will be beneficial to their sponsors, it is also corruption. These acts are deeply rooted in the nation and need very strict sanctions against the perpetrators of these acts. With these negative acts in place, and no remedy against them, the nation will only keep suffering in the hands of politicians who

have the money to ensure that it is only what they want that comes out in the media.

One participant shared an experience involving the head of a state electoral commission being paid millions of Naira to ensure that a candidate wins the state elections. The participant stated,

No matter how much good publicity you put out in the media via newspaper and television, it does not change the desires and the strategies of these older politicians since they have the money to manipulate the stories that come out through these media houses. It would have been different if these stories came out online because people who do not fear the truth will come out to oppose deceitful statements and posts that tend to mislead the public.

Another participant shared a different perspective highlighting the importance of factoring in foreign observers that are saddled with much more responsibilities than observing from a distance. She was of the opinion that powers should be given to foreign observers, to participate in every electoral phase, including the disqualification of candidates and the selection and monitoring of prospective candidates, which must include a sizeable percentage of qualified youths. The participant stated,

Nigerian politicians and government will respect the opinions of foreign observers who are empowered to carry out actions that may stop the oppression of these corrupt politicians. This should include screening and selection of qualified candidates, and publication of updates via online media, for opinions and feedbacks from the public. The entire campaign and voting processes should also

be put up online for the youths to have the opportunity to vote for whom they want without being oppressed.

Another participant stated,

The government should take out of those university professors used as election commissioners in various states. These men seek favors from politicians and will do anything to ensure that when these politicians come into power, they will return their favors. Therefore, these men help the politicians to rig elections and keep young men away from politics since they know that these young men are more likely to ignore them if they gain political power.

Further sessions intended at gaining elucidation on interpretation did not provide any new information. Participants believed that government should introduce other policies that will allow the inclusion of youths, introduction of online publicity and campaigns, and the incorporation of foreign observers saddled with powers to ensure zero tolerance of corruption within the electoral process, beginning with the campaigning phase. In line with the democratic-participant theory, which is a politico-media philosophy, which stresses that the media is at its best if its access to stakeholders, is democratized, participants showed that meaning acquired during the critique of political norms, will help in developing functional strategies aimed at driving performance.

Emergent Theme Four: Youth Revolution

Theme 4 *youth Revolution* revealed that participants understanding of the solutions for youth inclusion in politics and formation of policies to ensue online participation in politics and voting, is ambiguous. Participants believed that what the

country needs to become aware of the fact that the Nigerian youths were extracted from politics, is a revolution against the government. In their views, the government does not accept dialog on issues regarding technological development in election processes and the inclusion of youth in politics, for various reasons bothering on corruption and the desire for the older politicians to hold on to power for as long as they are alive.

Participants believed that by coming together to disrupt public activities and halt productive functions of the government, especially where revenue is generated for government to function, they could create an avenue to bargain with government. They also believed that they could achieve some of the things that may lead to a change in the political scene, including youths and online processes to improve elections in Nigeria.

One participant mentioned that,

We the youths in Nigeria have been silent on our rights for too long and the older politicians and government seem to be taking us for granted. The only language they will understand is a revolution. The only way is to halt the activities in the nation until the government listen to us and provide a platform where the youths can become actively involved in politics and contribute meaningfully.

Similarly, another participant described how an understanding of various approaches to technological enhancement might work in Nigeria. The participant stated,

Technology and the new wave in the society belong to the youths. We are knowledgeable and advanced in technology and can use this in our advantage to win credible elections through voting by participants who have all their voting rights and privileges intact. Though the older generation seem scared of the fact

that youths will dominate the online space, voting via Twitter and other online platforms will present many more, and genuine voters, which will in turn provide the best candidate without a godfather that, will provide change in our society.

Some participants recognized the fact that technological advancement had changed the process of campaigning and voting, as such, new ideas should be introduced to solve the problem of political touts, godfathers and election fraud in Nigeria. As an example, one participant stated,

The normal practice in Nigeria has been political oppression of candidates and political parties that are in the opposition. In most cases, the stronger political party in localized areas are in charge of the polling stations and the results as they either physically assault the agents of the electoral commission or buy them over with money. This cannot happen if an online process is introduced where participants have the freedom, privacy and choice to select their preferred candidate.

Participant knowledge about the subject was also based on experience as online bloggers and media professionals. One participant recalled that,

Based on the experience gained from online voting done by events managers and corporate organizations where the public votes for their choice candidate as winners of a live game show, it is clear that the participants made the choices to vote either by friendly negotiations or by choice. If a participant decides not to vote for a candidate, he or she cannot be forced to. This means that the right for every eligible voter to vote for a candidate of choice cannot be compromised.

One participant acknowledged that the Electoral Commission and the government were prepared to commit millions of dollars to technological development towards the electoral process in Nigeria. The participant stated,

Although it would have been a good, idea to invest into technological means to improve elections and voting in Nigeria, this may be another opportunity for government to divert government resources into the pockets of some particular people. We have seen this before. The situation with the card readers bought by the same Electoral Commission is a good example of this. Most of them did not work but millions of dollars were paid out for this project.

Another participant stated,

In Nigeria, dialog does not result in anything progressive. We have done this too many times. Sometimes, the government frustrates our efforts by bringing laws that prevent us from expressing ourselves as youths. Other times, the politicians let out their thugs with sophisticated weapons to apply deadly force on youths that oppose their candidates. The only way out of this, and the way forward is to revolt in numbers and take our future back in our hands finally.

