





# Impact of Social Media on Political Participation among Women in Ile-Ife Community


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## Abstract

Rising as a strong platform for human communication; social media presents new opportunities for participation in socio-political affairs. Empowering ordinary individuals to be heard on a large scale, technological advancement vis-à-vis emergence of social media presents new solution-options to gaps in political communication and civic engagements. Notwithstanding, a deficit in women political participation remains a problem within African communities, particularly in Nigeria. Thus, this study examines issues in women political participation and the use of social media as a tool of political participation among Nigerian women. The study covered Ile-Ife community in the Ife-Central Local Government Area of Osun State. The study examines the factors that hinder and facilitate women political participation in

Ile-Ife. It also investigates the knowledge of and the utilization of social media platforms by the Ile-Ife women, assesses how it impacts their level of political participation as well as appraises their perception about the impacts of this on Nigerian government and politics. A questionnaire was administered on randomly selected 384 women within Ile-Ife; calculated at 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. Data gathered were analysed by descriptive and inferential statistics. The study established that social media, can still further be maximized as instruments of civic engagements and political participation by the Nigerian community women.

**Keywords:** Human Communication, Social Media, Political Participation, Civic Engagements.

### Introduction

Social media has no doubt become a global phenomenon which has attracted and connected an extensive population all around the world and many people connect to social network sites daily to participate in different online activities. Before the advent of this new media, older conventional media such as radio, television, newspapers and magazines that ruled the world had directly or indirectly limited popular participation in the civic activities and the electoral process. This is because there were limitations on how the citizens could convey their views about politics, governance, electoral process and the community affairs.

Access to social media and other internet facilities is having democratizing effects for citizens by creating opportunities for more engagements in civic activities and the political process (Okafor 2023; Joinson 2008; Lenhart 2009). The internet, which is the basis of social media, has been embraced as an undeniable force for public good. In this sense Wael Ghonim, (2024) claimed that if you want to liberate a society, just give them the Internet. The Internet has been heralded as an effective weapon, resulting in what Kristof (2009) labelled as the “quintessential 21st- century conflict” in which on one side are government men firing bullets and on the other side are young protesters firing ‘tweets’.

The value of the communication experience has undergone a sea-change; from the need to share it, to the need to share in it (Zamani and Spanaki 2023; Adibe, Odoemelam and Chibuwe 2012). Technology and social media have brought power back to the people, such that currently, any person can communicate from anywhere, to any place, at any time and about anything. Social media is flexible, accessible and affordable thus promoting democratization of media, altering the meaning of geographic distance and allowing an increase in volume and speed of communication. With the advent of social media, activists and advocacy groups have also increased rapidly and formerly under-voiced individuals or the marginalized groups now enjoy new opportunities to be heard.

Scholars avers that the social media has become a veritable tool for interacting and mobilizing citizens towards active participation in Nigeria's political sphere (Abdulyakeen and Yusuf 2022; Jimada 2019; Ifukor 2010; Okoro and Dirim 2009). Internet penetration in Nigeria vis-à-vis social media is increasingly complementing citizens' political participation, changing interrelationships between citizens, organizations and public institutions, and also expanding notions of political behaviour and participation. The emergence and spread of the use of social media via the internet has allowed many underprivileged individuals and groups to participate in civic affairs such as political and community issues and this includes women across various communities.

This study, therefore, examines this phenomenon by considering the use of social media as a tool for political participation among community women in Nigeria. The study focused on Ile-Ife community in the Ife-Central Local Government Area of Osun State. It examined factors that hinder and facilitate political participation among women in Ile-Ife. The study also investigates the knowledge of and the utilization of social media platforms and further appraises Ile-Ife women's perception on the impact of social media on Nigerian government and politics. It also tests if age, education, marital statuses and religion affect the use of social media and political participation of women. Beside this introduction, this

study comprises of an overview of concepts and issues on social media, women political participation and the impacts of social media on government. Methodology is presented next followed by the data presentation as well as analyses. The discussion of findings and conclusion then follows. All these are with a view to identify the importance of the use of the social media as a tool for political participation among women within a Nigerian community.

### **Social Media and Women Political Participation**

This section reviews literature on social media and women political participation. The review focuses on concepts and the rise of social media, issues of women political participation and the impacts of social media on civic participation and government in Nigeria.

### **The Concept and Rise of Social Media**

Social media are interactive web-based media platforms that offer citizens opportunities and places to connect, share opinions, experiences, views, contacts, knowledge, expertise among other things. It is a new genre of media that focuses on social networking, allowing users to express themselves, interact with friends, share information with greater freedom as well as publish their views about issues. The roots of social media stretch far deeper than one might imagine. Although it seems like a new trend, sites like *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *YouTube* are the natural outcome of many centuries of technological advancement and social media development. Ansari and Khan (2020) and ISSAfrica.org (2012) observes that it the interactive or collaborative nature of these tools that makes them social. Barlett-Brag (2006) described social media as a body of applications that augment group interaction, shared spaces for collaboration, social connections and aggregates information exchanges in a web-based environment. Mayfield (2008) sees social media as online platforms that promote participation, openness, conversation and connectedness whilst Nation (2010) sees it as social instruments

of communication, different from the conventional instruments like newspapers or magazines.

Social media are seen as online content, created by people using highly accessible and scalable publishing technologies to disseminate information across geographical boundaries, providing interaction among people. Allen, Ekwugha and Chukwulete (2011) claimed that there are roughly six categories within social media, namely: social news, social network, media sharing, blogs and forums, micro blogging and bookmarking sites. In a related manner, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) identified six types of social media, namely: collaborative projects (such as wikis and social bookmarking applications), blogs, content communities (sharing of media content between users such as Google docs and YouTube), virtual game worlds, virtual social worlds (such as Second Life) and social networking sites (such as *Facebook*, *LinkedIn*, and *Twitter*).

Social media emerged with the advent of the internet and the World Wide Web. It is usually associated with the term “Web 2.0” which is used to describe websites that provide opportunity for users to interact with the sender of a message. Nwabueze (2012) observes that “Web 2.0” refers to the state of interactive websites which emerged from 2004 as opposed to “Web1.0” period. Web-based communities, social networking sites, video-sharing sites, wikis and blogs, are among examples of web 2.0 sites (Allen *et al.* 2011). Social media continues to expand and change with new applications appearing every day. Social media activities are carried out on Social Media Networks (SMNs) as social media tools are made available by emerging information communication technology (ICTs) facilities.

