

## Providing Evidence of Online Networking's Role in Political Education: A Case Study of INEC X Handle

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### Abstract-

**Introduction:** *The influence of online networking on political education has garnered significant attention from both media researchers and politicians. This study investigates the active role of online networking in political education, focusing on its benefits in terms of participation, interactivity, and cost-effectiveness. The aim of this study is to examine the degree to which students at Bayero University, Kano, utilise online networking for political education and to assess their awareness of INEC's usage of Twitter for political education.*

**Methodology:** *A standardized questionnaire was administered to 135 students using the messaging application WhatsApp. The data obtained followed a quantitative-descriptive survey technique.*

**Result:** *The results show that students engage in a substantial amount of online networking activity, with WhatsApp being the most often used platform. Most students are aware of INEC's use of Twitter for political education and have a positive impression of it. The result shows that online networking is a powerful platform for political education.*

**Conclusion:** *This study provides more evidence to support the importance of online networking in the field of political education and suggests methods to enhance its effectiveness in promoting public participation in political processes.*

**Keywords:** *Online platforms; Political education; INEC in Nigeria; X; False information; Internet platforms; Electoral procedures*

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### 1. Introduction

Online networking has revolutionized the way individuals and organizations connect and interact. The advancement of technology has freed up conventional approaches to acquiring and sharing news. Access to information is now available to anybody, irrespective of their geographical location, financial circumstances, or professional experience (U. Pate, personal communication, June 30, 2022). Therefore, online networking platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have become essential avenues for political discussions and education, allowing political actors to

engage with the public and disseminate information on political issues. Ahmad (2019) argues that the Internet and online networking have become increasingly important for spreading political knowledge and facilitating political education. Halder and Campbell-Phillips (2020) argue that politics is a fundamental aspect of a viable state, and the participation of citizens is crucial for the proper functioning of the state's political system. In order to exercise authority over the legislation and decisions that have an effect on their lives, individuals must engage in political participation. Individuals have the ability to express their opinions, advocate for their desires, and hold elected officials accountable by engaging in political activities (Galston, 2001). It is imperative for citizens to acquire political education to fully grasp the political system, its institutions, and the policies it formulates, enabling them to effectively participate in politics. Political education is essential for a well-functioning democratic society since it equips citizens with the necessary information and skills to actively engage in the political process (Galston, 2001). The significance of online networking in political education has been emphasised by several media scholars and politicians. Due to its three primary benefits—engagement, interactivity, and cost-effectiveness—online networking is emerging as a potent instrument for political campaigns. Various countries and politicians worldwide have embraced online networking as a means to inform and engage their citizens and candidates in political activities, such as elections and political progress. This trend gained momentum after Barack Obama's groundbreaking utilisation of the platform for political purposes during the 2008 US presidential elections (Ayeni, 2019). Statista (2023a), an international online publication website that aggregates data from many public and commercial sector sources, said that as of January 2022, there were 109.2 million active internet users and 32.9 million active online networking users in Nigeria. These data depict the population of the country, which consists of approximately 200 million residents. According to Statista (2023b, 2023c), it is projected that 15.22 million Nigerians will be using Twitter by 2028. This online networking platform has become an essential tool for political education and the dissemination of election-related information in the country. INEC, with a current following of 2.7 million, utilises its active Twitter account to disseminate election-related information worldwide. Political education plays a significant role in enabling the promotion of democratic principles and empowering citizens to effectively participate in politics. Ekuri (2018) defines Political education refers to the systematic procedure of instructing individuals on the importance of upholding several concepts, including the division of authority, adherence to legal principles, effective governance, and the conduct of unbiased and equitable elections. Political education plays a vital role in establishing democratic institutions that aim to progress the entirety of society. Additionally, it fosters justice and equal opportunities for all individuals (Ekuri, 2018). Voter education, a process of imparting knowledge to young individuals on crucial election-related subjects, possesses the capacity to mitigate election-related violence and manipulation (Ayeni, 2019). An extensive electoral education programme instructs voters on how to conduct themselves during the campaign period in a manner that adheres to the law and guarantees a democratic and impartial election. INEC's support for Nigeria's democratic system stems from this very reason. Nevertheless, employing online networking platforms for political purposes and education might have negative consequences. Online networking has faced criticism for its susceptibility to fake news and shallow, inaccurate journalism, potentially resulting in individuals being misinformed or deliberately deceived. Research papers like "Online networking as a Platform for Political Education. A Study of INEC

Twitter Handle" is necessary due to the dual role of online networking in facilitating and hindering the political process. This will provide an understanding of the level of online networking usage for political education among students at Bayero University and how they perceive this method of political education.

