



## **SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA.**

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### **Abstract**

This study examined social media usage and women's participation in politics with a focus on Anambra State. It assessed the rate of women's access to social media applications, and usage for political participation and mobilization in the state, as well as the inherent challenges and prospects. The Communication Theory also known as; the public sphere theory was used as a theoretical framework for the study. The research was designed as a survey using questionnaire as instrument for data collection. Using Taro Yamane's formula, a sample size of 399 was drawn from the population of 2,237,761 women from the state. The researchers distributed 399 copies of questionnaire to the women and the results were collated and analysed. Findings show that there is a high access rate of women to social media applications, however, it was also revealed that they do not use the applications to discuss politics generally; they accepted that they do not use social media to enhance their efforts towards participation in politics. On that note, it was recommended that Women should leverage on their high social media access to push discourse on increased participation in politics. Also, women should endeavour to use the social media as a medium to garner support for women contesting political position. Additionally, they should own personal pages on any social media platform as an avenue to reach their potential voters.

**Keywords:** Politics; women participation; social media; Anambra State.



## INTRODUCTION

According to Fapohunda (2011) leadership has always been about power, it is the power or personality to dominate a group. Men have held power and leadership in society and ingrained stereotypes about women which have prevented them from taking their rightful place as equal partners. Gender equality in political participation is a fundamental aspect of modern democratic governance.

Women in Anambra State, however, as is the case in most parts of the world, have unequivocally demonstrated limited participation in political leadership. The low presence of women of political power demonstrates the persistence of patriarchal power, perpetuating political role to which women have traditionally been relegated. Arguably, women's political empowerment in Anambra State seems to show a promising progress since Dame Virginia Etiaba of APGA political party, Stella Oduah of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Sen. Uche Lilian Ekwunife of the PDP, Joy Emordi of the same PDP etc., came into power. Since then, Anambra politics had witnessed the appointment of women into key political positions in an unprecedented manner. The state got its first female governor in its modern history in November 2006 under All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA). Moreover, women now make up a reasonable number of the government.

Women are extremely underrepresented at most levels of government, especially in ministerial and other executive positions, they have made little progress in attaining political power in legislative bodies, in achieving the target certified by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution in 1990, recommended targets for increasing the proportion of women in leadership positions: 30% to 35% by 1995 and 50% by 2000 (UN, 1995).

Nse (2015) making reference to the statement of the Deputy Director Gender Division of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Blessing Obidiegwu, noted that 14 females were elected into the House of Representatives and eight women won as Senators in the National Assembly election of Nigeria. This means that there are only 14 females out of 360 lawmakers for this current House of Representatives and 8 women out of 109 senators, these figures are sparring, 5.6 and 6.5 percent respectively. Again, out of the 14 candidates



that contested for the seat of the president the only woman amongst the contenders came out in the 12th position (Akor, 2015).

Social media platforms are interactive, web-based media. They belong to the new genre of media that focus on social networking, allowing users to express themselves, interact with friends, share personal information, as well as publish their own views on the Internet faster. The universal access of these online devices no doubt, has democratising effects as they offer women opportunities for full engagement in the political process.

Considering the fact that social media are increasingly being used world-wide with their power of reaching a large mass of audience, it should not be ignored in the political scheme of things. Thus, it is here posited that social media could significantly influence the acceleration and acceptance of women in politics. The potential of the media- mainstream to sustain the current gender inclusive reforms in politics in Anambra is momentarily valuable as the media are powerful sources of information that shape public understanding and perceptions of gender and gender relations. The media assume a significant place in the struggle for gender equality and political participation since they 'reflect, produce and reproduce norms and stereotypes and therefore have the potential to make socio-cultural changes in society. Recognizing the high-sounding nexus between gender equality/women inclusion in politics and the media, there is need to set explicit strategic objectives and actions to combat persisting gender inequality in and through media. The strategic objectives should be: increasing participation and access of women to decision-making in the media and eliminating stereotypical representation of women.

