AI AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION: EMPOWERING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

In recent years, artificial intelligence (AI) technologies have revolutionized various sectors, and their potential to transform political engagement and communication is increasingly recognized. This paper explores the role of AI in enhancing political communication and empowering political participation in Enugu state, Nigeria. The study also examines the current state of political participation in Enugu state, identifies challenges faced by citizens, and demonstrates how AI applications can address these issues, leading to more inclusive, transparent, and engaging political processes. Theoretical support were Technological Determinism and Agenda-Setting theories. Australian Calculator was useful in determining sample size of 385. Findings suggest that participation in politics has witnessed series of challenges ranging from limited access to information, voter apathy and inefficiencies in governance structures often hinders citizens from fully engaging in the political affairs. Results contrast the notion that online media literacy especially AI tools usage is a barrier, which assume that uneducated people may not be able to manipulate them effectively. From the outcome, the researcher recommends among other things that there should be training and retraining of staff members of Enugu state independence electoral commission (ENSIEC) and other stakeholders to manage Artificial intelligence apparatus effectively.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, political communication, political participation, Enugu state

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, enabling them to perform tasks, such as learning, reasoning, problem-solving, perception, and decision-making. Key concepts in AI include machine learning, neutral networks, natural language processing, and robotics. AI systems can analyze, and make predictions or recommendations based on the data.

As postulated by Sava get, Chianina, and Evans (2018), AI-based technologies in general, and machine learning, in particular, can be major drivers pulling civil society closer to public administration by allowing citizens to tackle stable and predictable problems for which large volumes of data are relatively easy to collect.

In recent years, the advancement of AI technologies has permeated various aspects of society, revolutionized industries and transforming conventional practices. One area where AI holds significant potential for positive impact is in political communication and participation. Enugu state, located in the southeastern region of Nigeria is a bustling hub of political activity, but its citizens face challenges in fully engaging with the democratic process. This paper aims to explore how AI can empower political participation in Enugu state by enhancing communication channels, promoting transparency, and increasing citizen engagement in the decision-making process. Enugu state has a rich political history, with a diverse population that actively participates in local, state, and national elections.

However, existing barrier such as limited access to information, voter apathy, and inefficiencies in governance structures often hinder citizens from fully engaging in political affairs. By harnessing the capabilities of AI, Enugu state can create a more inclusive and dynamic political landscape that enables individuals to voice their opinions, access relevant information, and contribute to shaping the future of their communities. Through the lens of political communication, this paper will delve in to the current state of political participation in Enugu state, highlighting the challenges faced by citizens and the opportunities for leveraging AI to overcome these obstacles.

By exploring case studies, theoretical frameworks, and practical contexts. This paper will provide insights into how technology can be harnessed to empower individuals, foster dialogue, and promote accountability within the political sphere. In the following sections the paper will look into the concept of AI and political communication, examine the potential benefits of integrating AI tools into political process, and analyses the ethical considerations and regulatory implications of AI-driven political participation. Drawing on existing literature, expert opinions and real-world examples, this paper aims to demonstrate the transformative potential of AI in enhancing political engagement and empowering citizens actively participate in the democratic governance of Enugu state. By exploring the intersection of AI and political communication, this paper aspires to provide a roadmap for policymakers, technologists, and civil society actors to leverage technology for the collective benefits of Enugu state's political landscape.

Through strategic implementation and thoughtful considerations of ethical and regulatory frameworks, AI has the potential to revolutionize political communication and empower citizens to play a more active role in shaping the future of their communities. By leveraging AI technology, political leaders and organizations can engage with citizens more effectively, streamline communication processes, and enhance transparency in governance.

Statement of Problem

Political science recognizes the importance of citizen participation and public engagement to democratic processes. Very little is known about how AI-based technologies and the disclosure of public data can empower civil society. The studies available in the literature which deal with the relationship between political communication and AI are mainly focused on technical assistance to decision making procedures and on how AI-based technologies can be used by existing governance structures.

