



BABCOCK
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COLLEGE OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

2022/2023 PhD Thesis Abstract

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RT: Exposure to Social Media Political Propaganda Messages and Perception of Selected 2023 Nigerian Presidential Candidates among Postgraduates' in South West, Nigeria

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AB: Electorates' perception of political candidates plays a crucial role in determining election outcomes globally. Political communicators understand this fact and strategically deploy social media political propaganda for political campaigns, political engagements and mobilization. The prevalence of propaganda in the social media messages of political actors, however, leaves many people in developing countries, susceptible to manipulations. In the period leading up to Nigeria's 2023 presidential elections, it was observed that a plethora of misinformation about the major political contenders was constantly being disseminated and circulated on social media. The barrage of propagandistic information in this direction is bound to inaccurately skew the perception social media users in the country have about each of the major presidential candidates. There is dearth of empirical literature accounting for how propaganda shape the perception of postgraduates, who are an educated demography expected to be media literate. The study, therefore, investigated the relationship between exposure to social media political propaganda messages and the perception that postgraduates have about selected (Abubakar Atiku, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Peter Gregory Obi) 2023 Nigerian presidential candidates in South-West, Nigeria.

The study adopted survey research design. The population of the study comprised 13,939

postgraduates of the University of Lagos, University of Ibadan, and Babcock University. A sample size of 1,067 was determined, using the formula of Krejcie and Morgan. The study applied multi-stage sampling technique in selecting the respondents. A validated questionnaire was used to collect data. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients for the constructs ranged from 0.78 to 0.90. The response rate was 90.6 percent. Descriptive and inferential (Pearson's correlation analysis) statistics were used to analyze the data.

Findings showed that postgraduates' exposure to social media political propaganda messages about the three selected presidential candidates was high ($\bar{x}=4.04$). It was revealed that postgraduates' level of exposure to social media political propaganda messages had a positive weak significant relationship with their perception of Abubakar Atiku ($r= 0.40, p< 0.05$), Bola Ahmed Tinubu ($r= 0.39, p<0.05$) and Peter Gregory Obi ($r= 0.22, p<0.05$). Findings also showed that postgraduates' level of exposure to social media political propaganda messages had a positive weak significant relationship with postgraduates' preference of Abubakar Atiku($r= 0.090, p< 0.05$) and Bola Ahmed Tinubu ($r= 0.21, p<0.05$); while it had a negative weak significant relationship with postgraduates' preference for Peter Obi ($r= -0.16, p < 0.05$).

The study concluded that exposure to social media political propaganda did not adversely affect the perception postgraduates had about the selected presidential candidates. The study recommended that more education should be provided to increase media literacy among the other demography with lesser education in order to insulate them against the inordinate influence of political propaganda, just as it is among postgraduates.

Keywords: Exposure, Messages, 2023 Nigerian presidential candidates, Political propaganda, Postgraduates' perception, Social media

Word Count: 445

Abbreviations: *RFN: Researcher's Full Name, RD: Researcher's Department, RS: Researcher's School, RE: Researcher's Email, RAE: Researcher's Alternate Email, RP: Researcher's Phone Contact, RT: Registered Title, MS: Main Supervisor, ME: Main Supervisor's E-mail Address, SP: Main Supervisor's Phone Contact, CS: Co-Supervisor, CE: Co-Supervisor's E-mail Address, CP: Co-Supervisor's Phone Contact, AB: Abstract*

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