SMNs are subsets of ICTs defined as online tools and utilities that allow communication of information, participation and collaboration online. Social networking via the World Wide Web has several defining characteristics. Boyd (2007) in Mason and Rennie (2008) expressed that primarily, it involves users generating their own content individually and collaboratively. Social networking is part of a larger group of social media tools that allow for the creation and exchange of user-generated

content. Within Africa, social media practices have materialized in unprecedented capacities. It has led to revolutions; encouraged, demanded and monitored best practices during elections and are also contributing to a larger dynamic of promoting growth on the continent through accountability and conversation (Ekpe 2017).

Across the continents, the most visited websites, the most common and known social network sites containing similar as well as different features include *Facebook*, *MySpace*, *YouTube*, Web-blogs, and *LinkedIn*. Most of these social media sites, which are now commonly known around the world, emerged locally with the purpose of sharing photos, personal information, videos, profiles and related content (Mejias 2005; Ajjan and Hartshorne 2008). Similarly, *Facebook*, launched in 2004, was initially launched as a social networking website exclusively for Harvard students, however, as at December 2022, there were around 28 million *Facebook* users in Nigeria alone, accounting for 12.7 percent of the population (Statista 2023). To interact with others, *Facebook* users update their 'status', write on 'walls', 'like' pages, upload photos and videos, communicate via messages or chat, share news and advertise innovations or products and view notifications. Most importantly, *Facebook* users are able to create and join interest groups, which translate mostly to offline civic activities.

*Twitter* is another important social media facility; launched in 2006 as a real-time information network that connects users to the latest information about what a user finds interesting. Its users communicate via 'Tweets' which are short posts limited to 140 characters and 'follow' or subscribe to the updates of other users, some of which include conventional media sources, groups or politicians (Twitter 2016). *Twitter* has approximately 450 million monthly active users as at 2022, which is 396 million more users than it had in 2010 and its audience has increased by more than 40% since 2018 (Statista 2023). *Twitter* has shown its political socialization and civic engagement potential such that citizens follow and are made aware of political and civic events through this medium.

Another social media network is *YouTube* which was launched in 2005 as the first SMN dedicated solely to uploading and sharing personal video where users can also leave comments on videos (Cloud 2006; Hopkins 2006; Graham 2005). On *YouTube*, an average of 2,500 new videos are uploaded every minute, amounting to 183 hours of video content, with an average video length of 4.4 minutes (YouTube 2023; Statista 2023). These video contents, which are open to comments, usually include music, plays as well as political comments, opinions and campaigns. Weblogs, mostly referred to as blogs, is another frequently utilized social media platform which was launched in 1994 (Blood 2000). On a 'blog', new content can instantly be added to a site via a web interface and it is accessible for both audience and bloggers. Through these social media, citizens' political consciousness and awareness can be increased and opinions can be formed while videos, comments and news of civic affairs are uploaded, shared and commented on by the citizenry.

### **Issues of Women Political Participation in Nigeria**

Participation refers to the act of taking part in some activities of life including social, economic or political spheres. Political participation refers to involvement in events or activities and influencing the selection of political representatives or the actions of governance. Scholars such as Agbalajobi (2021); Oladapo, Atela and Agbalajobi (2021) and Abubakar (2011) see political participation as the involvement of people (not necessarily active) in any political process before a collective decision has arrived. It entails citizens' engagement in the discourse of socio-political and economic issues which serve as yardsticks for choosing leaders. It may also include assessing the capabilities of the incumbencies and advocating ways of ameliorating societal ills for a country. For this research, political participation refers to engagement in political activities and action. It is the involvement of women in political affairs of the country, including taking active part in all political activities such as civic education, demonstrations, attending rallies, political conferences, voter registration, party campaigns, party elections, national

campaigns, national elections and even their active involvement in the legislative debates.

Nigeria maintains a federal democratic constitution, boasting inclusiveness and equality. It is expected that this will facilitate Nigerian women's involvement in politics and further prompt an admission of women to one-third of positions in governing bodies, to serve as an initial step in the pursuit of gender equity and women's empowerment (UNIFEM 2003). However, the under-representation of Nigerian women in politics is both descriptive and substantive (Agbalajobi 2021; Chaudhuri and Heller 2002; Tremblay and Pelletier 2000). Nussbaum (2002) claimed that Nigerian women's under-representation in the public and social domain has affected Nigerian women's empowerment and social status.

Nigerian women's under-representation is as a result of several impediments which have been identified as limiting civic engagement of Nigerian women and their participation on the social, economic, and political fronts. These barriers have been grouped as cultural, religious, economic, legal and perception factors. The Nigerian culture, social conventions and values had stereotyped and relegated the women to being lesser humans who should not be involved in public affairs (Agbalajobi 2010; Adisa *et al.* 2024). Religion is an accomplice in the stereotyping of Nigerian women and it reinforces the barriers that prevent them from participating politically, economically and socially to the extent that some religious sects do not even allow women to speak out in public, they can only communicate through the men (Para-Mallam 2006; Chitongo & Ojogiwa 2021).

The stark poverty that confronts Nigerian women is another impediment to civic engagement. Under stifling economic conditions, women have less access to education, credit information, skills, loans, and health care which are all crucial to attaining financial independence. Perception of politics is another impediment as politics is perceived as a dirty vocation that is reserved for unrefined people who have little scruples with bending the rules, subverting due process and manipulating popular will. Public political participation

as a woman is often considered 'unladylike' such that female politicians are often perceived to be divorcees and have marital failures (Mohanty 1988). The violent, 'do-or-die' nature of politics in Nigeria is hardly veiled and thus hinders women involvement.

The works of Burns, Schlozman and Verba (2001) and the related analysis by Verba, Burns and Schlozman (1997) as well as Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) have demonstrated that gender differences in political participation are always substantial for population at large. Part of their findings are that men score significantly higher on measures of interest in politics, knowledge of politics, consumption of news media and feelings of political efficacy. Burns *et al.* (2001) argued that the potential of civic education and skills development, which is the basis for an active engagement of women in policy processes, has not been fully tapped into in the formal and informal education and learning systems. Discriminatory laws and policies, low levels of education as well as poverty contribute to the widespread exclusion of women from civic and political life thus women remain at the periphery of political processes.