However, this article addresses the following research question: how can AI-based technologies be used to empower political participation? Empirical studies have tried to address the relationship between AI and the political empowerment or communication but none has touched this area. It is from this that the researcher tends to explore more insight and fill the gap in knowledge by examining AI and political communication with view of understanding political participation.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the potential of Artificial intelligence (AI) in enhancing political communication and empowering political participation in Enugu state. However, this paper is done with the following objectives, to:

1. ascertain how AI-based technologies can be used to empower political participation
2. examine the challenges faced by the citizens of Enugu state in participating actively in political processes
3. explore if ENSIEC utilizes AI technology in facilitating dialogue between political leaders and constituents
4. assess the benefits of AI technology in political process in Enugu state, Nigeria

Literature Review

Tittle: the role of artificial intelligence in enhancing political communication and participation in Developing Countries: A case study of Enugu state Nigeria. Authors: Okonkwo, Ogbonna, and Okafor (2020), A.

journal: journal of political science and international Relations. The study delves into the impact of AI on political communication and participation in Enugu state, Nigeria. It examines how AI technologies can be leveraged to enhance citizen engagement, improve communication strategies, and increase political participation in the region. The authors highlight the potential of AI in addressing the challenges of information dissemination and interaction with citizens, ultimately leading to a more inclusive and responsive political system.

Tittle:' Artificial intelligence and political communication: opportunities and challenges for Enugu state by Eze, Nwosu, Okeke (2019). International conference on information and communication technologies. The paper explores the opportunities and challenges presented by the integration of AI into political communication in Enugu state. The authors discuss how AI technologies can be used to personalize messaging, analyze voter behavior, and enhance citizen engagement. They also address the ethical considerations and potential risks associated with AI implementation in political communication, emphasizing the need for responsible use of these technologies in the region.

Tittle: 'AI-powered chatbots in political communication: A case study of Enugu state, Nigeria by Okoro, Anyanwu, and Odili (2021) African journal of political science. The article focuses on the use of AI-powered chatbots in political communication in Enugu state, Nigeria. The authors examine how chatbots can facilitate real-time interaction with citizens, provide information on political issues, and enhance engagement with political actors. They discuss the potential of chatbots to bridge the communication gap between politicians and citizens, ultimately empowering political participation in the region.

Tittle: 'Data Analytics and political participation: A study of AI applications in Enugu.by Nnamdi, Maduka, and Chukwuma, (2018) at the international conference on Data science and machine learning. This conference paper investigates the use of data analytics and AI applications to enhance political participation in Enugu state. The authors highlight how AI can be utilized to analyze voter data, predict electoral outcomes and inform policy-making decision. They emphasize the importance of leveraging data-driven insights to increase citizen engagement and empower political participation in the region.

In conclusion, the existing literature on AI and political communication in Enugu state demonstrates a growing interest in harnessing AI technologies to empower political participation, enhance citizen engagement, and improve communication strategies. These studies including the most recent highlight the potential benefits of AI in transforming the political landscape in Enugu state while also acknowledging the challenges and ethical considerations that need to be addressed for responsible and effective implementations.

Theoretical Framework
The technology Determinism and Agenda setting theories formed the theoretical basis for this study. Technology determinism is often associated with Marshall McLuhan (1962) a prominent communication theorist, who famously stated," the medium is the message" McLuhan's work focused on the ways in which technology shapes society and culture, arguing that the introduction of new technologies fundamentally alters how individuals perceive and interact with the world around them. It posits that technology is responsible for shaping society and culture, influencing how individuals think, act, and interact with each other. This perspective suggests that technology advancements drive societal change and development. Agenda -setting theory was developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in the 1970s. Their research highlighted the influential role of media in shaping public opinion and setting the agenda for societal discussions. It also suggests that media plays a crucial role in determining which issues and topics gain attention and prominence in society. The theory contends that media outlets have the power to shape public opinion and influence the public's perception of various issues by choosing what to cover and how to frame the information. In combination, these theories provide a comprehensive understanding of how artificial intelligence technologies could be employ to interact in political communication and participation, shedding light on the ways AI influences information flows, political discourses, and citizen engagement in the

digital age. By acknowledging the contributions of these theorist, we can better understand the historical context and intellectual theories in the study of technology, media, and society.

Methodology

The research design employed in the study was the survey method. This method was adopted because it is suitable to access public perceptions and attitude towards AI technologies in the context of political communication and participation in Enugu state.