Development and wide use of social media platforms created a significant opportunity space for further participation of women in politics. Growing number of users and platforms, coupled with rapid technological innovations such as smartphones and tablet PCs; are accepted as new avenues for further political participation for women. According to this optimistic view, social media have been accepted as newly emerging media as information provider, allowing users to access diversified sources of information and different viewpoints, a scarce resource during the hegemony of conventional mass media. Such a multiplicity of viewpoints empowers citizens and raises awareness about collective problems. Social media platforms also facilitate political and civic participation of users acting as a resource of political discussion and deliberation among participants.

Hence, it is expected that such a tool positively contributes to political participation level of its users.



### **Statement of the Problem**

Women participation in politics seems to be a problem in Nigeria. It is not new that women have assumed certain roles, which society labels womanly perfect, such as being mothers, school teachers, hairdressers, secretaries, nurses, maids and social workers. This of course is wrong and women also deserve equal opportunities politically. Many politicians have sought their political desires through the conventional mass media.

Despite the growing benefits associated with the social media, especially in its power to dissolve the difficulties inherent in the use of traditional mass media (TV, radio, newspaper) in political discourse and participation, most politicians (women) still have not utilised the strengths of social media in achieving their political goals.

Social media which appear to be less capital intensive in content creation and management during political process have in most cases been used by politicians to further their political agenda. The Goodluck Jonathan's political campaign made good use of social media and the same was reported of President Barrack Obama (Okoro & Santas, 2017). But the way social media have been put to use by women, during the political process especially in Anambra State, seems to be in doubt. One is forced to ask, could it be that women do not recognize social media as channels for political discourse and campaign or that they do not believe in the ability of the sites to reach the majority of the electorates who are youths or that they do not recognize the core effectiveness of social media? It is in view of this that this study seeks to examine the usage of social media by women for political participation in Anambra state.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. Find out the access rate of Anambra women to social media platforms.
2. Ascertain the extent of the usage of social media by Anambra women for political discourse and mobilization.
3. Identify the challenges inherent in the use of social media by Anambra women for political participation.
4. Find out the prospects of the use of social media by Anambra women for political participation.



## Research questions

1. What is the access rate of Anambra women to social media applications?
2. To what extent do Anambra women use social media for political discourse and mobilization?
3. What are the challenges to Anambra women usage of social media for political participation?
4. What are the prospects of Anambra women's use of social media for political participation?

## Conceptual Review

### Concept of social media

Social media are those Internet-based tools and services that allow users to engage with each other, generate content, distribute, and search for information online. "Social media, basically, concern all forms of new media technology that offer interactive sharing of information, videos, pictures, text and comments with such platforms as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Blog, MySpace and LinkedIn." They belong to a new genre of media that focuses on social networking allowing users to express themselves, interact with friends and share information with greater freedom as well as publish their views on issues on the World Wide Web.

Okoro and Adibe (2013) "social media emerged with the advent of the internet and the World Wide Web. They are usually associated with the term "web 2.0" which is used to describe websites that provide opportunity for a user to interact with the sender of a message".

Okoro and Adibe (2013) note that, "in many parts of the world today, individuals, groups, organisations and even nations are taking advantage of the opportunities provided by social media and other e-media platforms to mobilize millions of people to support and advance their course. In the political sphere it has become a veritable tool for interacting and mobilising citizens towards active participation in the political process and democratic projects".

The first social media site was a website called "six degrees of separation theory" and lasted from 1997 to 2001. Six degrees allowed users to create a profile and then become friends with other users. It even allowed unregistered persons to confirm friendships and connected



quite a few this way. From six degrees, the social media moved into the era of blogging and instant messaging.

### **Concept of political participation**

Political participation is a concept in political science and political marketing. Political participation is loosely defined as citizens' activities affecting politics.