Verba and Nie (1987) as well as Dalton (2008) among others have suggested ways to overcome the impediments and increase women civic engagement as well as their rate of political participation. Self-mindfulness by identifying areas of strengths and weaknesses, leadership training for women, creating personal connections and relationships, sensitization and social awareness about the social issues as well as organizational clarity are identified ways to increase women civic engagement. Other factors that have been identified as influencing civic engagement include education, income level, resources, information, efficacy and incentives. Putnam (2000) argues that education is the strongest predictor of civic engagement, although Verba *et al.* (1995) ranked it after interest in politics, civic skills and information. Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) find education considerably more important for participation in government than for electoral politics. Education seems to shape all forms of civic involvement and specifically needs to be improved for women to increase their

civic engagement level (Kitanova 2020; Uslaner 2023; Dow 2009; Burns, Schlozman and Verba 1997; Kenski and Jamieson 2000). Education is thus very important in the process of civic engagement and it serves as the most important key to social and political engagement.

Verba *et al.* (1995) also emphasized the importance of income level and personal wealth as a factor influencing women civic and political participation. Other scholars have contended that higher income people are more likely to join voluntary associations (Guterbock and Fries 1997). High income is a powerful determinant of political organization affiliation and membership, informal community activity, contact of public officials, campaign work as well signing petitions which are all relatively demanding forms of civic and political involvement (Rosenstone and Hansen 1992; Verba *et al.* 1995). Related to income (financial resource) are the non-financial resources including civic skills and abilities. People with greater organizational and communicational skills are more likely to participate in social and political life. These resources and skills include writing, bringing people together, making presentations, contacting public officials, and making decisions; each of which can translate to political or social activism (Verba *et al.* 1995). These skills are more important for local political and social activity than for national politics (Miller 2001). Civic skills are among the most important determinants of civic engagement in general and far surpasses income and education (Verba *et al.* 1995) and similarly to education and income, are important for the most demanding forms of civic engagement. Information, efficacy, and incentives are factors in enhancing women civic engagement and well informed people and citizens, who feel more powerful, are more likely to participate in all forms of civic and political life. Since education is also a strong determinant of engagement, more highly educated people are thus more likely to be well-informed people.

## **Impacts of Social Media on Government and Political Participation**

The impacts of social media, on politics in general as well as women political participation, cannot be stressed enough. Social media has brought power back to the people such that any person can communicate from anywhere, to any place, at any time about anything (Matisi, 2021). Social media has shaped political communication by deepening the segmentation of audiences, weakening the gate-keeping roles and standard breaking news practice of the traditional media. It is flexible, accessible and affordable thus promoting democratization of media, altering the meaning of geographic distance as well as allowing an increase in volume and the speed of communication. The advent of social media has also led to activists and advocacy groups increasing rapidly with formerly under-voiced individuals or marginalized groups now enjoying new opportunities to be heard.

Many authors have expressed the importance of social networking sites and media like *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *YouTube* and *Blogs* to lead efforts to a more democratic society, by increasing civic and political participation by citizens. Grant *et al.* (2010) claimed that politicians use social media sites to reach out to constituents, with varying success. Burns *et al.* (2009) indicates that Iranian citizens also used *Twitter* as means of expressing their opinions during their 2007 election. Ifukor (2010) claimed that the use of electronic media during the 2007 Nigerian elections revealed that there is a relationship between social media discourse and the process of political empowerment. In essence, the emergence and use of social media influences the process of empowering citizens politically.

Shirky (2011) expatiates that the more promising way to think about social media, is as a long-term tool that can strengthen civil society, the overall public sphere and compensate for the disadvantages of undisciplined groups by reducing the costs of coordination. Social media has increased shared awareness by propagating messages through social networks. Abubakar (2011) explained that the coming of social media in the last few years is rapidly changing the situation

as there are online platforms that now serve as new “political capitals” that people resort to and use to participate in political discourse. Min, (2021); Can and Alatas (2019); Kweon and Kim (2011) maintain that social media have become the main source of personal orientation, anonymous interactivities and social community on a variety of issues that involve politics and political discourse. Mayfield (2010) attributes social media capacity in boosting participation to its connectedness and textual/audio-visual characteristics appeal. Okoro and Nwafor (2013) agree that social media networks including the *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *YouTube*, *2go* and *Blackberry* services have made civic participation much easier, faster and cost effective.

The arrival of social media has greatly enhanced all aspects of human communication and the participatory, interactive and cost-effective nature of this new technology has made everyone who can use it, a mass communicator. This brings to fruition the prediction of Marshall McLuhan in 1964, that the world would someday become a “global village”, where what happens in one part of the world would be known instantly and simultaneously worldwide (Adibe and Okoro 2013). Adibe and Odoemelum (2011) observe that this new communication media has increasingly helped human society to be more aware of each other. This agrees with the submissions of Baran (1998) that as media shrinks the world, people will become more involved in one another’s lives and will thus form new beneficial relationships. Baran’s argument, as supported by Okoro and Nwafor (2013) and One (2017) is relevant to this discourse as in many parts of the world today, individuals, groups, organizations and even nations are taking advantage of the opportunities provided by social media platforms to mobilize millions of people to support and advance their course.

In Nigeria, social media has become a veritable tool for active participation in civic and political activities, specifically during elections and the usage of social media for political participation and communication during elections was employed. Internet penetration in Nigeria vis-à-vis social media is increasingly complementing citizens’ political participation, changing interrelationships between citizens, organizations,

public institutions and also expanding notions of political behaviour and participation (Ifukor 2010; Okoro and Dirim, 2009). The Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (2012) established that four key stakeholders in the electoral process, namely: the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), politicians and political parties, the electorate as well as Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) made extensive use of social media during Nigeria's April 2011 general elections. For INEC, social media was basically used to share information on elections and receive feedback from the public. Politicians and political parties used social media primarily to reach out to the voters and campaign for support. The voters used social media to report their experiences and receive election-related information. The CSOs used social media tools to mobilize and educate the electorate as well as to cover and report the outcome of their monitoring of the electoral process. The same has been reported during the 2015 general elections (Odeyemi and Mosunmola 2015) and 2023 general elections. With more Nigerians having access to the internet, this has made social media accessible to many more people but has also made political campaigning more difficult to manage (Idowu 2022; Nabiebu 2022).

Social media has also been used to create awareness and mobilize against activities of anti-state groups such as Boko Haram. This was the case with the Boko Haram attack on Chibok in Borno State that resulted in the kidnapping of over 200 secondary school girls on April 14, 2014 (Amnesty, 2023). When word of the mass-kidnapping made international news, people started speaking out on the internet via use of the hashtag *#bringbackourgirls* as well as posting photos of themselves holding protest signs on their social media. The *#bringbackourgirls* campaign was effective in raising awareness about an atrocity that may have otherwise been largely ignored by the Western media. Nigerian women used *Twitter* to participate in this campaign and social media platforms were used by many women, as well as other individuals and organizations to create awareness about the incident and mount pressure on Jonathan to ensure the rescue of the abducted girls.