Population and Sampling Techniques

The population comprises the educated traders and civil servants from Enugu state. Based on the 2006 population and Housing Census of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as obtained from the National Population Commission, Enugu, the population figure of the study was determined by eighteen years after last census in line with the United Nations populations Fund (UNFPA) estimation. Its projects Nigeria population growth rate as 3.2%, using the straight-line approach formula. The formula is given as;

$N1=No (1+kn)$

Where N1= current population at a given rate as in 2024

No= census figure as at 2006

K= the annual growth rate

n=number of years after the census

No=16395555,

K=0.032%

n=18

therefore, the N1 figure is 3267837 $(1+0.032 \times 18)$

=5150112

Determination of Sample Size

The researcher used Australian Calculator to determine the sample size as shown below:

Determine Sample Size

Field	Value
Confidence Level:	95%
Population Size:	5150112
Proportion:	0.5
Confidence Interval:	0.05
Upper	0.55000
Lower	0.45000
Standard Error	0.02551
Relative Standard Error	5.10
Sample Size:	385

Data Analysis and Discussion

Data for this analysis was collected from a sample of 385 residents of Enugu East, Enugu North, and Enugu West who are educated traders and civil servants. A response rate of ninety-one percent was recorded; that is 350 questionnaires were completed and returned.

Demographic patterns of respondents

Table 1: Age Distribution

Variable	F	%
18-24	50	20
25-34	200	40
35-44	35	13
45-54	40	15
55-65	20	10
66-above	5	2
Total	**350**	**100**

Table 2: Gender Distribution

Male	250	75
Female	100	25
Total	**350**	**100**

RQ1: how can AI-based technologies be used to empower political participation?

Table three

Variables	F	%
High tariff cost	195	55.71
Connectivity issues	55	15.71
Availability of technology	40	11.42
Medialiteracy	35	10
No idea	25	7.14
Total	**350**	**100**

RQ2: what are the challenges faced by the citizens of Enugu state in participating actively in political processes?

Table three

Variables	F	%
High tariff cost	100	54.28
Connectivity issues	60	17.14
Availability of technology	41	11.71
Media literacy	34	9.71
No idea	25	7.14
Total	**350**	**100**

RQ3: does ENSIEC utilizes AI tools in facilitating dialogue between political leaders and continents

Table 4: Dispositions on respondents towards the utilization of AI tools.

Variable	F	%
Positive	300	85.71
Negative	100	28.75
Indifferent	25	7.14
No idea	25	7.14
Total	**350**	**100**

RQ4; what are the benefits of AI technology in political process in Enugu state Nigeria?

Table 5: Responses on the benefits of AI in political communication and participation

Response	F	%
Necessary for political development	180	51.42
Not necessary	65	18.57
To an extent important	80	22.85
No opinion	25	7.14

Total	350	100

Discussion of findings

The potentialities of AI to revolutionize political communication and development, empower political participation is yet to be appreciated by a good number of respondents. At present, political discussions online is a privilege for those with access to smart devices, computer and the internet from which AI-powered chatbots, data analytics for decision-making, personalized communication, online engagement platforms, predictive analytics election forecasting domiciled. Those who would benefit the most from the democratizing potential of artificial intelligence (AI) technology do not have much access to it, e.g. artificial intelligence logarithms, etc. findings show and literature demonstrate the tents of the technology determinism theory and the agenda- setting theory. And that more males in Enugu state are traders than their female counterparts. The study concludes that the selected traders and civil servants in the three senatorial zones of Enugu state, Nigeria affirms their conversant use of AI applications which fall in line with Morah & uzochukwu (2019).

However, the researchers predict that Artificial intelligence (AI) will eventually become an increasingly pervasive tool through which politicians

and other sectors will seek to empower participation politically. The implication of the paper so far remains that Artificial intelligence need to be handled with care. The findings of this study are thus a beginning, not an end to AI application studies. Relevant research needs to be done. For example, on the consequences of Artificial intelligence. The study further recommends among other things that Government should look into the advancement of AI technology to avoid policy challenges, political manipulation, economic inequality and job displacement.

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