No fresh details emerged during follow-up sessions meant to validate either interview transcripts or themes development after data analysis. Participants voiced out their views that a proper understanding of the framework of online voting, campaigning and enlightenment will aid in the acceptance of more effective strategies to generate expected results in electoral reforms through Twitter online voting

Emergent Subtheme One: Millennial Knowledge in Local Politics

The subtheme *millennial knowledge in local politics* emerged from participant's descriptions of their role performance during participation in politics and media coverage in Nigeria. A shared perception held by the participants suggested that youths were not given the opportunity to understand and practice politics in Nigeria, as such, they lack experience. When asked of their inputs to the general efforts aimed at promoting youth understanding of local politics and their participation, participants responded with the following experiences;

Youths in Nigeria are always sidelined when it comes to politics and participation in decisive roles concerning the electoral process. Now that technology has made it easy for youths to learn anything online, most of us have educated ourselves to understand that online voting and election process is the strongest and most effective in terms of genuineness. You have the opportunity to vote for who you want based on your findings of the candidates capabilities and intentions to develop the nation.

Another participant acknowledged that the knowledge that the youths require for politics is not such that must be obtained in an institution of higher learning since most of the older politicians have been observed not to have attained such educational status. The participant stated,

These older experienced politicians always make politics seems like something that the youths cannot easily learn and understand. Although it is important to get a formal education to be able to understand how to generate and work with

policies, it is important to note that the knowledge of politics can be gained by experience or by research. Now, every form of knowledge is available online and the youths are the champions of online information. This means that the youths have more knowledge of global politics, which can be applied in the Nigerian concept, to achieve development.

Emergent Subtheme Two: Barriers to Participation in Millennial Voting and Politics

Subtheme two *barriers to participation in millennial voting and politics* emerged as participants recounted their role in attempting to create policies that allow youths participate freely, in politics. When asked the question about how twitter as one of the social media platforms affected millennial in Nigeria's 2015 presidential election, participants stated that largely, it helped to generate support for preferred candidates but that was the farthest it went. Responses offered captured mental discussions in the minds of participants about their actions as individuals, and their behavior as players involved in online politics and media.

One participant stated,

The best twitter involvement in the 2015 election did was to promote various candidates to the public. In the past, it was difficult to promote candidates that were not rich or popular, as rich and famous politicians would have bought off all the media houses. This way, most voters do not know who other candidates are or what they are capable of doing. This time, twitter helped to bring every candidate out and expose him or her to the personal decisions of voters based on

information provided about them. This informed the personal choices of voters, at least.

An interesting response was shared by one participant in response to a question on the extent to which twitter and online participation affected millennial voter turnout during the election. He stated,

Online participation and the physical participation are different. You may do all your ground work online and attract voters to your candidate based on the information you have given about him but that does not affect the turnout of voters during the physical elections. Because youths have their online spaces to themselves, they can decide on whom they want to vote for but that cannot help the candidate to win an election.

The participant noted that discussions of this sort are necessary, important, and will help readdress the focus of government, policy makers and politicians on the electoral process in Nigeria. Finally, the last response to a probing question on what the difference of online and live elections in Nigeria, the participant stated,

In Nigeria, there is nothing like online voting except for game shows. Of course there is online campaigning for candidates but that is the limit your choice can get to. Even if the entire youths chose a particular candidate and the number of youths exceed the number of other voters, it does not guarantee the candidate victory. It ends online because during the live voting; youths will be beating up, killed and threatened so most of them would not come out to vote. Even when voting is done, political touts take ballot boxes away. Where the ballot boxes are left, the

election officials are bribed to falsify results. These have defeated the aim of credible elections.

In response to the question about voter apathy, a participant responded:

Online voting is the answer to the problems of rigging elections in Nigeria. Youth voter and weaker candidates cannot be successful in electing the right candidate in a free and fair election as long as voting is open and people are exposed to thugs and political businesspersons. This is why many people do not come out to vote. Try creating a law enabling online voting and see the way voter's turnout will improve in Nigeria.

During member checking, participants confirmed the exactness of transcripts and repeated concise versions of their initial responses, during the follow-up sessions. In summary, participant believed that strong intervention efforts would positively affect the consideration of full online voting during elections in Nigeria.

Emergent Subtheme Three: Lack of Required Resources to Create Positive Impact

The subtheme *lack of required resources to create positive impact* validates the view that money is required to consolidate any plan, without which it will only remain a plan on paper on in the mind. Participants understood the value of funding in promoting a political career in Nigeria. This subtheme emerged following participants repeated references to politicians, government and political parties having excess funds at their disposal, to change the political game to suite themselves. Participants mentioned that having sufficient funds to sponsor elections in Nigeria is one of the major components for success.

One participant stated,

I have witnessed where people are lined up to vote for their choice of candidates and that changes when politicians openly use money to buy their votes. In fact, because of poverty, many hungry voters actually come out to sell their votes. If the right people had, the funds required educating the youths that selling their votes has a negative effect on their future, people would stop selling their votes and elect the right candidates. In essence, money is required to educate and give proper orientation to eligible voters.

For people to be in a position to give clear guidance to the youths, they must have enough knowledge and experience. Participants agreed that finances should be set aside to train electoral officials on online voting and electoral processes to allow voters the exclusive right, opportunity and freedom to vote for their choice candidate. Another participant stated emphatically,

What we need resources for it to set up a proper election process that involves online voting. It is possible that it will be as successful as that of online game shows where voting is transparent and the winner is clearly determined by the number of votes. With this system put in place, voters cannot be coerced into voting for candidates that are not their choice. For this to happen, a whole lot of money is required for training, and for setting up the infrastructure to ensure the success of millennial participation in politics, with privacy and freedom to vote for any candidate.

Participant's responses showed that resources are very relevant in setting expectations to achieve success but should be achieved with proper knowledge, experience, and understanding of the situation.

Emergent Subtheme Four: Professional Enhancement for Social Development

The emergence of this subtheme *professional enhancement for social development* evolved from responses shared by participants about their role experience as occupants of leadership positions responsible for policy formulation in Nigeria.