### **1.1. Operational Definition of Terms**

In this study, the following terms are used

1. Online networking: This study defines online networking as internet-based platforms that empower consumers to generate, distribute, and interchange information and content, including text, photos, and videos, with other users.
2. Political education: refers to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes pertaining to political institutions, systems, and processes, along with civic responsibilities and democratic values.
3. X (formal known as Twitter): Is a social networking site where users may send and receive short messages called "tweets."
4. INEC: stands for the Independent National Electoral Commission, which is a Nigerian governmental organization tasked with the duty of overseeing elections and voter registration in Nigeria.
5. X/Twitter handle: Is a distinct username that is used to identify a particular account on the online networking site, Twitter.
6. INEC X/Twitter handle: Is the official Twitter account of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the governing body responsible for the organization and oversight of elections in Nigeria.
7. Tweet engagement: As defined in this study, pertains to the level of interaction exhibited by Twitter users towards tweets shared by INEC's official account.

### **1.2. An examination of existing works**

The success of a state is mostly defined by long-lasting political endeavours, and in the contemporary world, policies that emerge from robust political determination and collaborative endeavours acknowledge this reality. Politics can be regarded as the fundamental basis of any well-functioning society. Political decisions have a profound impact on all aspects of society, encompassing social, economic, and cultural progress. Therefore, effective governance is essential to providing fair and impartial outcomes, providing everyone with a platform to engage in the democratic system, and holding elected representatives responsible for their actions. Several scholarly studies have analysed the influence of the media in educating the general public about municipal politics. Ikefuama (2023) states that elections in Nigeria are a dynamic political occasion characterised by media-driven political campaigns, political discussions, and educational attempts by relevant organizations. Considering the widespread presence of online networking, it remains an essential instrument for political enlightenment.

#### **1.2.1 Conceptual Review: Online networking**

Online networking, as defined by Jenny (2016), encompasses a range of interactive internet-based platforms that facilitate the process of generating, organising, and distributing content created by users, both individually and collaboratively. According to Van-Dijck (2013), it is an internet platform and software that permit users to communicate and interact with one another, share content, and create communities. Online networking, as described by Kaplan & Haenlein (2010), refers to a collection of internet-based apps that are built around the principles and technology of Web 2.0. These applications facilitate users in generating and distributing content that is generated by the users themselves. Boyd and Ellison (2007) state that a fundamental aspect of online networking is its emphasis on information created by users. Online networking platforms enable the creation and sharing of material by anybody with internet access, in contrast to traditional media that is often produced and disseminated by a limited number of professionals. Consequently, the process of creating and sharing knowledge has grown more egalitarian, allowing formerly marginalised or excluded groups to express themselves through conventional media outlets. Online networking platforms enable instantaneous communication and engagement between users and content, thereby promoting social relationships and collaboration. Online networking is distinct from traditional media since it is less centralised and has a smaller number of gatekeepers (Boyd, 2014). Online networking platforms provide universal access for individuals to create and disseminate content, unlike traditional media, which is often controlled by a limited group of owners or editors who determine what gets published and circulated (Shirky, 2008). Consequently, concerns have arisen over the dissemination of false information and manipulative content on online networking platforms, the potential for algorithmic biases, and the magnification of radical perspectives (Boyd, 2014). Mahmudov (2016) asserts that online networking currently fulfils a diverse array of roles in human society. He asserts that online networking fulfils various functions, including information dissemination, value generation, organisational support, social inclusion, and amusement.

