

**SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE PROMOTION OF CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS:
A STUDY OF THE 2019 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The stress-free access to, and the popularity of social media have brushed a motley of effects across the span of socio-economic, political and cultural concerns of the society. What has it done in the promotion of Civil and Political Rights in Nigeria during the 2019 Presidential election? This study investigates social media and the promotion of civil and political rights in Nigeria during the 2019 Presidential elections. It has descriptive research design, and adopted Structural-Functionalism in its content analysis of data collected from secondary sources such as the Internet, newspapers, textbooks, and journals. It argues that Social Media promoted civil and political rights in Nigeria during the 2019 Presidential election through its role as a tool for political communication as epitomized by its provision of platforms for electioneering, voter education, real-time updates during the polls, and promotion of transparency in the collation of figures from the polls. The study concluded accordingly, and recommended among other things that the gains accruing to human rights in Nigeria from social media should be reinforced via media literacy towards whetting the ability of the Nigerian citizens to access, analyse, evaluate, create and act on, social media information in an informed manner.

Keywords: Social Media, Civil and Political Rights, Media Literacy, Political Communication, Elections

1. Introduction

Elections and electioneering of the 21st Century politics have taken a new shade of nature at the face of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) revolution, and the portmanteau of interconnected networks (the Internet). The revolution shrunk the once a vast world into what Marshall McLuhan calls “the global village” (McLuhan, 1964), and created a virtual society which commands formidable bearings on the physical society. The virtual society features its unique form of media christened the social media (including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Skype, Zoom, YouTube, etc., beyond the orthodox media of the physical society such as radio, television, newspaper, and magazine. The uniqueness of the social media earned them a pride of place which is swiftly rendering the orthodox media quite anachronistic, and forcing them to establish social media presence and its enhancements for survival.

Social media are known for their freedom, relative accessibility and boundless reach. They put the powers to elicit, store and disseminate information to all and sundry with little or more technical

know-how. By implication, the water-tight control of what information is sent and received has been perforated. People nowadays send and receive large volumes of information from the comfort of their rooms or elsewhere, and more importantly, with little or no censorship. The social media allow white lies, half-truths, and unadulterated truths.

The social media revolution has been traced to the launch of SixDegrees in 1997. SixDegrees.com was with enhancements that allowed users with the creation of profiles, Friends listing and, from 1998, surfing the Friends lists. SixDegrees did not break the ice about all these, of course. As a matter of fact, many dating sites and community sites featured user profiles. Furthermore, listing of Friends, although invisible to others had been featured in AIM and ICQ buddy lists. The same thing is also to be said about Classmates.com. It allowed users to affiliate and surf other affiliates on the network. Friends' listing came into the website later. It is to the credit of SixDegrees to be the first that provided the users with all the features. Since then, many waters have passed under the bridge as it concerned the development of social media. Now, social media is reputed for being interactive, accessible, and affordable; and decked with unparalleled degree of freedom.

The freedom, accessibility and reach of the social media have been exploited during elections and electioneering, nay, the 2019 general election and electioneering. They have been used for electioneering, voter education, real-time news updates during the polls, and promotion of transparency in the collation of figures from the polls. Electioneering no longer needs to be face to face or biased against the opposition party, no thanks to the state media; and collation of results are no longer successfully manipulated by the election management body (EMB). On the negative side, campaign of calumny and character assassination have gotten a fillip; electoral process has been more prone to meddling. Social media, from the foregoing can make or mar. It is capable of promoting and violating human rights. This study examines the impacts of social media on the civil and political rights in Nigeria during the 2019 general election. It is made up of the introduction, conceptual discussions, theoretical framework of the study, discussion on the impacts of social media on the civil and political rights in the election, conclusions, and recommendations.