Xie and Jaeger (2008) see political participation as “behaviours aimed at shaping governmental policy either by influencing the selection of government personnel or by affecting their choices.” Other authors define political participation as “voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers and directly or indirectly in the formation of public policy. In sum, political participation simply means that a person is participating in the political process by making his or her opinion and beliefs known. It is often used to describe an action taken by a citizen to influence the outcome of a political issue.

There are various forms of political participation namely: voting in elections, involvement in political (election) campaign, protest over government policies, participating in consultations like town hall meeting, signing petitions, donating money to a cause, holding a public official position, taking part in public debate, engaging in political parties and association, and civil disobedience etc. Political participation is one of the cardinal pillars of a democracy from the Athenian era to the present time. As an essential part of democracy, political participation is an antidote against tyranny, oppression, bad government, poor leadership etc which are bane of African democracy. In the words of Joseph de Maistre a French publisher said in a democracy, “every country gets the kind of government it deserves.” This is a direct reference to political participation and voting in elections in particular. This explains why citizens' participation in a democracy is a panacea to good government. Traditional and new media are used to evoke political participation in both developed and developing countries

### **Election campaign as a measure of political participation**

Collins English dictionary defines election campaign as “a time when a politician or party try to persuade people to vote for them.” A political campaign is an organised effort which seeks to influence the decision-making process within a specific group.

In democracies, political campaigns are often referred to as electoral campaign, where representatives are chosen or referendum decided (Abizadeh, 2005). Political campaign is one



of the forms of political participation. Election campaigns (political campaigns) are carried out for nomination (primary election) of candidates and general elections. In a general election, the chosen party candidate contest with candidates from other political parties. A political party is an organized group of persons, sharing the same ideology and working to control the machinery of government through periodic elections.

Electoral campaign is part of political participation, and it is accompanied in most cases by candidates' debates. Debates are an important element of a general election, allowing candidates to answer questions on policy and prior decision.

Campaign message contains ideas that the candidate wants to share with the voters. It is to get those who agree with their ideas to support them when running for a political position.

The crafting of political campaign messages does not assure the candidates' victory, wikipedia.com. Political advertising and propaganda are part of political campaigns. There are rules and regulations governing election campaigns which are set by the electoral body.

Today, the internet is now a core element of modern political campaigns. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, blogs etc are some of the social network sites (SNS) used for election campaign. These social media platforms have helped to drive political campaign to reach a wide audience in split seconds. Barack Obama used social media for campaigns during the 2008/2012 general elections in the USA same for Donald Trump in 2016, Jonathan Goodluck 2011, Mohammadu Buhari election in Nigeria and in other parts of the globe. Recent political campaigns have been both online and the use of traditional media. All these campaigns brought the use of internet on various social media to the spotlight.

Election campaigns are the means by which candidates and political parties prepare and present their ideas and positions on issues to the voters in the period preceding elections day. Social media campaigning has grown into a very attractive means of reaching out to potential voters.

### **Use of social media for political discourse**

In their studies Flew (2005); Boyd and Ellison, (2007) have noted the possibilities of promoting an expanded conception of democratic political participation through information and communications technologies (ICTs; social media) have been widely observed. Nnadozie (2007) observed that, potential synergies between social media developments and



democratic renewal arise from the two-way; interactive nature of new digital media and their technical enhancement of citizen capacities to access, produce, distribute, share and debate political information made available through digital networks.

Flew (2005) in a study titled “from e-Government to online deliberative democracy”, identified six requirements for using social media to enhance the democratic process: (1) widespread and effective access to decision-makers; (2) provision of relevant and timely information; (3) interaction within and between institutionally, politically or geographically distinct networked communities; (4) access to various positions in relation to policy issues; (5) the capacity to register choices, and awareness of the implications of different choices; and (6) evidence that such deliberations have informed actions by governing institutions or elected representatives in relation to those issues.