### **1.2.2. Political Education**

Political education is widely regarded as a fundamental component of democratic societies because it enables individuals to hold public authorities accountable, engage in public discussions, and make well-informed decisions (Laswell, 1963; Walzer, 1992; and Arendt, 1968). Harold Laswell describes "political education" as the process of transmitting political culture along with its underlying beliefs, values, and assumptions (Laswell, 1963). Laswell argues that political education is essential for the stability of democratic societies. Political education, as defined by Michael Walzer, is the process by which individuals develop the ability to think critically about the structures and practices of their society (Walzer, 1992). Walzer argues that political education is the sole means by which social justice and civic involvement can be promoted. Hannah Arendt describes political education as the development of the ability to make sound judgements, which is necessary for effective political activity (Arendt, 1968). Arendt contends that moral deliberation and analytical thinking are indispensable for active participation in democratic societies, and she emphasises their importance in the realm of political instruction. Political education is crucial for maintaining democratic principles and enabling individuals to actively participate in politics. Political education enables individuals to obtain the knowledge, skills, and mindset necessary to engage in public discussions and effectively hold elected officials responsible.

### **1.2.3. The significance of online networking in political education**

Online networking has become a prominent platform and a potent instrument for political enlightenment. Individuals can utilise various online networking networks to get and disseminate information, participate in political discussions, and rally others for political activism (Papacharissi, 2014). Online networking facilitates a reciprocal flow of political information between candidates, parties, election organisations, and citizens, unlike conventional media (Makola, 2020; Stier et al., 2020). Therefore, it is accurate to state that online networking assists in dismantling the monopoly of the conventional system, in which the privileged few dictate the dissemination of news. Academics who have acknowledged the importance of online networking in informing the public about political issues have presented different viewpoints on its influence. Papacharissi (2010) suggests that online networking has the capacity to cultivate a novel type of political engagement that is both more democratic and inclusive. Elections are a crucial mechanism that both articulate and strengthen the principles of democracy, namely representation, equality, and participation (Selepe & Mehlape, 2023). However, the purpose will be undermined if voters are uninformed about whom to vote for and the process of voting. In the 2023 Nigerian presidential election, only 25,286,616 out of 93.46 million eligible voters took part (Suleiman, 2023). Similarly, a total of 1,259,506 out of the 39,469,484 votes cast were deemed invalid (Usman, 2023). There is expected to be a relatively low voter turnout among Nigerians in the upcoming election. Through the use of online networking platforms, INEC can efficiently carry out its essential responsibility of conducting voter and civic education, as well as fostering awareness of robust democratic election procedures. According to Jenkins (2006), online networking platforms facilitate a "participatory culture" where individuals can create and share political content. A prevalent feature of any contemporary election season is the existence of factional online networking accounts associated with supporters of various candidates. In a similar vein, Zuckerman (2013) contends that online networking facilitates the cultivation of "bridging" and "bonding" social capital, facilitating individuals to establish connections with those who have similar interests or values.

### **1.2.4. Online networking Utilisation by INEC**

Ayeni (2019) asserts that INEC is the preeminent government agency in terms of its prominence on online networking platforms. The Twitter account has a follower count exceeding one million, while the Facebook page has amassed 315,000 followers, and the Instagram account has garnered 56,800 followers. In their study, Partrick and Tijjani (2020) discovered that INEC allocates 60 percent of its online networking interaction to Facebook, 30 percent to Instagram, and the X platform dominates with the highest engagement rate of 85 percent. The account, as mentioned by Udu (2015) and Partrick and Tijjani (2020), reports that it played a crucial role in disproving a widely circulated film that sought to undermine the integrity of the presidential election prior to its completion in 2015. Several of the commission's press briefings and publications were livestreamed via tweets (Odeyemi & Mosunmola, 2015). The online networking accounts of INEC also serve as a platform for resolving grievances related to registration, the non-functional Bimodal Verification Accreditation System (BVAS), instances of electoral malpractices, and the conduct of INEC personnel.