Social media has kept women more informed, updated and assisted in exposing societal ills.

Social media is also increasingly being used as a means to improve women education and empowerment in community-led projects and has especially facilitated women engagement in urban governance and election monitoring. Through social media, citizens' political consciousness and awareness has also been increased and opinions formed. Africa Practice (2014) claimed that social media has impacted governance in Nigeria in four critical areas, namely: accountability, civic engagement, branding and sourcing information. Modern technology, where social media belongs, is participatory, interactive and cost-effective. NDI's (2014) research on citizen participation and technology showed that more people are using technology around the world and that it has improved the quality of their political participation. The research (NDI 2014) further explains how social media platforms have made it possible to make quality content accessible to mass audiences in Nigeria and by so doing, have amplified the voices of individuals at the 'bottom,' while enhancing responsiveness among those at the 'top.'

Social media has been a game changer in the civic engagement landscape for women. Okoro and Dirim (2009) cited in Okoro and Nwafor (2013), submitted that it is through these media that people are able to participate freely in discussions relevant to public good. Its unprecedented access has shifted the balance of power between women and governmental institutions. Women are craving for new developments and opportunities through social media channels and have used these mediums to serve as a global platform for their issues, generate and disseminate knowledge as well as to create unified social movements. Social media has enabled women to participate in new forms of engagement beyond the traditional, formal avenues available to them including institutional and governmental avenues, civil society, non-governmental organizations, media and communication amongst others. Social media also provides women with the opportunity to be informally free with the public through online engagement and grants women the chance to participate actively and get involved

fully in the political discourse by adding their voices on issues posted on social media sites (Oladipo and Chukwudi 2023).

Interestingly, social media has also been used to mobilize citizens against government policy and actions in Nigeria thus leading to and encouraging protests as well as promoting accountability. It was used to mobilize citizenry against President Goodluck Ebele Azikiwe Jonathan's hike in the fuel price in January 2012, which was tagged as *Occupy Nigeria*. *Occupy Nigeria* marked the significance of social media in Nigerian politics as the removal of the fuel subsidy by President Jonathan in 2012 led to mass protests, which were organized via *Twitter* thus translating cyber conversations to actual mobilization beyond those platforms. With an estimated tweet every second during the protest, the movement highlighted what Nigerians are capable of, as well as their will to mobilize to demand change from the government (Africa Practice 2013). *Occupy Nigeria* cemented the need for the government and politicians to engage with citizens, which is why many are active on Facebook and Twitter to date.

Across Africa, governments are becoming increasingly careful of the power of social media to mobilize opinions that disagree with them and challenges their authority (Bhanye, Shayamunda, & Tavirai 2023). They have thus attempted to control these online narratives which can be of influence, through tools of censorship, propaganda and disinformation campaigns (Bhanye, Shayamunda, & Tavirai 2023). . To restrict access to information and limit online mobilization, governments now utilize digital surveillance technologies to monitor online activity, identify activists and suppress critical voices that could pose a problem (Bhanye, Shayamunda, & Tavirai 2023). According to Hove and Chenzi (2020), Zimbabwe witnessed more than forty civilian-led demonstrations between January and September 2016, which were caused by failure of the government to address socio-economic and political grievances of the citizens. They further theorise that these protests could not have been instigated in the absence of social media platforms. Unfortunately, the government did not just respond to these calls for reform through widespread

arrests, beatings, torture and abductions of people involved in the protest (Tarisayi 2016), but they also used legislative instruments to silence the demonstrations, which included the banning of public demonstrations and encrypted messaging, the introduction of the Computer Crime and Cybercrime Bill (CCCB) of 2016 as well as remote surveillance of private telephone calls and mobile messaging of citizens (Privacy International 2016).

In Nigeria, the Cybercrimes Act officially criminalizes online activities such as cyberstalking, defamation and spreading false information. According to Eboibi (2017), it was a government response to the increasing rate of fraudsters using the internet after the growth in telecommunications usage and internet penetration that Nigeria experienced in the late 1990s which gave Nigeria the infamous reputation of being the global hub for cybercriminal activity. While this Act presents itself as a solution to a menace, however, there is a concern that it could also be weaponized to stifle free speech and target individuals who criticize the government, especially by using vague provisions that can be broadly interpreted to restrict online expression. Women who speak against injustice and challenge patriarchal norms will not be exempted from this. Bada & Eyongndi (2024) outline the various censorship and monitoring tactics which governments use, such as blocking or filtering certain information on the internet, filtering Domain Name System (DNS), blocking Ips including limiting citizen's internet access in times of civil unrest and demonstrations. This is supported by the case study of the 2020 *EndSars* protests, in which social media channels aided the demonstrations against police brutality as the youth was using them to plan events, disseminate information and create awareness around the world. In response, the Nigerian government placed limitations on social media sites, claiming that the protesters used it to spread false information and it is in light of all these that Jost *et al.*(2018), suggests the possibility of social media hindering political participation as a net effect, by making it easier for governments to disrupt oppositional activities.

## **The Role of Social Media in Promoting Women's Political Participation**

Research has shown that social media can be a game-changer for women's political engagement, providing a platform for them to express themselves, mobilize support and challenge patriarchal norms (Bruno *et al.* 2023). In Malawi, for instance, social media has been instrumental in promoting women's political participation, particularly during elections (Bruno *et al.* 2023). Similarly, in Nigeria, social media played a significant role in the 2011 General Elections, with women using platforms like *Twitter* and *Facebook* to mobilize support and engage in political discussions (Madueke *et al.* 2017). Despite these gains, however, women's political participation in Africa remains limited. According to UN Women, women hold only 24% of national parliamentary seats and 21% of local government leadership positions in Africa (Bizjak and Podergajs, 2024). Social media can help bridge this gap by providing women with a platform to amplify their voices, connect with other women, and access information and resources.

Social media can also be used to mobilize support for women's political candidates and causes. Social media platforms are very useful for fundraising and campaigning and can thus help female candidates reach a wider audience and connect with potential donors and volunteers. Grassroot mobilization is also easier through the use of social media as rallies, protests, and online campaigns can be properly utilized by female candidates to advocate for their rights and raise awareness about critical issues. Yarchi and Samuel-Azran (2018), in a case study of the Israeli 2015 campaign, comparatively investigated the ability of male and female politicians to engage social media users during an election campaign and found out that posts by female politicians generated significantly more user engagement in terms of likes and shares compared to the males. This finding indicates that social media presents greater opportunities to female politicians to promote themselves and improve their status in the political power play.