Adibe, Odoemelam and Chibuwe (2011) observed that President Goodluck Jonathan who also made use of social media, on Wednesday, September 15, 2010 announced his bid for the highest political office in the land on Facebook. He informed his 217,000 fans on the world’s most popular networking platform of his intent: twenty-four hours later, 4,000 more fans joined his page. By the day of the election, on 16 April 2011, he had over half a million followers In addition to the approximately 3 million registered Nigerians on Facebook and 60,000 on Twitter.

Velencia (2015) observed that Hillary Clinton took to the internet to officially launch her campaign for president via a video posted on YouTube and on her campaign website. She then made an announcement on twitter, setting off a media spark “I’m running for president, everyday Americans need a champion, and I want to be that champion”.-H hillaryclinton.com. This, at that moment got her 99, 875 fans talking and 105, 176 likes.

### **Empirical review**

A study carried out by Luka (2011), entitled ‘Women and Political Participation in Nigeria; The Imperative of Empowerment’ found out that women actually face massive resistance from participating in politics. Aside the fact that majority of husbands do not allow their wives to participate in politics, the study discovered that a lot of female believed that politics would prevent them from taking absolute care of their families. Fear of broken homes, breeding irresponsible children and the need to perform their domestic activities were identified as major reasons preventing them from going into politics (Luka, 2011)



A work by Muse, (2014) titled; ‘Social Media and Public Participation in Nigeria: Challenges and Possibilities’, states the challenges to be: inadequate electricity supply, High cost of tariffs, poor coverage, and government perception. While the possibilities are: better space for engagement, moving citizens closer to the government, reduction of anarchy, protest and riots, means of public enlightenment, feedback mechanism.

A study by Anyadike, Ebeze, Odoemelam (2014) titled “Social Media in E-Governance and Political Participation in Enugu State, Nigeria.” Survey data showed that, the government scored low (2.5 below the accepted level of mean score) in the use of social media to bring their programmes and services to the people, an action which has the potentials of alienating the people from the government.

Another study carried out by Perrin (2015) on “Social Media Usage: 2005-2015” noted that social media has affected such things as work, politics and political deliberation, communications patterns around the globe, as well as the way people get and share information about health, civic life, news consumption, communities, teenage life, parenting, dating and even people’s level of stress.

A study by Susanna and Vilma (2015) on “The Role Played by Social Media in Political Participation and Electoral Campaigns”. From the findings of the study, personal communication via social media brings politicians and parties closer to their potential voters. It allows politicians to communicate faster and reach citizens in a more targeted manner and vice versa, without the intermediate role of mass media. Reactions, feedback, conversations and debates are generated online as well as support and participation for offline events.

An analysis of the reviewed literature shows that although there has been studies on social media and politics, none of the reviewed literature centred on social media usage and women’s participation in politics in Anambra State particularly. This is the gap this study intends to fill.

## **Theoretical framework**

### **Public Sphere Theory**

The theory was propounded by Jurgen Habermas in the year 1962. Habermas opinion of public sphere is such that society will have to engage in critical public debate as part of their function in democracy. The concept of public sphere refers to a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed with guarantee of freedom of



assembly, association and freedom to express and publish opinions about matters of general interest with the aim of influencing political actions or government policies and possibly reach a common judgment.

Habermas (1962) argues that the public sphere requires “specific means of transmitting information and influencing those who receive it”. His argument shows that the media are of particular importance for constituting and maintaining a public sphere.

This theory is relevant to this work because it provides a forum for explaining how women’s interest in politics through the platform of social media, could be brought to the public domain for participatory discourse on their political world view. The underlining principle of the public sphere involves an open discussion of all issues of general concern in which politics key for the general interests and good of the people or public. The public sphere thus presupposes freedoms of speech and assembly, a free press, and the right to freely participate in political debate and decision-making (Habermas, 1989). Thus, with freedom provided by the social media as mentioned by Habermas, women could create political web page of their own on social media platforms, for political discussions, where they will make it open for the citizens to be part and parcel of everything going on there and as well air their views and complaints. This step can get the public interested in what the woman is capable of doing on political sit.