A participant said;

There is no way there can be any form of social development without professional enhancement. The society can only be developed when there is an upgrade in professional enlightenment and conduct.

Participants offered a collective commitment on the need for driving performance and a clear understanding of their responsibilities over societal development. They agree that vague understanding of their roles and obligations towards the society could negatively affect the behavior and performance of the electorate and the voters alike. One participant explained this during our interview,

The only way to move forward in a society is to provide professional development. In regards to millennial participation and twitter voting, it is imminent that various forms of development are required to step up the electoral process. To do this the electoral commission should send their officials to developed countries to learn and understand how things work in those countries. Some countries have a working process for online voting for those who cannot

make the live voting process. Because the system works with well-educated professionals, societal development will spring up.

Others noted that professionals in the field of elections and online voting should be brought to Nigeria to study its peculiar situation, and solutions to its problems should be proffered. One participant explained that,

Developed countries should be invited to study the political situation of this country to analyze it properly and find solutions to the problems. Professional enhancement cannot be over emphasized as one sure tool that is required for the development of the Nigerian political scene, which should give rise to societal development. There is no doubt that online voting and the inclusion of twitter in elections is very vital. To make this work effectively, adequate training and development is inevitable.

Participant's with roles' descriptions of their lived experiences revealed that having outstanding understanding of the subject as well as a commitment to driving performance, the only other tool required for success is the ability and capability to fulfill their role performance activities. During member checking, participants who also agreed with the interviews transcripts and themes development provided no further information.

Emergent Subtheme Five: Creation of Policies to Encourage Millennial

Participation in Politics

This subtheme *creation of policies to encourage millennial participation in politics* emerged from responses participants offered, indicating that the development and approval of policies that encourage youths to get active in politics will help them to be

more effective in their role performance. Participants expressed feelings of dissatisfaction with the regular complaints of inability for change to occur without a new policy in place to back the change. In agreement with UNDG (2017), theory of change provides interventions that are expected to lead to a specific development change. Using the available opportunities to create policies to change the electoral process and incorporate youths into politics and development is at the peril of the policy makers who also form part of the political parties.

A participant said,

The National Assembly is made up of members from various parties. The problem in passing policies into law is that if a policy does not favor a particular political party, it will be difficult for the House to accept it. The truth is that a lot of us who are policy makers know that we need youth involved in politics. We are also aware that online voting through twitter is a reliable, accountable, and transparent way to vote. The problem with this is that it does not favor some individuals and some political parties, as such; it will be difficult for such policies to see the light of day.

In response to a follow-up question to clarify meaning, a participant elaborated his point on voter apathy in the following way,

The power of online campaigns is actually stronger than the live campaigns where you may be forced to vote for some candidate other than yours, for particular reasons. Online campaigns provide every voter the opportunity to know and trust a particular candidate to deliver the promises of democracy, in the comfort of his

or her privacy. We may have to come up with policies that further protect voters from the claws of crude politicians.

One more participant stated that,

The Electoral Commission is in charge of the technical operations of the electoral process and may not need any law to introduce certain conditions into the process. If the Commission introduces youth participation and online voting mechanisms into the electoral process, I believe nobody is in the position to oppose this decision as the Commission is empowered to carry out processes that develop and promote the best standards of the election process.

Emergent Subtheme Six: Youth Coercion Resulting from Poverty

As poverty continues to loom in the country, it is difficult to determine how poor voters can choose a candidate of their choice without the temptation of being offered money in exchange for their franchise. The subtheme *youth coercion resulting from poverty* emerged during participant's responses about voting for the candidate of their choice or if they are manipulated to vote for other candidates. Participants expressed mixed feelings of frustration in having to choose a candidate who is not theirs, and satisfaction in getting a temporary means of livelihood. One participant stated,

You cannot blame the poor for selling their votes to politicians. How else will they get money to feed? Some of these people have no jobs and no means to even eat a meal in a day. Selling their votes serves as a means to feed, and the government is to blame for this. Sometimes, I think that the government is

intentionally subjecting the people to poverty so that they can be used during elections as voting mercenaries, in exchange for money.

Another participant stated,

The masses collecting the money for their votes are not complaining about this exchange but they are the same people that will later complain about bad government and poverty amongst the youth. If there were active and genuine youth empowerment programs that teach our youth's self-empowerment it will be very difficult to buy their votes since they will be looking at a bigger picture of national development. The best solution to this however, is the online form of election where nobody can be forced or coerced to vote for anyone. Since online voting is a private affair, things will turn around in terms of the candidates that are chosen. The fastest way I think this can happen is by including youths who are versatile in internet operations and online activities, into politics and the election process.

Emergent Subtheme Seven: The Need to Work with Reality

The subtheme *the need to work with reality* emerged as participants described how Nigerians have still not realized the truth about the political situation in the nation and how working and living in assumptions cannot move a nation forward. Some participants felt that politicians in Nigeria have hijacked the nation and its polity, and as such, the nation, the electoral process and the citizens will remain under their authority. This appears to be true because the government and the politicians appear to be one body.

One participant stated,

As long as all the political appointees come from the ruling party and the opposition parties are not strong enough, things will continue to go wrong with the electoral system. The government is the same as the politicians and the politicians have the masses under their control so what do you expect? It will continue to be a revolving act except something happens to change this.

Other participants acknowledged that a drastic change in the political scene is required as a solution to transform the voting ethics of the nation. One participant stated, What we need in Nigeria is a revolution. That is the only way we can get the older generation out of politics. They have failed us for 60 years, since we got our independence. All the politicians since then have failed us as a nation. It is time to send all of them home and allow the youths take over politics. This is the reality of the situation. The system is so corrupt and fashioned in a way that can never change except a drastic action is taken to recover our nation from the hands of these older politicians. They cannot develop new policies to fight against corrupt electoral practices; nobody has been convicted for election fraud, and so on. As long as these things and these people are still in place, Nigeria has no hope when it comes to politics. We need a real revolution.