2. Clarifying Social Media

Social media definition can be approached from technical and functional perspectives. Technically speaking, social media is “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Web 2.0 and User Generated Content (UGC) are the central words in the definition. Web 2.0 means the second version of World Wide Web which allows interaction between and among people; unlike the elderly Web 1.0 which was static and top-down in nature so that people are only consumers of information, and never the generators. The focus of the Web 2.0 is to create the forum for collaboration to the people for information sharing online through social media, blogging and Web-based communities (Techopedia, n.d); i.e. the ability for the people to interact. In this regard, User Generated Content is a product of the *laissez faire* ideology of the Web 2.0 technology. The uniqueness of the Web 2.0 is enhancement for dynamic information sharing epitomized by allowing readers, unlike previously where it existed at all, to comment directly on pages. The creators of the concept, Dale Dougherty, and Tim O'Reilly differentiated between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 by listing websites and applications founded on either of the ideologies and technologies; and the list as below shows clearly that social media is indeed Web 2.0 based.

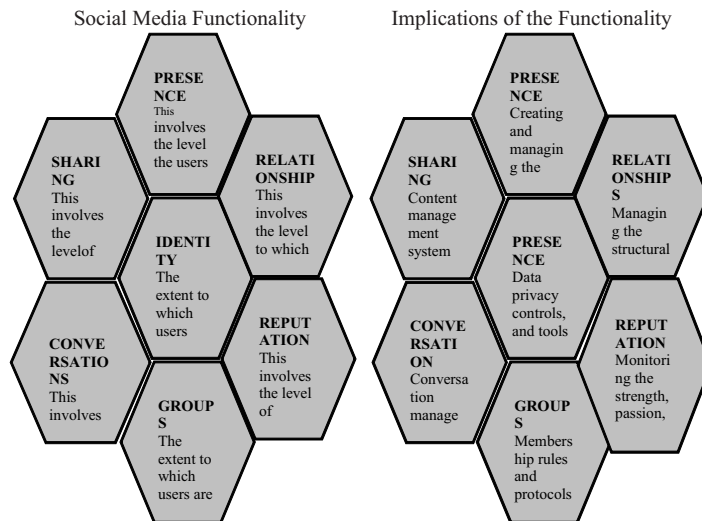
Table 1. Describing Web 2.0 by Example

Websites under Web 1.0		Websites under Web 2.0
Ofoto	=	Flickr
personal websites	=	Blogging
Akamai	=	BitTorrent
mp3.com	=	Napster
Britannica Online	=	Wikipedia
page views	=	cost per click
DoubleClick	=	Google AdSense
domain name speculation	=	search engine optimization
directories (taxonomy)	=	tagging ("folksonomy")
screen scraping	=	web services
Stickiness	=	Syndication
content management systems	=	Wikis
Publishing	=	Participation
Evite	=	upcoming.org and EVDB

Source: O'Reilly (2005, para. 7)

From the list above, it is observable that each of the Web 1.0 websites and applications have their corresponding latest version with similar utility under Web 2.0; and that the edge which the latter websites and applications have over the former ones was their participatory nature.

Figure 1. Building Blocks of Social Media



Source: Kietzmann et al. (2011)

Functionally, social media has been described as that which “employ mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content” (Kietzmann, Kristopher, Ian, and Bruno, 2011, p. 241). Towards a better description of social media, Kietzmann, et al (2011) also identified what he called the seven functional building blocks of social media which are: sharing, relationships, identity, conversations, reputation, groups and presence; functional building blocks which in their respective rights represent specific social media experience.

According to Wolf, Sims, and Yang (2018, p 5 - 6):