Social media also provides a platform for women to express themselves, share their experiences, and challenge

patriarchal norms. Women can leverage social media to share their personal stories and experiences thus bring political issues to the humane level and connect with electorates on an emotional level. According to Li and Zhuo (2023), women often use social media for cognitive attention, a means to seek more attention and validation, as well as an outlet for emotional expression. According to Sweinstani, (2019), using digital media as one of the marketing methods for female political candidates proved to have a positive impact on the public perceptions of such candidates, especially as it made it easier for people to know them and for them to get closer to the people.

Social media can provide women with access to information and resources on politics, governance, and leadership as well as enable them to stay informed and engaged in current events as they can build networks and connect with other women, organizations and resources. This confirms the theory by Oladipo & Chukwudi (2023), that social media deserves the credit for the apparent improvement in political awareness in Nigeria. As more people are joining social media networks, they are becoming more politically aware and educated thus directly engaging in elections and devoting more time to political discussions.

Solidifying what role social media plays in boosting women political participation, is referred to as the digital democracy theory. According to Dunan (2020), the old era of democracy made use of conventional patterns that made it difficult for people to be well informed and properly express their opinions. Democratic systems were complex and thus only minimal participation of the public was achieved. Technology and ICT advancement, however, has caused people to change practically every aspect of their lives and embrace virtualization and digitalization (Blühdorn and Butzlaff 2020). Democracy calls for new spaces where the community can be fully involved in democratic life, and this is what digital democracy provides, according to Congge *et al.* (2023).

Gilardi (2016) defines digital democracy as the use of digital media and networks for political and government

purposes. Digital technology possesses a huge influence on democratic processes through political mobilization, campaign strategies and polarization of public opinion. Hardiman (2018) outlines easy access to the acquisition and expression of information for community members as a crucial essence of digital democracy. Indianto *et al.* (2021) then argues that virtual space is what strongly influences the development of digital democracy and social media is the embodiment of virtual space. According to Guillamón *et al.* (2016), social media is used by candidates/politicians during political campaigns to keep electorates informed of the programs and ideas that will be implemented by them. Women, candidates and electorates alike, can leverage on this to achieve success and maintain their relevance within the democratic status quo.

In measuring the impact of social media on political participation of women, it is important to admit that there are not just positives. Negative impacts also exist that could hamper people's political participation. The use of social media increases the rate at which women in politics face online harassment, threats and abuse which can further discourage them from participating in online spaces and public life, thereby affecting their chances of success. Social media can also be a breeding ground for false information, propaganda and cause hate speech to become prominent thus causing manipulation of public opinion. Barker & Jurasz (2019) argue that while the rise of online feminist activism has helped to gain attention for women globally, women in these online spaces face various forms of violence which also includes online misogyny. According to Carpenter (2023), online harassment of female elected officials is very prevalent and its aims are usually to diminish the efficacy of these women in government by stifling their voices in public spaces and attempt to belittle, embarrass and abuse them for choosing to be relevant in spaces that are traditionally considered masculine. Women already suffer societal pressures and scrutiny, Okpokwasili and Ekemezie (2023) in their research indicated that media often portrays female politicians in a gendered manner and ends up perpetuating stereotypes and biases that already exist. Coffé *et al.* (2023) also suggest that the

public is more likely to accept or condone negative campaign behaviours from men than from women. The constant pressure for female politicians to present a perfect image online during these attacks can negatively influence their mental health.

Overall, social media has the potential to play a significant role in promoting women's political participation in Africa but it could also be a tool for their suppression. More research, however, is needed to fully understand the impact of social media on women's political engagement and to identify strategies to leverage social media to promote women's political participation (Makatlar and Kumar 2022) as asserted by scholars like Schuster (2013), that online political work presents opportunities for women's participation in politics.

### **Methodology**

This study was empirical and involved descriptive design. It consisted of a survey to investigate the impact of social media on political participation among community women in Nigeria. Ile-Ife community was purposively selected for the survey because it exhibits features of a rural and urban Nigerian community as well as for its strategic importance in Nigerian history. Ile-Ife is an ancient and historical Nigerian town, regarded as the ancestral home of the Yoruba ethnic nationality (Obayemi 1979). It is located in the Ife Central Local Government area of Osun State, in the Southwest geopolitical zone of the country. The study comprised of the female population in the Ile-Ife community and the survey involved women above the age of eighteen who are residents in areas within the community from which a sample was randomly selected. A sample size of 384 was calculated for the survey at 95% level of confidence and 5% margin of error (Krejcie and Morgan 1970; Research Advisor 2006) and the sample size was based on the projected population for female residents of Ile-Ife community estimated at 78,801 from the 2006 population census (NPC 2010).

A structured close-ended questionnaire, self-designed and pretested for reliability and validity, was used to gather data for the survey. The questionnaire was administered on artisans,

market women, civil servants, students and lecturers in different parts of Ile-Ife community including Obafemi Awolowo University Campus, Mayfair, Ife-Central Local Government Secretariat, Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital Complex, Lagere, Oja-Obalufon, Eleyele, Ibadan Road, Sabo and Ajegunle areas. Surveyed data were analysed by descriptive (measure of central tendency – mean and standard deviation) inferential statistics (estimating population parameters with a margin of error). Responses to the questionnaire were entered with *epi data version 3.1* and exported to and analysed with *SPSS version 20* (Statistical Package for Social Science). Analysis is hereafter presented in tables to reflect frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation and mean values, followed by interpretation and discussion in relation to each objective.

## **Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings**

This section involves the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from the field through a questionnaire survey and a discussion of the basic findings in relation to each objective. The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented hereafter.