Discrepant Cases

All participants appreciatively responded to interview questions, they provided useful details on their roles and activities regarding millennial voting and the use of twitter in Nigerian elections. All participants were cooperative and responded to all interview questions. During the interview records reviews, one discrepant case where the

participant response was considerably different from the responses of others was recognized. The participant felt that he was entitled to sell his votes to make money for himself, and did not see anything wrong with that. He insisted that if he was a politician, he will also engage in buying votes. His point was that this is the Nigeria he met and so he is not interested in changing anything as long as it works for him.

Responses from the other three participants to the interview questions on their experiences and knowledge were described as either staggering or unacceptable. Amazingly, one participant offered no precise experience even after further probing during the interview. Her position offered her no first-hand experience in the subject, which explained her inability to share experiences of precise instances relating to twitter voting and millennial participation in elections.

The Essence of Participants Experience

The focus of participant's involvement is to describe the meanings participants ascribed resulting from actual accounts of their roles with the issue. This account offers a mixture of the documented and physical participant descriptions regarding their experiences. Participants comprised politicians, bloggers, youth leaders, media practitioners, and political scientists and analysts shared stories related to their role perceptions, role behaviors, and role performance within the perspective of millennial participation in voting, using twitter as a platform.

Their beliefs, feelings, and thoughts about their role in electoral processes, good knowledge, understanding of their role also in online voting and millennial participation in elections were shared to help set clear expectations, identify fruitless and threatening

activities, and ensure intervention can be achieved with necessary support (Schalow et al., 2013). Sharing their experiences therefore, will highlight most of the flaws that may have been concealed from authorities because of fear of being attacked by political opponents or touts. This in turn, may be addressed, resulting in positive impacts that would be significantly enhanced, yielding increased levels of performance by the officials of government electoral commissions across the nation.

Each participant understood that changes in the electoral process required developing laws and passing them into law by legislative though some claim that executive orders are sufficient to draw up guidelines for the commission to operate. In addition, participants viewed the mitigation of electoral malpractices from a performance perspective, combining observation with verbal persuasion. Having a personal commitment to driving performance and an understanding of the responsibility for controlling electoral malpractices as well as enforcing the guidelines for operation as recommended by the electoral body, be essential for all officials assigned to this task.

In conclusion, participants viewed an understanding developing antidotes for corrupt practices during elections, along with labor development and the provision of laws as well as adequate and necessary training, as useful enhancers for performance and effectiveness.

Summary

In Chapter 4, an account of the research setting, participant demographics, participant recruitment, data collection, data analysis process, and evidence of methods used to ensure trustworthiness were presented. Details of the data analysis results used to

reveal the meaning participants attributed to their roles was also provided. This chapter also contains details of the thematic development process used to derive the essences of participant experiences offered, and a discrepant case identified during data analysis was discussed. In Chapter 5, details of how the results of the study contribute to the body of knowledge is given. The chapter includes facts on the study's limitations and its impact on trustworthiness. Chapter 5 concludes with recommendations for future research and implications of the study from a social change perspective.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the study's purpose, methods, and results. The theoretical framework's effect on the interpretation method from a post-data analysis perspective is also discussed. Details of the study's limitations and trustworthiness are enclosed in this chapter. The chapter is concluded with recommendations for further research and a discussion of the influence of the study from a social change viewpoint.

Overview

This study explored the lived experiences of bloggers, media practitioners, politicians, and political scientists to understanding how millennial participation and Twitter voting affected the 2015 presidential elections in Nigeria. The decision to conduct this study was informed by the need to apply other measures to enable a free and fair election in Nigeria through youth participation. The study specifically focused on millennial participation in elections and the impact of online voting via Twitter during the 2015 presidential elections in Nigeria.

I used a qualitative research process, applying a phenomenological method to unravel knowledge. Qualitative research presents a comprehensive framework that allows for detailed examination of complex issues related to a lived experience (Khan, 2014). The quantitative method was not ideal for providing an accurate interpretation of participants' lived experiences and an extensive description of the issue (Yilmaz, 2013).

This study leads the research effort to discover the effects of Twitter and youth participation in politics during 2015 presidential election in Nigeria, using theoretical

frameworks that pull from the democratic-participant theory and UGT. Existing research on online election practices focused on the impact of online voting on elections. This study stretches the knowledge on millennial participation in politics and the election process while using Twitter as an online voting mechanism, with a goal towards developing workable and more effective approaches for youth participation with online techniques.

Interpretation of the Findings

A descriptive phenomenologist aims at recounting the significant and meaningful issues found within the rich textual data derived from participant responses (Giorgi, 2012). In Chapter 2, current research studies focusing largely on the impact of millennial participation in voting via Twitter during the 2015 presidential elections in Nigeria were discussed. Regarding the research question that focused on the ways Twitter as a social media platform defined participation of millennial in promoting voter turnout and addressing voter apathy, the outcomes of this study helped unfold knowledge on the roles of all stakeholders involved in politics in Nigeria and develop workable strategies to be used in the electoral process.

Grass-Root Level Media's democratic-participant theory developed in the 1960s (Bajracharya, 2018) and Elihu Katz's UGT developed in the 1970s (Shao, 2009; Folarin, 1998). Together, they served as instruments for regulating the data collection plan and unravelling information during data analysis. Reviewing the impact of millennial participation on elections requires a constant process of periodic monitoring of various

elections as well as the media, continuous research and interviews with stakeholders, and thoughtful consideration and analysis of ideas.