- i. *Identity* is the representation of the person of the user in the virtual world. This representation comes in different forms such as a profile on Facebook, birthday of users, their hobbies, and even family relationships, or fictitious pseudonym.
- ii. *Conversations* refers to the users' interaction with each other either in a broadcast or dialogue manner in real time or time lags.
- iii. *Sharing* is dissemination of content between and among users both with and without connections in the virtual world.
- iv. *Presence* is the indicators of the online status of the users. Presence helps to know whether other community members are on or off-line, and even their virtual and actual locations.
- v. *Relationships* within a community offer various ways for members to perceive their networks, which can be represented through activities like "likes" and "followers-followed," or by virtually mapping real-life connections. These abstractions in the form of social graphs can include both one-way and mutual connections, allowing for both strong and weak ties between individuals. For instance, on platforms like Twitter, "following" someone may not require reciprocation, whereas on LinkedIn, establishing a connection demands mutual acceptance and categorization of the relationship (e.g., colleagues).
- vi. The term *groups* encompasses two main aspects: membership groups, where users can express their affiliations with or interest in a particular subject, and groups used by users to organize and handle their relationships.
- vii. *Reputation* enables users to assess the content shared by other users and establish trust levels among members of the community. These trust levels can be explicit, such as through a scoring or ranking system (e.g., LinkedIn "influencer" status or StackOverflow points system), or they can be implicit, like gauging trust based on the number of followers on Twitter.

Social media however have common denominators which resulted in their unique nature and popularity. Every shade and colour of the social media is standing on the tripod: Web 2.0 technologies, laissez faire ideology and, IT technologies and market. Founded on these common denominators, social media are today digital, interactive, accessible and affordable.

Table 2. Technological, Ideological and Market foundations of Social Media

Social Media									
Social Networking Sites, Blogs, MMORPG, Virtual Worlds, Knowledge Sites, Online Communities of Practice, Corporate In-House Platforms, etc.									
Web 2.0 Technologies			Web 2.0 Ideology			IT Technologies and Market			
Media Richness	Interactive Applications	Content Creation	Transparency	Information Availability	Tools Availability	Smartphones fast CPUs and GPUs	Affordability	Fiber Broadband, WiFi, 4G	GPS

Source: Wolf, Sims, and Yang (2018, p. 4)

Social media, according to Manning, (2014) come in a motley forms such as below:

- *Email*: This is the most common form of social media in everyday life which involves the users logging into an account for sending and receiving of messages.
- *Texters*: This type of social media is connected to email. It functions as a bidirectional communication channel that enables individuals to promptly send messages to others or groups of people. Over time, texters' technologies have evolved to the point where they can now transmit photos and weblinks as well.
- *Blog*: This is a short word for *weblog*. It is a webpage through which individuals or groups share information and ideas with large group of people. Unlike the static webpages of old, blogs has room for interaction with their authors. Orthodox media have even started adapting to the trend by making their webpages blog-like for continued relevance.
- *Connection Sites*: This form of social media allows the users to attract compatible partners. A very good example is the online dating sites. The connection sites allow the users to create profile with a catalogue of their attributes for other users that might find them congenial with their own towards partnership.
- *Social Networking Sites*: This type of social media primarily revolves around connecting with individuals who already know each other, although it still provides ample opportunities to meet new people. The public nature of information shared on these social networking sites often creates a platform for expressing social or political viewpoints. However, research suggests that much of this political activity reinforces existing beliefs, particularly since people tend to be online friends with those who share similar views. Some well-known examples of social networking sites include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, among others. These platforms are so widespread that they promptly come to mind once social media is discussed.
- *Games and Entertainment*: Interestingly, some of the online games and entertainments such as Bejeweled and Words with Friends have social dimension allowing friends to engage each other in a contest for higher scores, send gifts that will allow for advanced game play, or even cooperate to beat a game.
- *Apps*: This is the short word for *mobile applications*. Generally, apps are not social media oriented but people could access social media websites through them, example, Facebook App; and many times however, apps have some kind of social dimension. One example is Grindr, an app that allows gay men to find other gay men who are within close proximity.

Social media marks a transition from broadcast media to interactive media. During the broadcast age, media were predominantly centralized, with entities like radio or television stations, newspaper companies, and movie production studios distributing messages to a wide audience. Feedback in this era was mostly delayed, indirect, and impersonal. The feats achieved in information and communication technologies advancement and also the advent of the Internet midwived a shift that resulted as the era of interactive media. One individual could now speak to many people, and with possible instant feedback. Advancements in technology have led to lower costs and increased accessibility, providing people with a wide range of media consumption options. Unlike the limited number of news outlets in the past, individuals now have the ability to access information from multiple sources and engage in dialogues with others through message forums, verifying the accuracy of the information being shared. At the heart

of this ongoing revolution lies social media (Manning, 2014).