Table 1.1 above shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. On the age of the respondents, the majority (50.8%) were between 18 to 28 years while the least were those who were not less than 58 years and the others were between 28 to 57 years. The marital status of the respondents as on the table shows that a substantial amount (39.3%) of the respondents were married while most (53.2%) of the respondents were never married and a few (7.3%) of the respondents were either widowed or divorced. For the religious affiliation of the respondents, it is shown that most (74.2%) of the respondents were Christian while less than one quarter (24.2%) were practicing Islam and the remaining six respondents (1.6%) were of traditional beliefs. The table further shows that over two-third (69%) of the respondents were of the Yoruba ethnic nationality while the Igbo (22.4%), Hausa (4.7%) and other ethnic groups accounted for the remaining less than one-third of the respondents. Employment status of the respondents as shown in the table indicates that

**Table 1.1:** Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents by their socio-demographic characteristics

Items	Options	Frequency	%	Cumulative %	Mean; Std. Dev.
Age Range	18 - 27 years	195	50.8	50.8	1.92; 1.150
	28 - 37 years	86	22.4	73.2	
	38 - 47 years	56	14.6	87.8	
	48 - 57 years	33	8.6	96.4	
	≥58 years	14	3.6	100.0	
Marital Status	Never married	205	53.4	53.4	1.60; 0.804
	Married	151	39.3	92.7	
	Widowed/Divorced	28	7.3	100.0	
Religious Affiliation	Christianity	285	74.2	74.2	1.27; 0.480
	Islam	93	24.2	98.4	
	Traditional	6	1.6	100.0	
Ethnic Origin	Hausa	18	4.7	4.7	2.72; 0.611
	Igbo	86	22.4	27.1	
	Yoruba	265	69.0	96.1	
	Others	15	3.9	100.0	

Items	Options	Frequency	%	Cumulative %	Mean; Std. Dev.
Employment Status	Employed	150	39.1	39.1	1.92; 0.834
	Self Employed	115	29.9	69.0	
	Unemployed	119	31.0	100.0	
Highest Level of Education	Primary	17	4.4	4.4	3.28; 0.944
	Secondary	81	21.1	25.5	
	Tertiary	286	74.5	100	

Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

**Table 1.2:** Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents by factors that hinder political participation among women in Ile-Ife Community, Osun State

Factors	Responses [N= 384; Freq. (%)]						
	SA	A	PA	D	SD	Sum	Mean; Std. Dev.
Influence of social media	81 (21.1)	91 (23.7)	58 (15.1)	66 (17.2)	88 (22.9)	384 (100)	2.97; 1.474
Cultural belief	185 (48.2)	140 (36.5)	21 (5.5)	27 (7.0)	11 (2.9)	384 (100)	1.8; 1.019

Factors	Responses [N= 384; Freq. (%)]							Mean; Std. Dev.
	SA	A	PA	D	SD	Sum		
Godfatherism	168 (43.8)	126 (32.8)	33 (8.6)	26 (6.8)	31 (8.1)	384 (100)	2.03; 1.235	
Huge financial requirement	194 (50.5)	126 (32.8)	24 (6.3)	30 (7.8)	10 (2.6)	384 (100)	1.79; 1.036	
Religious belief	196 (51.0)	128 (33.3)	36 (9.4)	16 (4.2)	8 (2.1)	384 (100)	1.73; 0.942	
Level of education	173 (45.1)	136 (35.4)	27 (7.0)	28 (7.3)	20 (5.2)	384 (100)	1.92; 1.131	
Marital and other family responsibilities	186 (48.4)	128 (33.3)	25 (6.5)	27 (7.0)	18 (4.7)	384 (100)	1.86; 1.112	
Emotional challenges	133 (34.6)	130 (33.9)	84 (21.9)	29 (7.6)	8 (2.1)	384 (100)	2.09; 1.025	
Electoral rules	118 (30.7)	108 (28.1)	93 (24.2)	49 (12.8)	16 (4.2)	384 (100)	2.32; 1.157	
Negative societal attitude towards women participation	181 (47.1)	132 (34.4)	40 (10.4)	23 (6.0)	8 (2.1)	384 (100)	1.82; 0.985	
Lack of enthusiasm on the part of women	181 (47.1)	115 (29.9)	57 (14.8)	20 (5.2)	11 (2.9)	384 (100)	1.87; 1.035	

Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

approximately one-third of the respondents were employed (39.1%), self-employed (29.9%) and unemployed (31%). The table finally shows the highest level of educational attainment of the respondents with approximately three-quarters (74.5%) having tertiary education while one in every five (21.1%) of the respondents had maximum of a secondary school education and a meagre proportion (4.4%) of the respondents does not have more than a primary school education.

### **Factors that Hinder and Facilitate Political Participation among Women in Ile-Ife**

Table 1.2 shows factors that hinder political participation by women in Ile-Ife community. It shows that of the entire respondents (N=384), 21.1% strongly agrees, 23.7% agrees, 15.8% partially agrees while 17.2% disagrees and 22.9% strongly disagrees that the influence of social media hinders women political participation in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Considering another factor, 48.2% strongly agrees, 36.5% agrees and 5.5% partially agrees while 7.0% disagrees and 2.9% strongly disagrees that cultural belief hinders women political participation in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Also, as shown on the table concerning the respondents, 43.8% strongly agrees, 32.8% agrees and 8.6% partially agrees while 6.8% disagrees and 8.1% strongly disagrees that Godfatherism hinders women political participation in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. In addition, of the total respondents, 50.5% strongly agrees, 32.8% agrees and 6.3% partially agrees while 7.8% disagrees and 2.6% strongly disagrees that huge financial requirements hinder women political participation in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Again, from the respondents, 51.0% strongly agrees, 33.3% agrees and 9.4% partially agrees while 4.2% disagrees and 2.1% strongly disagrees that the level of education hinders women political participation in Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

The table further revealed that of all the respondents, 48.4% strongly agrees, 33.3% agrees and 6.5% partially agrees while 7.0% disagrees and 4.7% strongly disagrees that marital and other family responsibilities hinder women political participation in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Among the respondents,

34.6% strongly agrees, 33.9% agrees and 21.9% partially agrees while 7.6% disagrees and 2.9% strongly disagrees that emotional challenges hinder women political participation in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Of all the factors identified by the authors and assessed by the respondents, cultural belief, religious belief, negative societal attitude and perception, marital and other family responsibility, huge financial requirement and lack of enthusiasm posed greater threats to active participation in politics among women in Ile-Ife community. These findings corroborate literature as asserted by Para-Mallam (2006) and Agbalajobi (2010) and thus there is still a lot of work to be done to reduce to the minimum the challenges standing as a threat to the active participation of women in politics.