The results provide an opening through which other researchers can understand reasons behind the neglect of youths from participation in politics, the inclusion of online voting techniques in the Nigerian electoral process, and ways through which Twitter can enhance voter apathy in Nigeria. This study proves that though youths may have been involved in politics and taking part in the conventional voting process, their rights to choose their own candidates may have been violated due to corrupt practices and forceful coercion. It also showed that the online voting process would allow more millennial voters participate in elections since the process is not exposed to touts, and it is easy for voters to select their candidates in the comfort of their privacy. The participants shared their perceptions on their roles, experiences, and performances within the context of millennial participation in politics in Nigeria.

The main findings of this study helped identify the significance of the roles of stakeholders involved in the Nigerian electoral process and the strategies required to transform the political arena of the nation, including millennial participation and online voting, especially with the aid of Twitter. Primarily, four key components resulting in the failure of the past and present electoral process were identified. The themes summarizing the flaws related to this include understanding millennial participation and online voting, government collaboration, corruption, and youth revolution.

In all, seven subthemes emerged, representing the different elements of participants' experiences: millennial knowledge in local politics, barriers to participation

in millennial voting and politics, lack of required resources to create positive impact, professional enhancement for social development, creation of policies to encourage millennial participation in politics, youth coercion resulting from poverty, and the need to work with reality. The findings support the view that most youths stay away from politics and voting due to various reasons including fear of being attacked by thugs of political opponents and fear of being forced to vote for other candidates against their wishes. It also indicates that online voting provides privacy and confidence for voters, as well as a right to vote for a candidate of choice.

The first theme, understanding millennial participation and online voting, was the most significant because of the need to assess the level of understanding of the youths regarding politics and voting online and create a link between knowledge and the need for their participation. The results of this study highlighted the inexperience of youths regarding politics. They also showed the benefits of introducing an online voting platform, including larger voter turnout resulting from increased privacy. The role of youths in politics in Nigeria involves responsibilities that warrant critical attention from all the arms of government, with a view to revising laws for inclusion and protection of youths in politics. The results revealed that youths had a very low sense of involvement, as most of them believed that politics was for the wealthier and older generation.

The second theme, government collaboration, proved to be vital for the success of national decision-making. This indicates that government is required to pull all its resources (human and material) to intervene in and supervise the electoral process to ensure credibility. Participants complained of government neglect and its support for

politicians. The various arms of government have their parts to play in the electoral process. Laws have to be passed to ensure that the electoral process is strengthened by a legal backing. To ensure compliance with these laws, punitive measures have to be put in place by the government to discourage lawbreakers and miscreants from taking laws into their hands. In addition, executives have to ensure that they appropriately prepare for credible elections, which must include training of electoral agency permanent and temporary staff.

The theme of corruption showed a disturbing concern that negatively affects the electoral process. Bamidele et al. (2013) confirmed that corruption deters the development of a society and destroys its citizens even in the midst of wealth. This study proved that corruption by politicians, public officers, and even the youth who gladly expose themselves to corruption because of its benefits to them, all contribute to the deterioration in the electoral system in Nigeria. For this to change, stern measures must be taken to discourage the youths from being corrupted, and to ensure that the wealth of politicians and corrupt government officials have no place in the determination of elections in Nigeria.

The theme youth revolution confirmed the thoughts of the youths in Nigeria regarding revolting against the government to attempt to change certain situations in Nigeria. Recently, Nigerians went on rampage on the streets, requesting for reforms. Their actions had an image of what participants expressed during the interview, signifying their plans to take over their place in the Nigerian political scene. While the youths plan to take back their political positions in Nigeria, data from this study shows

that majority of the youths in Nigeria are contented with making money from the older politicians. A few of them are bent on bringing a change in Nigeria but have a problem with strategically executing their plans, as evident by the failure in the October 2020 Nigeria youth revolution carried out by youths, to address and attempt to change some major policies that affect the youth in Nigeria directly. In engaging government with such revolution, the youths must be equipped with sufficient knowledge and experience through consultancy and professional training, and must hire strategists and professional mediators to assist them with rational negotiations and operating guidelines to achieve success.

The subtheme millennial knowledge of local politics revealed the importance of knowledge in the Nigerian political arena and its usefulness in aiding to develop the electoral process. Lack of understanding the political scene may hinder the provision of solutions to mitigate the problems being encountered. The major issues with this are knowledge that there are political godfathers who control the parties to bring out candidates of their choice; the strongest party in terms of rigging, funding and violence determines results. Knowledge of these will help in a strategic solution to avoid and prevent such filthy political practices. Understanding the political scene also positions the youth in a place where he or she may have to choose which way to go. This may either redirect a focused youth to do the right thing or join the corrupt majority.

The subtheme barriers to participation in millennial voting and politics depicts participant's beliefs there are solid forces behind the prevention of youths in Nigeria from participating in politics. Several forces who are older politicians have cabals that have

hijacked the political scene and will do everything to prevent youths from participation as they prefer to hold on to power for as long as they live. Based on this, the authorities have created a position for the youths to be impoverished, to depend on the older politicians for means of livelihood especially in form of handouts or fees for touting during elections.

The subthemes lack of required resources to create positive impact confirmed findings that indicated direct expectations are required to meet specific goals. Data collected proved that most elections are rigged with heavy financial input provided by older politicians whereas, the youths have no resources to even provide a sane political atmosphere conducive for modern elections using online voting. This subtheme therefore suggests that for education of youths to develop their capacity to build a strong political front, for modern election processes to be put in place, and for the political scene to be void of all forms of touting and electoral malpractices, financial, human and educative resources must be made available.

Professional enhancement for social development, one of the subthemes that emerged during data analysis, is an important part of equipping youths to occupy the position they crave for in the political scene. For a society to be developed, professional enhancement is required to continue the transformation of the lives of humans with increasing levels of integration into the day-to-day functioning. Training is needed to build up the youths and innovations in voting need to be introduced to promote the credibility of the electoral system. These enhancements include development and adoption of the online voting system as a legal voting method in Nigeria, beginning from

the campaigning phase to the election proper. This will allow voters know and choose candidates of their choices without interferences. It is the responsibility of every government to engage in enhancement in this area, through strategic planning to ensure they achieve social development through creditable elections.