### **Research Methodology**

For this study, the research design is survey. The population of this study comprises all women in Anambra State. The population is estimated at 2,237,761 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). The sample size was 399. This was statistically generated using Taro Yamani’s Formula.

It is given as:  $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$

Where n = sample size

N= population

1 is constant

e = margin of error 0.05

Therefore, for a population of 2237761,



$$n = 2237761 / 1 + 2237761(0.005)^2$$

$$n = 2237761 / 1 + 2237761 \times 0.0025$$

$$n = 2237761 / 1 + 5594.4025$$

$$n = 2237761 / 5595.4025$$

$$n = 399$$

## Results and Discussions

### Psychographic data

#### The access rate of women to social media application

In this section, the primary objective was to determine the access rate of women to social media the application. This variable was measured using question items 6-13 in the questionnaire. The data generated were presented below.

Table1: Use of social media by respondents

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage % |
|----------|-----------|--------------|
| Yes      | 300       | 88.2         |
| No       | 40        | 11.8         |
| Total    | 340       | 100          |

Table 1 above shows the respondents' answers to the above question. Respondents who chose Yes were 300(88.2%) of the population while for No were 40(11.8%). This shows that majority of the respondents have high access to social media.

This shows that there is high rate of access to social media application by respondents.

Table 2: Social media platforms used by respondents

| Variable  | Frequency | Percentage % |
|-----------|-----------|--------------|
| Instagram | 50        | 14.7         |
| Facebook  | 249       | 73.2         |
| WhatsApp  | 22        | 6.5          |
| Twitter   | 11        | 3.2          |



|          |     |     |
|----------|-----|-----|
| LinkedIn | 8   | 2.4 |
| Total    | 340 | 100 |

Table 2 following the 6<sup>th</sup> question, many of respondents make use of Facebook by 73.2% representing 249 of the total population, following are Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter and LinkedIn.

**Table 3: Social media platforms mostly accessed by respondents**

| Variable  | Frequency | Percentage % |
|-----------|-----------|--------------|
| Facebook  | 200       | 58.8         |
| Instagram | 70        | 20.6         |
| WhatsApp  | 35        | 10.3         |
| Twitter   | 21        | 6.2          |
| TikTok    | 14        | 4.1          |
| Total     | 340       | 100          |

Table 3 above shows that a good number of respondents mostly use Facebook and Instagram with the percentages of 58.8% and 20.6% respectively.

**Table 4: Respondents frequency of social media access**

| Variable    | Frequency | Percentage % |
|-------------|-----------|--------------|
| Very Often  | 130       | 38.2         |
| Often       | 110       | 33.4         |
| Rarely      | 70        | 20.6         |
| Very Rarely | 10        | 2.9          |
| Never       | 20        | 5.9          |
| Total       | 340       | 100          |

Table 4 shows that a high Percentage of respondents with 71.1% have high frequency of social media application.

**The extent of usage of social media for political discourses and mobilization.**

In this section, an attempt was made to measure the extent respondents use social media for political discourses and mobilization. Through questions 10-12 (see appendix), the data were generated, and it is presented below.



Table 5: Conducting Political Campaigns Using social media

|       | Frequency | Percentage % |
|-------|-----------|--------------|
| Yes   | 50        | 14.7         |
| No    | 290       | 85.3         |
| Total | 340       | 100          |

Table 5 shows that only 50 respondents from the total population of 399 conduct political campaigns using social media while a large number of 290 respondents do not use social media for political campaigns. Which further proves that majority of the respondents do not use social media for political discourses and mobilization.

Table 6: Large fan base of respondents on social media

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage % |
|----------|-----------|--------------|
| Yes      | 20        | 5.9          |
| No       | 320       | 94.1         |
| Total    | 340       | 100          |

Table 6 above shows that only 20 respondents have large fan base on social media while 320 respondents do not have large fan base on social media.