### **1.2.5. Empirical Review**

In Nigeria, online networking has been adopted by the electoral body and some political aspirants as a means to engage with voters, facilitate discussions, and share important information. Online networking, in particular, has proven to be influential in inspiring young people to become more politically aware (Chen et al., 2016; Kushin & Kitchener, 2009). Nwodu (2007) argues that online networking technologies can have a substantial influence on the political landscape by accomplishing various goals. These include providing extensive and informative political information, shaping the opinions of targeted individuals and determining political agendas, educating individuals about election procedures, and increasing awareness about a candidate and their campaign messages in relation to broader political issues and processes (cited in Nwabueze & Ezebuonyi, 2012). Ayeni (2019) examined the functions, role, and impact of online networking within a certain setting of voter education. The author also provided recommendations for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to improve its visibility and involvement using online networking sites, with the objective of facilitating efficient information dissemination and voter education. A study conducted by Ojo (2014), cited in Ajayi and Adesole (2016), reported that the majority of respondents submitted that online networking has helped to overcome the previous scarcity of information during the electioneering process, leading to increased transparency and reduced tension. Furthermore, Chinedu and Ijeoma (2016) observed that online networking is still mainly an urban affair and mostly elitist. Jubrin's (2023) study on the relationship between online networking and the 2023 election campaigns. The result of this study concludes that during the 2023 Nigerian election, several influential individuals concentrated on exalting or discrediting political candidates, eroding the trustworthiness of the INEC influencers. Ofonmbuk (2020), in a study set out with the aim of assessing the Facebook and Twitter platforms of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to ascertain the use of social platforms for voter education by the electoral body, The theoretical framework employed in this study was actor-network theory. The study utilised content analysis as a methodological approach to investigate specific research objectives, employing a coding sheet as the major instrument for data collection. By employing a systematic sample methodology, this study examined a diverse range of sources and ascertained a notable occurrence of press releases and INEC activity on online networking platforms. Nevertheless, the research revealed a deficiency in the level of involvement with different sub-themes pertaining to voter education. Prior to the 2019 general elections, INEC had not made use of these channels for citizen interaction. The study suggests that INEC should consider revising its communication strategy for online networking in order to transition from a unidirectional approach. It is recommended that INEC allocate resources towards engaging citizens on platforms like Facebook and Twitter, given their substantial usage for political communication (Ofonmbuk, 2020).

## **2. Research methodology**

The study utilised a quantitative descriptive survey design, which involved creating a survey tool to collect data from a valid sample or specific group. This design focused on determining what should be included in the questionnaire, how it should be organised, the format of the answers, and

the administration of the questionnaire to ensure the collection of reliable and valid data (Dillman et. al., 2014). This method was chosen to gather data from the study population.

### **2.1. Population of the Study**

The population of this study comprises the entire student body of Bayero University, Kano (BUK). BUK has a total of 49,622 enrolled students, distributed among different academic programmes and campuses. Specifically, there are 34,895 undergraduates, 9,710 students in the School of Postgraduate Studies, 674 students in the Dangote Business School, and 4,343 students in the School of Continuing Education (School website, 2021). Thus, the population of this study consists of the aforementioned 49,622 BUK students.

### **2.2. Sampling Technique and Sample Size**

The researchers intentionally chose a sample size of 150 students from the population for this study. They used convenience sampling, which means they selected participants who were easily accessible to them (Wimmer and Dominick, 2014). Therefore, 150 questionnaires were distributed to available BUK students for this study.

### **2.3. Data Collection Instrument**

The chosen method for data collection is a questionnaire. Online structured questions were adjusted and customised using Google Forms. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the research participants using WhatsApp.

### **2.4. Questionnaire**

According to Jenn (2006), a questionnaire was used as a valuable tool to collect data for the research. It provided valuable insights into the research questions and helped achieve the study's goals. The survey was carefully designed to address specific obstacles and research questions, ensuring its relevance and alignment with the study's objectives. The questionnaire was distributed to participants through online platforms, along with clear instructions for completion, following its design. Participants were given a specific time limit to complete the questionnaire, and reminders were sent to encourage timely responses. To ensure the credibility and reliability of the collected data, thorough examinations were conducted to verify the comprehensiveness and consistency of the responses.

### **2.5. Data Analysis**

The collected data was analysed using basic statistical techniques. Frequency distribution tables (FDTs) and percentages were utilised due to their simplicity and compatibility with social science research. This approach facilitated the organisation and presentation of the data in a clear and structured manner, emphasising the distribution of responses or variables.

## **3. Result**

### 3.1 Introduction

Out of the 150 questionnaires distributed, only 143 were returned. Eight of them were incomplete, resulting in 135 questionnaires available for analysis. To ensure clarity, simplicity, and reliability, 15 tables were created in two sections. The first set of tables addressed the research questions and provided a detailed analysis of the data presented in each table. The second set of tables displayed the socio-demographic data of the respondents.

### 3.2 Data Presentation and Analysis based on Research Questions

#### 3.2.1. Research question one: What are the levels of online networking usage among students of Bayero University, Kano?