Expounding Civil and Political Rights

Civil and political rights, known as first-generation human rights, encompass legal safeguards that protect individuals or groups from specific forms of oppression. These rights are prominently outlined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Civil and political rights aim to limit the government's authority concerning actions that impact an individual's autonomy (civil rights) and grant people the opportunity to participate in government and influence the creation of laws (political rights). The body of rights are germane for dignified human existence. Civil and political rights protect individual's freedom not only against government's infringements but also, against that of social organisations and private individuals. Salient rights under the civil and political rights as listed in United Nations (1967) are:

Right to Life: This right ensures that every individual has the entitlement to life, and this right can be violated in various ways, including deaths in custody due to torture, neglect, the use of excessive force, or hazardous detention conditions. It also includes killings by state agents or individuals acting on behalf of the State, where the use of force is unnecessary and disproportionate to the situation. Additionally, it encompasses instances of expelling or "refoulement" (illegal return) of people to countries where their lives are at risk. Furthermore, the state is obliged to investigate alleged violations of the right to life and prosecute those responsible. Human rights doctrine also opposes the use of the death penalty.

The right to freedom from torture: This right forbids torture and any form of inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Examples of violations include the intentional infliction of severe physical or psychological pain by state agents to cause suffering, expelling or returning individuals to countries where they might face torture or inhuman treatment, subjecting individuals to very poor detention conditions even without the intention to cause suffering, and corporal (physical) punishment of children in schools.

The right to a fair trial: This right pertains to the justice system and emphasizes that every individual has the right to a fair trial. It opposes certain practices, including conducting criminal charges hearings before administrative bodies that lack independence and impartiality, holding trials where one party has a significant advantage from the outset (violating the principle of "equality of arms"), experiencing undue delays in bringing a case to trial or concluding court proceedings, conducting secret trials, and disregarding the presumption of innocence by denying accused individuals procedural protections (such as access to information about the charge, time to prepare a defense, legal representation, the ability to confront witnesses, and access to interpretation services). In some documents, this right may be referred to as the right to fair hearing.

The right to freedom of assembly and association: All individuals possess the right to freedom of assembly and association. This right can be infringed upon in various ways, such as inhibiting peaceful public demonstrations, except when there is a legitimate concern for public safety and order. It also includes limiting opportunities to participate in voluntary associations and denying individuals the right to form or join organized unions.

The Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion: This right guarantees individuals the freedom to choose or adopt a religion or belief of their preference. It also grants the freedom to express their

religion or belief either individually or as part of a community, publicly or privately, through worship, observance, practice, and teaching. The most common violations of this right involve coercing people to follow a specific religion and imposing unreasonable restrictions, even including criminal penalties, on practicing one's own religion. The freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may only be limited by law when necessary to protect public safety, order, health, morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

The right to freedom of expression: All individuals possess the right to freedom of expression, and international human rights mechanisms acknowledge that this right can be infringed upon in diverse manners, such as restricting access to political, artistic, or commercial information and ideas (for instance, denying pregnant women information about abortion facilities). Other violations include curbing press freedom and imposing unwarranted restrictions, except for reasonable licensing restrictions, on broadcasting.

The right to privacy: This right can be infringed upon in various ways, such as intruding into an individual's private life, which encompasses their right to form relationships and exercise sexual autonomy. It also includes disrupting family life, which involves the right to marry and establish a family, as well as damaging a person's home or preventing them from residing in their own home. Additionally, interfering with private correspondence is another form of violation of this right.

The right to liberty and security: Various violations of this right include unlawful or arbitrary detention, which occurs when there is no legal justification for the deprivation of liberty. For instance, a person may be held in detention even after completing their prison sentence or despite being covered by an amnesty law. Additionally, individuals may be detained simply for exercising their rights and freedoms as guaranteed by international instruments. Another violation occurs when detention follows a trial that did not adhere to international standards for a fair trial (as described in the right to a fair trial).