The subtheme creation of policies to encourage millennial participation in politics emerged after participant responses suggesting that policies must be put in place for any change to occur in the election process. For there to be a legal inclusion of youths where a percentage of youths must be included in political benefits, a law must be passed to this effect. For online voting to be adopted as an authentic means of voting, laws must be passed, and to ensure strict compliance of these innovations, laws must also be passed. In summary, this subtheme implies that government, its officials and agents, legislatives, and the judiciary must put heads together to see as an obligation to the nation, the development of laws to provide political sanity in Nigeria.

Youth coercion resulting from poverty was the next subtheme that emerged during data analysis. Due to poverty in Nigeria, it is easy to coerce the youths to do dirty jobs for politicians. Where a political party is losing, the youths are sent to snatch ballot boxes and create chaos to dislodge the election process. All these are for stipends. As long as the youths can be positively engaged to make the offers from politicians unattractive, and they have a vision for a society free of social decadence resulting from their actions in fighting against election malpractices, a formidable political opening for the youths can be created.

The last subtheme, the need to work with reality explains the political norms that have been deeply rooted in the nation. There has to be an understanding and acceptance of the reality before steps are taken to mitigate the effects of a corrupt society and its political scene. With these facts in place, it is more convenient to proffer solutions based on reality; otherwise, it may be difficult to understand the developments that may enable the practical advancement of new strategies concerning the issue. In general, working with reality presents the opportunities for a combination of active and sensitive approaches to mitigation.

Limitations of the Study

A major limitation resulted from the sampling strategy, as the perception of sampled participants may not represent the opinion of all online voters in Nigeria, which may limit replicability of the study. The global pandemic situation, which resulted in the use of telephone interviews as the primary method for data collection, resulted in a shortfall since a lot of prompting questions to get deeper understanding was avoided because of inability to observe facial and body language of participants. This limitation was however addressed by triangulating data sources and merging interview data with data from interview notes, and reflective journals.

It is important to note that all the participants have had no direct contact with me either as friends or as colleagues in any capacity, and as such, there was no unwarranted pressure exercised on them to influence the interviews. In my honest view, they gave true and truthful responses, as their transcripts did not provide more positive information when compared with those of the other participants. In addition, I did not encounter any

challenge regarding undue familiarity that may have prejudiced the neutrality of responses during the period of my assignment with all participants. However, during the pre-selection phase, two participants who indicated their interests to participate were well known to me. These participants were however, eliminated from participation.

Recommendations

This study is focused on gaining an understanding of the effects of millennial participation in politics and election and its effects on voter apathy, especially at the 2015 presidential elections in Nigeria. The interest in exploring the issue stemmed from the failure of politicians and government to include youths in politics, and for the youths themselves to establish a political frontier with workable modern strategies that register strong voter apathy. The results of this study therefore, have provided recommendations that can be used in Nigeria or as a template for use in other developing countries where voters, especially the youth, are exploited.

First, it is important that the general population has an understanding of how voting can be positively affected by certain changes and measures. A large number of citizens have lost hope in the political system in Nigeria and prefer to sit at home rather than participate in voting. Because of this, the government should work towards changing this negative perspective through voter and citizen's awareness programs aimed at enlightening the public on the changes that are to occur in the electoral process, that safeguard voters, protect them from political opponents and provide privacy to exercise their franchise of voting without interference. These can be achieved by promoting

public awareness through television programs and documentaries that can be distributed via various means of broadcasting such as the internet, journals, the radio and television.

Because one of the reasons why the youths are being taken advantage of is poverty, and the youths see an opportunity in making a living through their assistance of politician in carrying out election fraud, touting, and violence against political opponents, it is paramount that poverty must be eliminated to avoid reoccurrences. This can be achieved by creating youth empowerment programs to develop youths in various vocations, and providing them with opportunities to be positively engaged so as not to be enticed by the financial gains attached to political fraud and violence which selfish politicians use them to accomplishing. This strategy has been tried and tested in other parts of Nigeria and have proved to be effective.

Policies to include youth participation in active politics must be created and passed as law. Without a law guiding this and protecting the rights of youths to participate actively in politics, the older politicians will continue to sideline the youths. The number of youths, their age bracket as well as the slots allocated to youths per local government and constituency must be stated in other to ensure their inclusion. With this, specific youths must be sort and very well prepared to occupy certain political offices, to contribute their quota of service to their society. Of course, this will increase the number of youth voters participating in subsequent elections, and the mode of voting can improve through youth inputs.

The political tools used in terms of technology and work force must also be upgraded. More modern ways of carrying out elections must be introduced to include an

online electoral process leading to voting and collation of results. This method has proved to be effective with other events utilizing the online voting system and will provide privacy and confidence for young voters. As they have previously been taken advantage of by politicians and their touts, and have stayed away from politics because of this, it is important that this technology, which allows youths to make their decisions, and exercise their voting rights privately, be put in place to upgrade the election process in Nigeria.

Quality control must also be put in place to ensure that all the changes as well as the issues that are addressed remain in place and in top standards and conditions. In Nigeria, quality control for projects such as election have never been taken seriously. It is therefore strongly advised that a law enforcement body should be set up to monitor strict compliance of all these election and electoral upgrades to maintain standards. The body should comprise of mainly the military (a combination of the Army, Navy and Air Force), operatives from the Department of State Service (DSS), operatives from the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and officials from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). These operatives must be given special orientation on the new laws and process which they have been chosen to protect, and must be told of the consequences involved with aiding any politician or election official to breach the set regulations.

