

Citizen Journalism and Influenced on Political Participation in Nigeria's 2019 General Election



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Abstract

This study aimed to explore citizen journalism and influence political participation in Nigeria's 2019 general election. The objective was to examine the nature of access that citizen journalism gave to political parties, candidates, and citizens in the 2019 general election in Nigeria. The study is anchored on Democratic Participant Media Theory which proposes that citizens and minority groups should have rights of access to media (right to communicate) and the right to be served by media according to their determination of needs. Data in this study were gathered through a survey. At the initial stage, data were gathered through a web-based online survey. The survey was carried out from 22nd May to 23rd June 2022 among respondents aged 18 and above in Nigeria, using questionnaires as instruments for data collection. The results and presentation of findings were statistically tested using Hierarchical Regression. Findings revealed that Citizen Journalism has significant impact on political parties, candidates and citizens, with regards to the nature of access to online sources in the 2019 general elections. Based on the findings and conclusion, the study recommends that there is a need to ensure that media literacy courses geared toward journalistic training are introduced to beginners at high school level, the introduction of short online courses on political reporting, news gathering, and content management where citizens can take, to have journalistic training, this will enhance more access by political actors.

Keywords: Citizen journalism, Political participation, Nigeria, Election

Introduction

The fundamental changes experienced from the twentieth to the twenty-first century brought about an emerging new form of journalism whose qualities include global information access, ubiquitous news stories, instantaneous reporting, interactivity, multimedia content, and extreme content customization that cut across the different segments of journalism. These in many ways represent a better form of journalism that engages an increasingly alienated audience (Pavlik, 2001).

Pavlik (2001) further noted that this kind of journalism presents many challenges as well as good benefits to the values and standards of journalism in terms of authenticity and truth. This type of Journalism allows imaging in a medium where anyone with a

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computer or mobile Android phone can become a global publisher. This is done through posting photos of events; giving information on the spot, and events as they are unfolding which may not be at the reach of the journalists at that particular time. Although there is a massive shift like Journalism, transformation is not one-dimensional, rather, a set of economic, regulatory, and cultural forces driven by technological changes, converging over the years. This new media system embraces all forms of human communications in a digital format and this is changing the media and communication landscape in ways that make it possible for envisioning a more engaged citizen participation in journalism.

The emergence of citizen content in the new media organization is associated with several factors that include the rapid growth of the Internet throughout the 1990s extending to the 21st century, conflicting or complementing citizen journalism with conventional media. With the ability of citizens to use Internet technologies to replicate and distribute their work online, a formerly passive audience now became both producers and consumers of content (Belair-Gagnon & Anderson, 2015).

Citizen journalism is challenging the hierarchical, unidirectional model of news because the ordinary citizen now engages in Journalism practice, especially in most Western democracies. The changing media landscape has been fueled by the public's distrust of the mainstream media due to the concern about biased reporting (Ardevol-Abreu & Zuniga, 2016). The term new media since 1960 has covered ways and methods of developing and diversifying the use of communication technology. The antecedence of citizen Journalism practices has shown that citizens have participated in news production since the start of modern Journalism, before the emergence of the new media.

Citizen journalism has become a trend in the media with various user-generated websites, including news portals and blog sites; these offer platforms to masses of people to be citizen Journalists and share their stories with the rest of the world. Traditional media had also found citizen journalism to be a veritable source of news, consequently; news gathering interfaces have been created to incorporate citizen journalism feeds. Notable citizen journalism websites around the globe include *Cable News Network* (CNN), the iReport feature launched in 2006, Al-Jazeera's sharek portal (which means "share") launched in late 2007 (Noor, 2017).

Citizen journalism in a new media environment has altered the fundamentals of political outcomes and brought citizens closer to democratic ideals such as increase in the level of political participation and involvement, freedom of expression and access to information. These new media sources and tools provided citizens the opportunity to express and organize themselves around their political interests.

The Freedom of Information Act enacted by the National Assembly and assented to by former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan in May 2011, gave rise to citizen participation on issues of national development. Citizen Journalism is often associated with the freedom of the press, the art of writing and developing stories freely and originally without restriction, and citizens who work as freelance journalists reporting on their favorite beats (Pertanika, 2015).

Statement of the problem

Since the founding of the free press worldwide, conventional media have been in constant battle with readers over issues of sensationalism, truthfulness, believability, and bias. Citizen journalism involvement in the coverage of events and happenings in the

country must democratised the participation of ordinary citizens. This has ensured on-the-spot assessment of situations, which promotes transparency, accountability as well as exposing all kinds of irregularities where the traditional media in Nigeria is unable to cover. Hence, citizen journalism provides an alternative news source for the citizenry.