Table 3.2.1: How frequently do you use online networking platforms?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	131	97.1%
Occasionally	4	2.9%
Never	0	-
Total	135	100%

According to Table 3.2.1, 131 out of 134 respondents use an online networking app every day. Approximately 4 respondents (2.9%) reported using online networking platforms occasionally. None of the respondents indicated that they rarely use social networks. These findings suggest that a significant proportion of BUK students (97.1%) use online networking platforms on a daily basis.

Table 3.2.2: Which online networking platforms do you actively use?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	20	14.8%
Twitter	11	8.1%
Instagram	17	12.6%
Snapchat	3	2.2%
LinkedIn	8	5.9%
Tiktok	15	11.1%
YouTube	5	3.7%
WhatsApp	25	18.5%



All of the above	31	22.9%
Total	135	100%

Table 3.2.2 shows the usage of various online networking platforms among the respondents. Among the total respondents, 20 (14.8%) actively use Facebook, 11 (8.1%) actively use Twitter, 17 (12.6%) actively use Instagram, 3 (2.2%) actively use Snapchat, 8 (5.9%) actively use LinkedIn, 15 (11.1%) actively use TikTok, and 5 (3.7%) actively use YouTube. Additionally, 25 (18.5%) respondents actively use WhatsApp, and 31 (22.9%) respondents actively use all the listed online networking platforms. This indicates that the most commonly used online networking platforms among BUK students are WhatsApp (18.5%), followed by Facebook (14.8%), Instagram (12.6%), and Twitter (8.1%).

Table 3.2.3: On average, how much time do you spend on online networking per day?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	37	27.4%
1-2 hours	18	13.3%
2-4 hours	25	18.5%
4-6 hours	46	34.1%
More than 6 hours	9	6.7%
Total	135	100%

Table 3.2.3 shows that 37 respondents, accounting for 27.4% of the total respondents, spend less than 1 hour on online networking each day. Additionally, 18 respondents (13.3%) spend 1-2 hours, 25 respondents (18.5%) spend 2-4 hours, 46 respondents (34.1%) spend 4-6 hours, and 9 respondents (6.7%) spend more than 6 hours on online networking daily. Further analysis using weighted averaging indicates that the average time spent by all respondents on online networking is approximately 3.06 hours per day.

Table 3.2.4: How do you primarily use online networking?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Personal communication	28	20.7%
Entertainment	34	25.2%
Academic	19	14.1%
Professional purposes	8	5.9%
All of the above	46	34.1%
Total	135	100%

The table above indicates that 28 respondents (20.7%) primarily utilise online networking for personal communication, 34 (25.2%) for entertainment, 19 (14.1%) for academic purposes, 8 (5.9%) for professional purposes, and 46 (34.1%) use online networking for a combination of purposes.

**Table 3.2.5: How often do you come across political content while using online networking?**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Rarely	8	5.9%
Occasionally	34	25.2%
Several times a week	19	14.1%
Daily	28	20.7%
Multiple times a day	46	34.1%
Total	135	100%

According to the data from Table 3.2.5, 46 individuals (34.1%) encounter political content on online networking multiple times a day. 28 individuals (20.7%) reported coming across political content a couple of times a day. 34 individuals (25.2%) stated that they do not come across such content every day. 19 individuals (14.1%) said they view political content several times a week. Lastly, 8 individuals (5.9%) reported rarely coming across political content.

### **3.2.2. Research question two: To what extent are Bayero University, Kano students aware of INEC's use of twitter for political education?**

**Table 3.2.6: Are you aware that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) uses Twitter for political education?**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	107	79.3%
No	28	20.7%
Total	135	100%

Table 3.2.6 illustrates that 107 respondents, accounting for 79.3% of the total, expressed their awareness of INEC's utilization of X for political education. Conversely, 28 respondents, representing 20.7% of the total, showed their lack of awareness.

**Table 3.2.7: How frequently do you come across INEC's official Twitter handle?**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Rarely	31	22.9%
Occasionally	54	40%
Several times a week	19	14.1%
Daily	29	21.5%
Multiple times a day	2	1.5%
Total	135	100%

Out of the total respondents, 54 (40%) encounter INEC's official X handle a few times a week. 29 (21.5%) encounter the handle at least once a day. 19 (14.1%) encounter the handle several times a week. However, 31 (22.9%) rarely come across the official Twitter handle, while only 2 (1.5%) encounter it multiple times a day.