Strict punitive measures must also be set for defaulters of the laws governing elections in Nigeria. Nigeria is a country where people take advantage of the government at its laws if there are no measures to curb the citizens. It is necessary therefore, that very

strict punitive measures are taken, and the first defaulters are used as scapegoats to discourage others from attempting to break laws governing the election process.

As defined in Chapter 1, the limitations of this study offer prospects for further research, using an alternative research approach or research instrument to gain a different viewpoint of the issue. Prospective researchers may collect data using a case study research design to achieve deeper understanding of the issue, through interviewing and observation. Addition of observation to the researcher's data collection plan may raise the identification of observable elements excluded from this study and the researcher would be granted an opportunity to test the theoretical assumptions of this study, using a case study design.

Another opening for future research is the use of a quantitative design to further discover the relationships between maintaining situational awareness as regards the performance of youths, the electoral process, and the politicians and government of Nigeria. Quantitative research methods are dedicated to defining the link between variables in a population, uncovering the nature of the variables, and making justifications about knowledge.

The third opportunity for future research involves taking a closer look at the barriers hindering the effectiveness of upgraded tools used for elections, such as online voting and the laws created for youth inclusion, to uncover possible ways to resolve any challenge that may be discovered to be associated with them. An ethnographic research design may aid the engagement of the researcher within the target populations' environment, to gain direct insight of the issue while another opportunity for future

research may involve carrying out a research to gain understanding on the related peculiarities.

Implications

This study offers answers to the research question; giving the wider scope of interest on millennial participation in politics in Nigeria, the use of online platforms, especially twitter to build youth support as well as the overall organizational efforts aimed at solving the problems associated with voting and politics in Nigeria, as it affects the youths. The results provide some contributions to the research literature on the electoral process in Nigeria, stressing the need for the government, policy makers, the youths, and other stakeholders to think through redefining their functions. The results further submit that all the stakeholders involved in the electoral process, along with the youths of the nation, all have roles to play in achieving a well-developed political arena with upgraded election machinery and youth inclusion in politics.

Significance to Practice

Until lately, elections have been focused on the conventional style of physical presence at polling stations to cast votes and count them to generate results. This study however focused on the effects of millennial participation in voting via twitter and voter apathy as a whole, by weighing participant's perceptions about their experiences. The effect of this study is therefore significant to practice, as they illuminate various strategies that can be useful in increasing an improved understanding of the efforts put together to provide a well-managed and successful political society. Identifying, assigning and applying important roles in election activities could help facilitate the development of

clearer definitions of politics in Nigeria, and can be used as a model for other developing countries.

Significance to Theory

This research focused on twitter and millennial participation in voting during Nigeria's 2015 presidential election. Using theoretical framework, and drawing from the democratic-participant, and uses and gratification theories heightened the novelty of the study. Collectively, the two theories enabled a deeper understanding of the symbolic meaning players of politics in Nigeria established about their role in adopting operative strategies in conducting successful elections through effective electoral processes. It also clarified the meaning they attributed to availing productive criticism and sufficient resources for the human, technological and material development of the electoral process and its stakeholders, and how that knowledge affects their roles.

The target population of the study was politicians, bloggers, political scientists, youth leaders, and media practitioners, agents of the electoral commission, and policy makers that participate in the Nigerian electoral process. Though some research is available on politics, elections and the social media (De Wet, et al, 1974), they have essentially been conducted on a perspective of the effects of social media on politics rather than on twitter and millennial voting and its effects on voter apathy as their focus, as is the case in this study.

The result of this study offers a window through which other researchers can understand impacts, choices, and characteristics related to upgrading the electoral process in Nigeria. Its significance to theory is based on its ability to offer new knowledge that

can help all stakeholders involved in twitter and millennial voting, generate and develop strategies for implementation.

Significance to Social Change

The participants involved in this study were professionals in various fields related to media, politics and information technology. This study offers ways through which elections can be upgraded in Nigeria, and ways through which election malpractices can be addressed. Deficiency in the Nigerian education system, minimized intellectual experience, poverty and the lack of socio-economic opportunities, particularly to the youths, are major reasons why politicians find it easy to coerce and manipulate younger voters. The results of this study indicates that education and youth empowerment are basic necessities required to enlighten and educate the youths to understand rudimentary social tenets that will prevent them from being manipulated and bullied by politicians and their thugs. Empowerment programs to positively engage the youths for self-reliance, and to discourage them from being used as political touts as a means of livelihood is highly significant for social change. With these, the nation will be a safer place, and the economy will improve through local and foreign investors, promoting improvement in the country's socioeconomic position. My results also, should further thicken the knowledge of stakeholders on the role each of them play in mitigating the election and political flaws in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Nigeria has witnessed decades of political trauma since its independence in 1960. The electoral system has passed through several transformations without visible results.

This has resulted to actions of electoral malpractices, touting and outright fraud being carried out by politicians and their crony's, which include officials of the nation's electoral regulatory body.

In Nigeria today, it is common to have political cabals with godfathers who assign power to whoever they are pleased with, in other to continue generating revenue for themselves, as a benefit for the favor offered to whomever they choose to be in power. For this reason, these politicians do anything possible to achieve their plans. This may result in murders and assassinations, removal of decent public officers from positions of authority and replacement of these decent officials with corrupt public officials loyal to the political parties and cabals. Of course, the reason is to ensure that the selected candidates are successfully positioned in their various offices.