The right to asylum: All individuals who possess a reasonable fear of persecution have the entitlement to seek asylum in a secure country. According to international human rights mechanisms, this right can be breached in several ways, including not offering the necessary facilities to enable individuals to apply for asylum, such as interpreters and well-trained immigration personnel. Other violations involve inadequately considering a request for asylum and expelling a person to a country where they may face the risk of torture, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.

The right to freedom from discrimination: All individuals possess the right to be free from discrimination, and international human rights mechanisms acknowledge that this right can be violated in diverse manners, such as discriminating against someone based on their sex, race, colour, language, religion, political affiliation, opinions, nationality, social background, or association with a national minority.

The Right to elect and to be elected: The right to participate in elections, both as a voter and a candidate, is known as the election right. This right is closely tied to the state's responsibility to facilitate the practical exercise of the right to vote and run for office without unjustified limitations. As a consequence, only justified and reasonable restrictions, as outlined by law, are permissible.

3. Situating the 2019 Presidential Election in Nigeria

The 2019 Presidential election in Nigeria was part of the 2019 general election held on February 23, 2019 to elect the President and the members of the National Assembly. The election was initially scheduled to hold on February 16, 2019 but the election management body which is the Independent National Electoral Body (INEC) postponed the election in the early hours of the election day, justifying the postponement on logistical grounds. The election featured 73 presidential candidates, 84,004,084 registered voters, and 27,324,583 total valid votes (INEC Nigeria 2019). This shows that a paltry 35% of the voters turned out to vote. The election was won by the incumbent President, Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressive Congress (APC) with a total number of 15,191,847 votes. His closest rival was Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) who polled a total number of 11,262,978 votes (INEC Nigeria, 2019). Expressing dissatisfaction with the election results, Atiku Abubakar and the PDP contested President Buhari's victory at the Presidential Election Petition Tribunal. Among various claims, they questioned President Buhari's educational qualification. However, the Tribunal ruled that Atiku Abubakar and the PDP could not sufficiently prove the allegation of President Buhari's non-qualification to participate in the February 23 general election, and concluded that President Buhari was eminently qualified to contest the election. The subsequent appeal filed by the Petitioner at the Supreme Court was defeated, and the seven-man Supreme Court panel led by Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Tanko Mohammed, dismissed Atiku's petition for lacking in merit, upholding the Tribunal's verdict.

4. Theoretical Foundations

This research is founded on the structural-functional theory as propounded by Gabriel Almond and Coleman, and later, Almond and Powell in 1960s. Structural-functionalism or simply, functionalism has age-long history traceable to Aristotle. It later courted the attention of the ace sociologists and anthropologists including Emile Durkheim and Talcott Persons. Across the disciplines and ages, structural-functionalism argues that society should be understood as a system of interdependent parts. The parts (structures) perform certain functions for the system's survival. Almond and Powell (1966) argued that understanding the political system is highly dependent on understanding the structures of the political system and their functions, and in doing so, must be put in an expressive and active historical context. The structural functions as listed by Almond and Coleman (1960) are interest articulation, political socialization, political communication, interest aggregation, law making, law implementation, and law interpretation. The foremost four belong to the input side of the system while the hindmost three represent policy outputs, especially from the inputs. Political communication serves as a link between the inputs and the outputs, thus performing the function of a feedback loop. In other words, it links the society and the political system. The function of political communication is performed by the media, including social media. The legislature, executive and judiciary perform the output functions in that order. On the other hand, structures such as schools perform the function of political socialization, political parties perform the function of interest aggregation while interest and pressure although not exclusively, perform the function of interest articulation.

Structural functional theory therefore makes the role of social media in human rights promotion and protection in the 2019 Presidential election understandable. During the 2019 general election, the 14 functions of mass media which were identified by Fisher and Soemarsono (2008) were observably performed by social media with positive impacts on the civil and political rights of the citizenry, and they include:

1. identification of problems,
2. relaying of problems to the public,
3. highlighting groups and their proposals,

4. presenting policymaker's proposals,
5. suggestions of media content
6. determination of the speed of decision making,
7. voter education
8. informing the public of content,
9. describing administration,
10. whetting the consciousness of the public,
11. evaluating effectiveness,
12. reacting to policy,
13. stimulating review,
14. making proposals for change or termination.