Table 1.3 shows factors that can improve women political participation in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Among the total respondents (N=384), 41.1% strongly agrees, 49.5% agrees and 6.3% partially agrees while 3.1% disagrees and no one strongly disagrees that clarification and enlightenment of women on electoral rules will improve women political participation in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Also, of all the respondents, 38.3% strongly agrees, 39.3% agrees and 12.0% partially agrees while 8.9% disagrees and 1.6% strongly disagrees that the eradication of poverty and an increased income for women will improve women political participation in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. In addition, among all the respondents, 54.9% strongly agrees, 39.1% agrees and 3.9% partially agrees while 2.1% disagrees and none strongly disagree that increases in women awareness about issues that concern them will improve women political participation in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Furthermore, it is revealed that of the respondents, 50.8% strongly agrees, 41.9% agrees and 5.2% partially agrees while 2.1% disagrees and none strongly disagrees that an increase in the level of political education amongst women will improve women political participation in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. It is finally shown on the table that of all the respondents, 52.1% strongly agrees, 35.9% agrees and 9.6% partially agrees while 1.8% disagrees and 0.5% strongly disagrees that an increase in the rate of young women's active participation in politics will improve women political participation in Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

**Table 1.3:** Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents by factors that facilitate political participation among women in Ile-Ife Community, Osun State

Factors	Responses [N= 384; Freq. (%)]							Mean; Std. Dev.
	SA	A	PA	D	SD	Sum		
Clarification and enlightenment of women on electoral rules	158 (41.1)	190 (49.5)	24 (6.3)	12 (3.1)	0 (0)	384 (100)	1.71; 0.720	
Eradication of poverty and increased income for women	147 (38.3)	151 (39.3)	46 (12.0)	34 (8.9)	6 (1.6)	384 (100)	1.96; 0.999	
Increase in women awareness about issues that concern them	211 (54.9)	150 (39.1)	15 (3.9)	8 (2.1)	0 (0)	384 (100)	1.53; 0.673	
Increase in the level of political education amongst women	195 (50.8)	161 (41.9)	20 (5.2)	8 (2.1)	0 (0)	384 (100)	1.59; 0.688	
Increase in rate of young women actively participating in politics	200 (52.1)	138 (35.9)	37 (9.6)	7 (1.8)	2 (0.5)	384 (100)	1.63; 0.775	

Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

**Table 1.4:** Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents by knowledge of social media

Variables	Responses / Rating (N= 384)			
	High (%)	Low (%)	No (%)	Mean; Std. Dev.
Knowledge of Social Media	353 (91.9)	13 (3.4)	18 (4.7)	6.13; 0.453

Source: Authors’ Survey, 2023

Table 1.4 above shows the level of knowledge and utilization of social media by the respondents. It shows that almost all (91.9%) of the respondents have a high level of knowledge of social media while a meagre proportion (3.4%) of the respondents have low level of knowledge of social media networks and a few (4.7%) of the respondents have no knowledge of social media networks.

**Table 1.5:** Utilization of social media

Table	YES (%)	NO (%)	Mean; Std. Dev.
Communicate with friends through social media	330 (85.9)	54 (14.1)	7.14; 0.348
Actively use social media networks and understand their usages	322 (83.9)	62 (16.1)	7.16; 0.368
Use Facebook or Twitter to voice out discontentment on political issues	178 (46.4)	206 (53.6)	7.54; 0.499
Internet and social media networks do more harm than good on their users	124 (32.3)	260 (67.7)	7.68; 0.468

Source: Authors’ Survey, 2023

Table 1.5 shows the utilization of social media by the respondents. It shows that the majority (85.9%) of the respondents communicate with friends through the social media while only a few (14.1%) of the respondents do not communicate with friends via social media. It also indicates that a greater proportion (83.9%) of the respondents actively use social media networks and understand their usage while just a few (16.1%) of the respondents

do not actively use social media networks nor understand its usage. It again indicates that more than half (53.6%) of the respondents do not use social media platforms like Facebook or Twitter to voice out their discontentment with political issues whilst close to half (46.4%) of the respondents do. Furthermore, it is shown that more than two-thirds (67.7%) of the respondents were against the assertion that internet and social media networks do more harm than good on their users while less than one-third were supportive of it.

### **Impacts of social media on women political participation in Ile-Ife community**

Table 1.6 shows how social media and its utilization impacts political participation among women in Ile-Ife community, Osun State. It indicates that of the respondents, majority (27.9%) strongly agrees, almost one-fifth (19.8%) agrees and more than one-fifth (20.3%) partially agrees while also close to one-fifth (19.8%) disagrees and a meagre proportion (12.2%) strongly disagrees that they have been informed more and encouraged to participate in politics by social media. Also, it reveals that of the respondents, a few proportion (13.8%) strongly agree, almost one-fifth (19.0%) agrees and one-eighth (12.5%) partially agrees while a majority (27.6%) disagrees and similar proportion (27.1%) strongly disagrees that they get themselves engaged in political activities and discussions on social media platforms. Again, the table indicates that of the respondents, one-fifth (20.1%) strongly agrees, more than one-quarter (29.2%) agrees and below one-fifth (18.0%) partially agrees while less than one-tenth (9.1%) disagrees and a substantial proportion (23.7%) strongly disagrees that they can contest for a political office with access and use of social media for campaigns. Furthermore, the table reveals that of the respondents, the majority (50.8%) strongly disagrees and a substantial proportion (20.6%) disagrees while a combined less than one-third (28.7%) variedly agrees with the belief that politics is for the male folks even with the opportunities presented by the social media.

**Table 1.6:** Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents by impacts of the utilization of social media on their political participation

Impacts of the utilization of social media on political participation	Responses [N= 384; Freq. (%)]							Mean; Std. Dev.
	SA	A	PA	D	SD	Sum		
Social media has informed me more and encouraged me to participate in politics.	107 (27.9)	76 (19.8)	78 (20.3)	76 (19.8)	47 (12.2)	384 (100)	2.69; 1.381	
I get myself engaged in political activities and discussions on social media platforms.	53 (13.8)	73 (19.0)	48 (12.5)	106 (27.6)	104 (27.1)	384 (100)	3.35; 1.408	
With access and use of social media for campaigns, I can contest for a political office.	77 (20.1)	112 (29.2)	69 (18.0)	35 (9.1)	91 (23.7)	384 (100)	2.87; 1.457	
Even with the social media, I believe politics is for the male and not the female folk.	26 (6.8)	39 (10.2)	45 (11.7)	79 (20.6)	195 (50.8)	384 (100)	3.98; 1.282	

Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

**Table 1.7:** Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents by their perception about the impacts of social media on Nigerian government and politics