Although the government set up different law enforcement agencies that are meant to monitor the operations of the electorate, there are no strict laws and repercussions for politicians and their agents who violate political and election ethics. This suggests that there has to be a revision and addition of existing strategies in the electoral process, to augment existing strategies to improve its effectiveness and enhance overall performance (Kataria, Rastogi, & Garg, 2013). It was therefore essential, to look into the facts of why the political scene in Nigeria has been polluted. In addition, it was necessary to know how it can be remedied with innovations in technology as well as policies that may help in youth inclusion and in protecting the voters by providing safety and privacy to exercise their rights to vote for candidates of their choices. Following the findings of this study, it is okay to admit that most of the problems being faced in the

Nigerian political arena are caused by politicians, the government and even youths themselves, though the government should take the largest share of the blame. Severe corruption, lack of exposure and experience among the youths, lack of knowledge of fundamental rights of voters, and lack of an upgrade in the electoral process are some of the findings that this study has made regarding the failure of the Nigerian political system.

This study explored twitter and millennial participation in voting during Nigeria's 2015 presidential elections, and the roles as well as the experiences of stakeholders, in achieving a credible election process. The study showed that Nigeria has great potentials in reforming the system if the government is dedicated to these reforms, which, from results of the study, can bring a total positive turnaround to politics in Nigeria. The results of this study deliver several contributions to the research literature on youth, social media and politics, supporting the need for stakeholders to reflect on redefining their attitude to the political problem in Nigeria.

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Appendix B: Participant Invite to Participate in Research Study

Date:

Name of participant

Address

Dear Sir/Ma'am,

My name is Deborah Zoaka and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I am currently conducting a study on Twitter and Millennial Participation in Voting during Nigeria's 2015 Presidential Elections, to fulfill requirements of the Walden University Ph.D. in Public policy and Administration program, with a focus on Policy Analysis.

I am conducting interviews as part of a research study designed to elicit feedback about your experiences and understanding about millennial participation in voting and electoral processes in Nigeria, via social media platforms. The overall aim of the full-scale study is to compile meaningful insights from the lived experiences and perceptions of stakeholders about the centrality of Twitter in Nigeria's media ecology within the context of its capabilities to promote millennial participation in voting, particularly, during the 2015 presidential election.

This study is not intended to assess or evaluate your personal knowledge, understanding, experience, or technique. Rather, the focus is to learn more about the ways that twitter and other social media platforms can positively influence youth to participate progressively in politics and elections, in order to elect good leaders.

Kindly be advised that no compensation will be made for participating in the study. Participation is completely voluntary and in the event you feel uncomfortable during the interview, you can opt out at any time. No harm is intended to you as a participant and anonymity of participant's responses will be kept confidential.

I realize that your important to you, therefore, I sincerely appreciate your kind consideration if you choose to participate in this study. Your inputs would provide valuable insights and enhance a better understanding of the phenomenon. Pre-arranged face-to- face interviews will be conducted and will last for approximately 25-35 minutes. Audio recordings will be made during the interview with notes written as the interview progresses. Transcripts of audio recording will be provided to all participants.

If you have any questions, please contact me at your earliest convenience to schedule date and time to meet. You can email me at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

Deborah Zoaka
Doctoral Student
Walden University

Appendix C: Follow-up Participant Invite to Participate in Research Study

Dear Sir/Ma'am,

This letter is a follow up to see if you are still interested in participating in a research study designed to prompt feedback on your experiences and understanding of Twitter and Millennial Participation in Voting during Nigeria's 2015 Presidential Elections. The overall aim of the full-scale study is to compile meaningful insights from the lived experiences and perceptions of stakeholders about the centrality of Twitter in Nigeria's media ecology within the context of its capabilities to promote millennial participation in voting, particularly, during the 2015 presidential election.

This study is not looking to assess or evaluate your personal knowledge, experience or technique. Rather, the focus is to learn more about the impact of twitter and millennial participation in voting.

No compensation will be made for participating in the study. Participation is voluntary and in the event you feel uncomfortable during the interview, you can stop at any time. No harm is intended to you as a participant and anonymity of participant's responses will be kept confidential.

Should you choose to participate, your contribution would provide valuable insights and enhance a better understanding of the phenomenon. Pre-arranged face to face interviews will be conducted and will last for approximately 25-35 minutes. Audio recordings will be made during the interview with notes written as the interview progresses, and transcripts of audio recording will be provided to all participants.

If you have any questions, please email me at [REDACTED]

Thank you.

Deborah Zoaka
Doctoral Student
Walden University

Appendix D: Response Email to Prospective Participants with Eligibility Questions

Dear Sir/Ma'am,

Thank you for your email response. To determine your eligibility to participate, please respond via email and answer the following 'yes' or 'no' questions:

1. Please, tell me are you 18 years old and above?
2. Do you have a registered twitter account?
3. Did you participate in online campaigns during the 2015 presidential elections?
4. Are you a media professional or within the millennial age range?
5. Are you conversant with blogging?
6. Are you willing to candidly share your experiences and understanding about your role in the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria?

I truly appreciate your interest in participating, and look forward to reading your response.

Deborah Zoaka
Doctoral Student
Walden University

Appendix E: Interview Questions

Interview Questions with prompts

Interviews are semi-structured with questions and prompts designed to encourage in-depth responses from participants.

Interview Questions

1. What are the challenges you have faced with voting at polling stations?
2. What are the main reasons for violence during elections in Nigeria?
3. How has violence been perpetuated during elections in Nigeria by candidates directly involved or by citizens on the streets?
4. How does law enforcement in Nigeria react to election violence and obstruction?
5. How has violence during elections affected the number of youths participating in voting during elections in Nigeria?
6. How do the social media affect youth behavior?
7. What ways do social media contribute to youth participation in politics and elections?
8. What are the attractions and benefits in twitter participation during elections?
9. What other ways are people influenced to vote for candidates apart from the normal campaigning?
10. What makes a candidate popular and how does such a candidate pull votes from youth through online campaign via social media

11. How will online voting work in Nigeria, considering the rate of election fraud experienced in the past?

Further Probes

- What do you think about the way elections are being conducted by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)?
- What are the policies that should be put in place regarding youth voting?
- What else would you want me to know?