Table 3.2.8: Have you actively followed or engaged with INEC's official Twitter handle for political education or election purposes?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	49	36.3%
No	86	63.7%
Total	135	100%

Table 3.2.9: What benefits have you gained from following INEC's official Twitter handle?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Access to up-to-date information on elections	30	22.2%
Increased awareness of electoral processes	23	17.0%
Better understanding of political parties and candidates	18	13.3%
Guidance on voter registration and polling procedures	16	11.9%
Insights into INEC's initiatives and campaigns	12	8.9%
All of the above	36	26.7%
Total	135	100%

According to Table 3.2.9, 30 respondents (22.2%) reported having access to up-to-date information on elections through INEC's official X handle. Additionally, 23 respondents (17.0%) stated that following the handle increased their awareness of electoral processes, while 18 respondents (13.3%) mentioned that the handle helped them understand political parties and candidates. The handle also guided 16 respondents (11.9%) on voter registration and polling procedures, and provided insights into INEC's initiatives and campaigns to 12 respondents (8.9%). Lastly, 36 respondents (26.7%) claimed to have benefited from all the listed categories.

Table 3.2.10: Have you shared or reposted any content from INEC's Twitter accounts related to political education and election?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, frequently	28	20.7%
Yes, occasionally	21	15.6%
No, I have not shared or reposted any content	86	63.7%

Total	135	100%
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According to the information provided in Table 3.2.10, 28 respondents (20.7% of the total) said that they frequently share or repost content from INEC's X account. Additionally, 21 respondents (15.6%) claimed they only share or repost content sometimes. On the other hand, 86 respondents (63.7%) stated that they have never shared or reposted any content from the commissions X account.

### 3.2.3. Research question three: how did students of Bayero University, Kano perceive INEC's use of online networking for political education?

Table 3.2.11: How would you describe your perception of INEC's use of online networking for political education?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	122	90.4%
Negative	13	9.6%
Total	135	100%

The data shown in Table 3.2.11 indicates that out of the total respondents, 122 individuals, accounting for 90.4% of the sample, hold a favorable impression of INEC's utilization of online networking for political education. Conversely, 13 respondents (9.6%) reported having a negative perception.

Table 3.2.12: Do you find INEC's use of twitter effective in disseminating political education such as election news effective?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, very effective	18	13.3%
Yes, somewhat effective	67	49.6%
Neutral	10	7.4%
No, not very effective	33	24.4%
No, not effective at all	9	6.7%
Total	135	100%

According to the information provided in Table 3.2.12, most of the participants believe that INEC's utilization of X for political communication, particularly election news, is successful. This is supported by the fact that nearly half of the participants (49.6%) found it to be somewhat effective, and an additional 13.3% considered it to be very effective. On the other hand, 31% of the participants did not find it to be effective.

Table 3.2.13: Overall, do you believe online networking is an effective platform for political education?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	135	100%
No	0	0%
Total	135	100%

Table 3.2.13 indicates that the entire sample of 135 respondents (100%) expressed the belief that online networking platforms are good tools for political education.

Table 3.2.15: How do you think INEC could improve its use of online networking for political education?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Be more consistent in posting important information in real time	44	32.6%
Integrate all their online networking platforms when posting information	3	2.2%
Employed professional online networking handlers	12	8.9%
Make constant attempt to refute election related misinformation as soon as possible	33	24.4%
Be more accurate	43	31.9%
Total	135	100%

The Table above shows that 32.6% of the total respondents believed that INEC could improve by being more consistent in posting important information in real time, 2.2% suggested INEC should post information on all its online networking platforms simultaneously, while 8.9% believed that INEC's online presence could be improved by employing professional online networking handlers. Also, 24.4% of the respondents suggested that INEC should always refute election-related misinformation as soon as possible, and 31.9% recommended the commission to be more accurate in their online networking posts.