Perceptions on the Impacts	Responses [N = 384; Freq. (%)]							Mean; Std. Dev.
	SA	A	PA	D	SD	Sum		
Social media has encouraged political stability in Nigeria	92 (24.0)	141 (36.7)	86 (22.4)	55 (14.3)	10 (2.6)	384 (100)	2.35; 1.073	
Social media has enhanced the decision - making process in Nigeria	96 (25.0)	167 (43.5)	90 (23.4)	29 (7.6)	2 (0.5)	384 (100)	2.15; 0.901	
It has enhanced effective allocation and distribution of power	98 (25.5)	136 (35.4)	104 (27.1)	42 (10.9)	4 (1.0)	384 (100)	2.27; 0.995	
Social media has enhanced gender balance and reduced inequality in Nigerian politics	103 (26.8)	115 (29.9)	99 (25.8)	51 (13.3)	16 (4.2)	384 (100)	2.38; 1.136	
Social media has enhanced poverty alleviation in Nigeria	79 (20.6)	148 (38.5)	80 (20.8)	69 (18.0)	8 (2.1)	384 (100)	2.42; 1.069	
Social media has enhanced national integration and unity in Nigeria	101 (26.3)	173 (45.1)	67 (17.4)	33 (8.6)	10 (2.6)	384 (100)	2.16; 0.996	

Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

### **Perception about impacts of social media on Nigerian government and politics**

Table 1.7 shows the perception of the respondents about the impacts of social media on Nigerian government and politics. It indicates that of the respondents, majority (83.1%) differently agrees while minority (16.9%) variedly disagrees that social media has encouraged political stability in Nigeria. Also, almost all (91.9%) the respondents supported, while a meagre proportion (8.1%) variedly disagree that social media has enhanced the decision-making process in Nigeria. Again, the majority (88%) of the respondents variably agrees while a poor proportion (12%) of the respondents variedly disagrees that social media has enhanced effective allocation and distribution of power. The table further show that more than three-quarters (82.5%) agrees while a fewer proportion (17.5%) of the respondents variedly disagrees that the social media has enhanced gender balance and reduced inequality in Nigerian politics. It indicates that four-fifths (79.9%) of the respondents agrees while one-fifth (20.1%) variedly disagrees that social media has enhanced poverty alleviation in Nigeria. The last item on the table reveals that almost all (88.8%) of the respondents somewhat agree while only a little above one-tenth of the respondents variedly disagrees that social media has enhanced national integration and unity in Nigeria.

### **Effect of Selected Socio-demographic Variables on the Use of social media for Political Participation among Women in Ile-Ife community**

Table 1.8 above shows the effect of use of social media on the political participation among women in Ile-Ife community, Osun State, Nigeria. The result revealed that age ( $t=4.016$ ;  $p=0.000$ ) and employment status ( $t=4.016$ ;  $p=0.000$ ) has a significant positive influence on how the use of social media informs and encourages women to participation in politics in Ile-Ife. Marital status and religion have an insignificant negative influence while ethnic affiliation and the level of education also have an insignificant but positive influence on how the use of social media informs

**Table 1.8:** Linear Regression Distribution of the effect of use of social media for political participation by respondents with selected socio-demographic characteristics

VARIABLES		ANALYSIS			
Impacts of social media on political participation	Socio-demographic Variables	Coefficient	Std. Error	T-Statistics	P-Value (Sig.)
Social media has informed me more and encouraged my participation in politics	Age	0.278	0.077	4.016	0.000*
	Marital Status	-0.046	0.109	-0.681	0.497
	Religion Affiliation	-0.077	0.131	-1.560	0.120
	Ethnic Affiliation	0.077	0.104	1.547	0.123
	Employment Status	0.279	0.083	5.169	0.000*
	Level of Education	0.033	0.120	0.648	0.517
Engagement in political activities through the social media	Age	0.170	0.088	2.443	0.015*
	Marital Status	0.174	0.124	2.539	0.012*
	Religion Affiliation	-0.067	0.150	-1.350	0.178
	Ethnic Affiliation	-0.042	0.119	0.852	0.395
	Employment Status	0.075	0.095	1.385	0.167
	Level of Education	-0.032	0.137	-0.617	0.538

VARIABLES		ANALYSIS			
Impacts of social media on political participation	Socio-demographic Variables	Coefficient	Std. Error	T-Statistics	P-Value (Sig.)
Accessibility / usage of social media for campaign and my contest for political office	Age	-0.025	0.074	-0.410	0.682
	Marital Status	-0.109	0.105	-1.792	0.074
	Religion Affiliation	0.030	0.127	0.684	0.494
	Ethnic Affiliation	0.042	0.100	0.944	0.346
	Employment Status	0.411	0.080	8.485	0.000*
	Level of Education	-0.240	0.115	-5.255	0.000*
Even with the social media, I believe politics is for the male and not the female folk	Age	0.133	0.087	1.850	0.065
	Marital Status	0.025	0.123	0.354	0.723
	Religion Affiliation	-0.086	0.148	-1.679	0.094
	Ethnic Affiliation	0.018	0.117	0.356	0.722
	Employment Status	0.089	0.094	1.581	0.115
	Level of Education	0.043	0.135	0.812	0.417

Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

and encourages women to participation in politics in Ile-Ife community, Osun State.

The table further reveals that age ( $t=2.443$ ;  $p=0.015$ ) and marital status ( $t=2.539$ ;  $p=0.012$ ) have positive significant influence on the level of engagement in political activities on social media by the women in Ile-Ife community. While employment status has an insignificant positive influence, other socio-demographic variables have negative but insignificant influence on acts of engagement in political activities on social media by the women in Ile-Ife community.

The result further revealed that employment status has a positive significant influence ( $t=8.485$ ;  $p=0.000$ ) while the level of education has a significant but negative influence ( $t=-5.255$ ;  $p=0.000$ ) on the use of social media for campaign and contest for political office by women within Ile-Ife community. Whereas age and marital status has a negative but insignificant influence, religious and ethnic affiliation has insignificant but positive influence on accessibility or usage of social media for campaign and contest for political office.

Finally, the result reveals that beside religious affiliation with a negative but insignificant relationship, none of the socio-demographic variables has a significant influence on how social media affects the belief that politics is for the male and not the female folks in among women in Ile-Ife community.

## **Conclusion**

The challenges posed to women political participation and general civic engagement has been reduced by the advent of social media. Several impediments have been identified as limiting political participation among women in Ile-Ife community. These barriers in respect to women in Ile-Ife community can be grouped as cultural, religious, economic, legal and perception factors. Also, several ways that have been suggested in overcoming the impediments to women political participation include education and mobilization by identifying areas of strengths, leadership training and education, sensitization and social awareness, increased income level and resources, among others. It has also

been revealed that with the exception of ethnic affiliation, most socio-demographic variables including age, education, marital status, religion and employment status significantly influence knowledge and use of social media for political participation among women in Ile-Ife community. The study established that social media, though utilized, can further be maximized as instruments of civic engagements and political participation by the Nigerian community women.

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