A close study of the list of functions above shows the fact that there cannot be other input functions such as political socialization, interest aggregation, and interest articulation without political communication. Communication is central as it coordinates other functions. It is the life wire of the political system. As a matter of fact, without communication the political system will crash. This follows therefore to mean that all the political socialization, interest articulation, and interest aggregations in the 2019 Presidential elections were done by the instrumentality of political communication; a function performed by the media, and accordingly, assisted the citizenry in exercising their civil and political rights such as the rights franchise, freedom of assembly and expression.

5. Social Media, Civil and Political Rights, and the 2019 Presidential Election in Nigeria

Elections and electioneering in Nigeria have come under significant social media influence, especially with the vast majority of Nigerians online. According to the Nigerian Communication Commission, over 114 million Nigerians were on the Internet by February 2019 (Sahara Reporters, 2019, May 20). This follows therefore to mean that over 60% of the country's population are Internet users; hence the extraordinary interest which the political parties, INEC, contestants and even the electorates had on the internet for political information and communication.

Three basic things as observed by Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) (2012) that underlie the use of social media for electoral purposes in Nigeria since 2011, which were still observable in the 2019 general election are: firstly, the use of social media in Nigeria's 2019 elections reflected a global fashion for "Internet elections" or "e-electioneering" (Macnamara 2008). Generally, the trend of using social media for elections and electioneering was traced to 2008 during which the former President of the United States of America used them to reach out the US citizens for political support (Ayeni, 2019). Since then, many nations of the world have followed suit, including Nigeria which since 2011 witnessed active participation of the electoral stakeholders on the social media. The reason for the trend is simply because of the ease of use, speed, and reach of social media relative to the era orthodox media dominated by radios, newspapers, and televisions which were not easily within reach.

The second concern pertains to certain Nigerian politicians leveraging the opportunities presented by social media for conducting online campaigns. This trend reached its peak during the 2019 general election. The presidential aspirants, especially the third force aspirants (Kingsley Muoghalu of YPP, Omoyele Sowore of AAC, Fela Durotoye of AAN, and even Oby Ezekwesili of ACPN) which were youthful and more Internet-savvy mounted formidable opposition against the big two aspirants (Muhammadu Buhari of the APC, and Atiku Abubakar of the PDP) using social media. The failure of the third force aspirants at the polls have however cast aspersion on the potency of social media in ensuring

electoral success as the total votes polled by the three third force parties was a trivial 73,000; being roughly the size of their online followers. It is not out of place to argue nonetheless that they would land victory at the polls with a worthier number of fan base.

The third concern involves the inclination of Nigerian civil society and the electorate to utilize social media as a means to enhance the effectiveness of election observation. Social media platforms serve as channels for sharing an abundant amount of videos, photos, tweets, and comments related to the elections. Omokri (2011) in his analysis of the 2011 election argued that the widespread use of these real-time media severely limited electoral malpractices because he and his observer team found that people were aware that they were on camera and this made them operate at their best behaviour. In his analysis of the 2011 election, Omokri (2011) asserted that the extensive adoption of real-time media significantly curtailed electoral malpractices. According to his findings, people became conscious of being recorded by cameras, which compelled them to conduct themselves with greater care and adherence to appropriate behaviour. For instance, @ogundamisi published on Twitter on February 27, 2019 the post below:

Nigeria 2019 Presidential Election

@MBuhari = 15,191,847

@atiku = 11,262,978

Cancelled = 2,825,375

@YeleSowore = 33,953

@MoghaluKingsley = 21,886

@feladurotoye = 16,779

Voided votes came 3rd with over 2 Million

We need to do more with voters education, reduce the parties.