Table 3.2.15: Socio-demographic Data of the Respondents (N= 135)

Variables	Responses	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Age	16 -18	13	9.6%
	19 - 21	29	21.5%
	22 - 24	40	29.6%
	24 and above	43	31.9%
Gender	Male	62	45.9%
	Female	73	54.1%

Marital Status	Single	119	88.1%
	Married	16	11.6%
	Divorced	0	-
	Widow/Widower	0	-
Religion	Islam	91	67.4%
	Christianity	44	32.6%

The Table above indicate that, majority (31.9%) of the respondents was within the age range of 24 and above, there are 72 (54.1%) females and 62 (45.9%) males. Most (88.1%) of the respondents were single. Lastly, 169 (65%) of the respondent are Muslims. This may be expected since BUK is a university in Northern Nigeria and Islam is the dominant religion in the region. However, 91 (67.4%) are Christians, while 44(32.6%) practice other religion.

#### 4. Discussion of the Findings

The first research question explores the levels at which BUK students use social media. This study found there is a high level of online networking usage among the students. The finding revealed that many students spend a reasonable part of their day on online networking, mainly on WhatsApp, but they also spend time on other platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. This finding agrees with Abdullahi et al. (2019) and Eke and Odoh (2004). In their studies on online networking usage among university students, the scholars found that almost all the students were using social networking sites for various reasons. These include chatting with friends and families, watching movies, networking, connecting for online study, and exchanging views on serious national issues such as politics and elections. The second research question examines the extent to which BUK students are aware of political contents on the INEC X handle. The finding shows that most of the students know INEC has an X account it uses to disseminate political and election-related contents. Although different levels of engagement were observed among the students, those actively engaging with the handle reported being able to access up-to-date political information through it. This finding aligns with Ayeni (2019), who observed that online networking is an influential platform for informing voters, promoting political engagement, and facilitating rapid communication. political engagement in this digital age. According to Ekuri et al. (2018), political education refers to the concept of imparting knowledge and understanding about politics and its various aspects to instruct individuals in cultivating reverence for the principles and regulations of the legal system, effective government and transparent elections, the concept of separation of powers and the recognition of fundamental human rights, the promotion of press freedom, equality, and justice for all, as well as the establishment of democratic institutions. The third research question analyses BUK students' perceptions of INEC's use of online networking for political education. The findings indicate a positive perception and recognition of the value of online networking in facilitating political education among students. Interestingly, all respondents unanimously agreed that online networking is an effective platform

for political education. The findings are supported by the study by Jang and Lee (2019). They aggregated data from multiple studies and observed a positive relationship between online networking use and political participation. In other words, individuals who use online networking platforms tend to engage more in various forms of political participation.

### 5. Summary and Conclusion

The study underscores the role of online networking in political education. Online networking is an effective tool for reaching wider audiences, especially the younger and more tech-savvy segment. In short, the results of this study show that most of the students at BUK are active online networking users and that they are aware of INEC's use of X for political education. They agree that INEC's X handle is beneficial in educating the citizenry on how politics and elections work. The findings confirm that online networking is a formidable political education tool with the special capacity to reach, engage, and impact diverse individuals. This study suggests that electoral bodies such as INEC need to strengthen their presence on online networking platforms and invest in professional online networking management. By addressing concerns about consistency, accuracy, and countering misinformation, INEC can increase the effectiveness of its online networking accounts.

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2. **Adekunle, J. D.**, is a graduate of mathematics from the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB). His field of interest is artificial intelligence and machine learning. He contributed by providing guidance and supervision for the analytic computations. Also, he supervised the findings of the work so that they were reliable and valid.
3. **Oyeniran, M. I.**, is a graduate of mathematics from the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB). He specialised in machine learning and artificial intelligence. In this work, he contributed to the analytical calculations and ensured the work was accurately attributed and referenced. He also contributed essential comments, which played a crucial role in influencing the research, analysis, and article.
4. **Sule, H. S.**, is a graduate from the department of statistics at the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB). He contributed to the analytical computations and offered valuable input and assistance in developing the research and analysis of the article.

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**Data access statement:** The data used for this project is a primary data. No access to it will be made available

### **Statement of ethics approval**

Data collection was voluntary. Respondents were properly informed before conducting the survey. The research ethics stipulate that participation in the research be consensual, where the participants are required to give informed consent after fully understanding the research's purpose, procedures, and potential risks. It was made important that participants fully understand these conditions and explicitly consent to donating their data before making any data collection decisions. Also, the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were prioritised.