Table 7: Engaging social media fans on political issues

| Variable     | Frequency | Percentage % |
|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| Regularly    | 34        | 10           |
| Occasionally | 46        | 13.5         |
| Hardly       | 100       | 29.4         |
| Never        | 160       | 47.1         |
| Total        | 340       | 100          |

Table 7 shows that most of the respondents hardly engage their social media fans on political issues. Just few of the respondents do.

### **What are the challenges inherent to women usage of social media for political discourse and mobilization in Anambra State?**

**Table 8:** Constraints faced by respondents with the use of social media to participate in politics.



| S / N | Items   | Agree          | Disagree       | Strongly agree | Strongly disagree |
|-------|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| 14    | Lack of personal page or group page on any social media platform                                | 100<br>(29.4%) | 20<br>(5.9%)   | 210<br>(61.8%) | 10<br>(2.9%)      |
| 15    | Low literacy level in the area of using social media for political discourse and participation. | 85<br>(25%)    | 40<br>(11.8%)  | 200<br>(58.8%) | 15<br>(4.4%)      |
| 16    | Lack of network access or poor internet connection  | 25<br>(7.4%)   | 100<br>(29.4%) | 35<br>(10.3%)  | 180<br>(52.9%)    |
| 17    | Lack of time  | 35<br>(10.3%)  | 90<br>(26.5%)  | 45<br>(13.2%)  | 170<br>(50%)      |

Table 8 shows the different challenges faced by respondents with the use of social media for political discourses, participation, and mobilization.

**What are the prospects of women’s use of social media for political discourse and mobilization in Anambra State?**

**Table 9: The prospects of women’s use of social media for political discourse and mobilization in Anambra State**

| S / N | Items  | Agree          | Disagree     | Strongly Agree | Strongly Disagree |
|-------|--|----------------|--------------|----------------|-------------------|
| 18    | Women contributing or taking part in political discussions, using the social media, can remove apathy.     | 130<br>(38.2%) | 15<br>(4.4%) | 190<br>(55.9%) | 5<br>(1.5%)       |
| 19    | Women taking part in political discussions, using the social, can increase their understanding of politics | 110<br>(32.4%) | 12<br>(3.5%) | 210<br>(61.8%) | 8<br>(2.4%)       |



|    |   |               |            |                |              |
|----|---|---------------|------------|----------------|--------------|
| 20 | Women using the social media for political issues and discourse can increase their participation in politics. | 90<br>(26.5%) | 17<br>(5%) | 220<br>(64.7%) | 13<br>(3.8%) |
|----|---|---------------|------------|----------------|--------------|

**Table 9 shows the responses of the respondents to the prospects of women use of social media for political discourses and mobilization.**

**Discussion of findings**

The research was conducted to analyse the usage of social media and women participation in politics in Anambra State.

From the results generated in this study, the findings reveal that the respondents are women alone. These women make up from varied age brackets with a predominant percentage of these respondents, 54.9% precisely within the age bracket of 31 and above. It was also revealed that, 5.9% of the respondents are within the age ranges of 16-20, 11.8% of these respondents fall into the age bracket of 21-25 while 26.5% are within the age bracket of 26-30.

Major findings of the study revealed that women have a very high access rate to social media application. A high percentage of 88.2 representing 300 of the total population. This implies that women have high access to social media applications. This finding is in conformity with the findings of Perrin in his study on social media usage: 2005-2015, which states that women were more likely than men to use social networking sites for a number of years, with the attribution of 68% of all women use social media, compared with 62% of all men.

The implication of this finding is that between 2015 and 2016, it is safe to say that there has been an increase of 15.3% in the women access rate to social media applications. This means that the rate at which women have access to social media applications is constantly on the increase.