In this manner, the social media raised the notch of transparency of the election. Social media users also quickly pointed out manipulations or acts of omissions in the figures, or other unbecoming electoral practice and accordingly held the electoral officers at bay from unholy acts in favour of a party or candidate in the election.

These underlying factors of social media in the 2019 Presidential elections discussed above wielded impressive positive implications on the civil and political rights of Nigerians. They largely protected the right to life of the citizenry. The 2019 Presidential election as established above featured extensive employment of social media for elections and electioneering. It was also used for voter education which includes not just the voting process but also propaganda against electoral violence which could lead to the killing of the participants in the election. For example, the Vote, Not Fight campaign by the Nigerian music artist 2FaceIdibia was carried out mostly on the social media such as YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. Mr. Idibia urged political parties and candidates to utilize established legal avenues if they had concerns about the election instead of going the road of violence. Atiku Abubakar of the PDP who challenged the election Muhammadu Buhari in the election abided by the doctrine of Vote, Not Fight, or similar campaigns.

The use of social media in the 2019 Presidential election promoted right to vote and be voted for. Social media assisted people in realizing their right to franchise. Aspirants used social media to solicit for electoral support while INEC following the provision of Section 154 of the 2010 Electoral Act, used social media to enlighten the citizenry on the power of their votes. On the Institution's Facebook handle, several campaigns were posted with different messages such as "how to locate your polling unit," "don't sell your vote," "don't sell your conscience," "vote wisely." The totality of these campaigns improve the political participation of the citizenry, as well as their political rights.

Social media also promoted right to freedom of expression, association and assembly in the 2019 Presidential election. It has already been said that Web 2.0 technology which is the foundation of social media technology features the ideology of freedom of expression by its interactive nature. The technology allowed people to share perspectives and opinions in “res publica” (public affairs), which was not there during the Web 1.0 epoch. A very good example is the @ogundamisi tweet above. This interactive nature of the technology also made it possible for the electorates to meet people with shared opinions towards aggregation of their interest for a formidable articulation of same.

The enthronement of a responsible and responsive government through the transparency demanded of the electoral process is another good implication for civil and political rights. The government would largely reflect the wishes of the majority of the people, and such government is most likely going to be accountable to the people, and respectful to their civil and political rights. The government of Muhammadu Buhari which was returned elected at the 2019 Presidential election will be judged based on this fact at the end of his administration.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Following from the discussion above, social media promoted and protected the civil and political rights of Nigerians in the 2019 Presidential election. The open nature of social media, ease of use, wide reach, and its cost effectiveness made it a beautiful bride which every political actor is keenly struggling to woo. Social media through its role as a platform for political communication enthroned transparency in the electoral process, expression of opinion by the people, interaction among the citizenry, and aggregation of interests by people with shared opinions in the 2019 Presidential election. However, it is noteworthy that the unbridled freedom on the social media platform is a serious challenge to human rights, nay civil and political rights, especially in the election. Social media users during the election under study engaged in several nefarious activities online in order to score cheap political points. There were significant number of libellous posts, as well as half-truths on the platform. The privacy of some political aspirants and voters were violated. Pictures were posted online showing the choice of voter on the ballot, in what was supposed to be an open-secret system. Muhammadu Buhari was equally pictured and posted online in what seemed to show that he was checking to ascertain the choice of her wife on the ballot. That was obviously a misrepresentation, and also a violation of his right to privacy.

This study therefore recommends media literacy towards making the citizens competent, critical and literate in all media forms so that they control the interpretation of what they see or hear rather than letting the interpretation control them. The importance of this is that the unrestricted nature of social media can only do the greatest harm when the people are not media literate. The social media operators should also ensure adequate governance of their various platforms in order to ensure decorum. This governance should still allow the freedoms there are, but should make sure that posts comply with certain principles. The suspension of the accounts of a crop of social media influencers by Twitter days before the 2019 Presidential election towards ensuring the sanctity of the election should be encouraged and leaf borrowed by others. The individual social media users should also recognize their obligation to protect and promote human rights in all their activities on social media.

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