The study discovered that even though women have high access to social media applications, they do not use such high access to meet their political goals. This study unveiled that a good number of women at 85.3% representing 290 of the total population, do not use social media platforms for political discourses, participation, and mobilization. This finding is in relation with the findings of Anyadike, Ebeze, and Odoemelum, (2014), which found that the government scored low (2.5 below the accepted level of mean score) in the use of social



media to bring their programmes and services to the people, an action which has the potentials of alienating the people from the government. Comparing the two studies, it can be understood that there is no doubt saying that women do not make use of social media for political discourse or participation, even after having access to the platforms.

The study also found out that women in Anambra do not just decide not to use the social media platforms to achieve their political goals rather, they face constraints that stand as barriers to their use of social media for political discourse, participation, and mobilization. Women at 61% representing 210 of the sample agreed to be facing the challenge of not having their own personal or group pages on any social media platform while 58.8% representing 200 of the total population face the problem of low literacy level in the area of using social media for political discourse, participation, and mobilization. A few women at 10.3% representing 33 of the total population, complained of lack of internet connection or poor network access while 4.4% of women representing 15 of the total population complained of lack of time. This proves that majorly, women face the constraints of not having their own personal or group pages on any social media platform and their low literacy level in the area of using social media for political discourse, participation and mobilization. All the findings except one are different from the findings of Muse 2014. Muse stated the challenges to be: inadequate electricity supply, high cost of tariffs and government perception and has one challenge of poor coverage in conformity with lack of network access. Findings from the two studies imply that challenges given by Muse as at 2014 must have been resolved, except that of poor coverage or lack of network access. This is reflecting the fact that the current challenges can still be resolved or reduced.

The study further discovered that a large number of the respondents agreed (38.2% representing 130 of the total population) and strongly agreed (55.9% representing 190 of the total population) that social media can be a medium of ridding off apathy if women decide to use it for their political discourse, participation, and mobilization. A larger number of respondents equally agreed (32.4% representing 110 of the total population) and strongly agreed (61.8% representing 210 of the total population) that using the social media for political discourse, participation and mobilization can make women understand politics.

While a good number of the respondents agreed (26.5% representing 90 of the total population) and strongly agreed (64.7% representing 220 of the total population) that the usage of social media by women for political discourse, participation and mobilization can increase their political participation. These findings are in conformity with the findings of



Tenhunen and Karvelyte 2014. The researchers found that personal communication via social media brings politicians and parties closer to their potential voters. This is also in relation with findings of Muse (2014). The study found that the possibilities of using social media for public participation include better space for engagement, moving citizens closer to the government, reduction of anarchy, means of public enlightenment, feedback mechanism. Given these three studies, it is clear that truly social media usage by women can be an avenue for increase in politics in Anambra State.

### **Summary**

This study sought to determine the usage of social media and women's political participation in politics in Anambra State. The essence of this work was to find answers to the questions of the research.

The study was designed as a survey. Data were collected from 399 women in Anambra State and copies of questionnaire were distributed randomly to different local government areas selected. Based on findings of this study, women have high access to social media platforms, but they rarely use those platforms to achieve purposes of political participation.

### **Conclusion**

From the survey, it was observed that aside having access to social media platforms, women in Anambra State do not use the social media for political discourse, participation and mobilization. If women really have political interest, they can take a bold step into increasing their political status, understanding and participation.

### **Recommendations**

Considering the fact that the findings of this study dwelled on the analysis of social media usage by women for political participation in Anambra State, the following are therefore recommended:

1. Women should leverage on their high social media access to push discourse on increased participation in politics.
2. Women should endeavour to use the social media as a medium to garner support for women contesting political position. This earns the support of public sphere theory which according to Okoro and Diri (2009), "the public sphere is an area in social life



where individuals can come together freely to discuss and identify societal problems and through that discussion influence political action.”

3. Women should own their personal or group pages on any social media platform of their choice, as an avenue to reach their potential voters and equally carry out their political discourses, participation, and mobilization through such pages.
4. Given the prospects of women using social media for political discourse, participation and mobilization, women should be encouraged more to make public their political values, using means of social media platforms.

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