Citizens do not simply rely on professional journalists for credible news anymore. They go out and construct their narratives, to come up with solutions to systemic contradictions. As the contingencies of life, work and place converge on the shoulders of the individual, traditional social institutions lose their automatic authority, and people are at the same time swept up in a world of cosmopolitan politics and a global capitalist economy

The objective is to examine the nature of access that citizen journalism gave to political parties, candidates and the citizens in the 2019 general election in Nigeria. The research hypothesis was to test the null hypothesis (H0). The new media has not created access to political parties, candidates and citizens through citizen journalism in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Review of Literature

The role Citizen Journalism played in Elections.

Citizen journalism is news for the people, by the people and for the people. Mare, Keith and Mukundu (2018) assert that citizen journalism plays the role of a watchdog in elections, by the unfettered scrutiny and discussion of the success and failures of candidates, government, and electoral management bodies. They outline other roles citizen journalist plays in enabling full public participation in election as: educating voters on how to exercise their democratic rights, reporting on the development of election campaign, providing for individuals to communicate their opinions and needs, to the parties, candidates, the electoral bodies, the government and voters to interact on issues, Allowing the parties and candidates to debate with each other, reporting results and monitoring vote counting, Providing content and clarity to relevant events and developments that take place in the community. The need to inform the public may also be about raising awareness of human rights. Providing the public and policymakers with information examples are information that exposes electoral malpractice and vote rigging that prompts observers and the international community or not to recognize fraudulent polls.

A study by, Zeng, Jain, Nguyen and Allen (2019), on news perspectives on citizen Journalism observed that citizen journalism is resilient in difficult political spaces. In Malaysia, the media are under political parties or government-friendly corporations and lack journalism of the population under 30 years of age, the increasing affordability of smartphones and technologies helped Malaysians to share information and debate issues. In the process, citizen journalists posted audio, videos, texts, and grassroots analyses of sociopolitical protest, human rights abuses, and political corruption. Burns (2008) pointed out that citizen journalism performs an important public service, it provides an answer to the ancient question of who watches the watchers, whose independence and objectivity is threatened and undermined by political interference. Citizen journalism has been evident from *indymedia's* role in providing an independent contribution of many news bloggers and citizen journalists to critical coverage of global implicit politics. This was evident during the 2007 Australian federal election campaign

in which many scientists analysing political opinion polls and related demographic data blogged their work challenging the unscientific and sometimes deliberately misleading interpretation of opinion polls by political journalists. Studies by Gruen (2009) on OhMyNews 2008 used the organization as a case study in participating politics in the Internet age, highlighting the 2002 presidential election in South Korea as a key example of how online collaboration, citizens are directly influenced by politics. Hauhen (2008) puts it as over a decade, OhMyNews which is one of the most quoted Korean citizen journalism sites in communication studies, representing the democratic role of the Internet in journalism has demonstrated all positive facets of the Internet in academic fields. The Internet has been referred to as a virtual space where the public have the opportunity to express their opinions and debate issues.

Political development in Nigeria brought about the emergence of citizen journalism, the traditional media created a vacuum of progressive and investigative content and civic engagement after the return of democratic rule in Nigeria. Before this time, the media set an agenda after the departure of the military dictatorship; the media ensured respect for human rights, the rule of law and the demand for accountability from leadership. These characteristics became what citizen journalism now strives to achieve since the traditional media went to sleep after the return of democratic rule in 1999, and the media became passive in carrying out its work. The audience began to question the effectiveness, neutrality and objectivity of the traditional media which was caused by the media's increasing isolation from its audience. The introduction of social media in the political process made the audience explore the emerging citizen journalism website and particularly the discussion forum to vent and hold different levels of conversation by simply mastering the use of social media platforms that allow them to interact among their friends who often share personal information and publish their views on the Internet. (Agboola, 2013). Corroborating on this, Dare, (2011) asserted that "the rise in the use of social media and user-generated content is quickly shifting the relation of the communicative powers in Nigeria.

Citizen journalism and elections have experienced growing recognition in Nigeria. The national recognition of citizen journalism in Nigeria came as a result of social media usage on June 28th, 2010 when the formal Nigerian president Goodluck Jonathan launched his Facebook page with the aim of getting feedback on electoral reform and other national issues. The Nigerian 2011 elections witnessed a lot of politicians employing the use of social media platforms such as Facebook and twitter for political agenda to get the electorate's votes and support (Apuke, 2019). Before the 2011 election, Nigeria's quest for free and fair elections made youths register in the 2011 voter registration exercise, and the advancement in technology made citizens monitor the elections on mobile devices.

Theoretical underpinning

This paper adopted Democratic participant media theory, the theory placing emphasis on the media to promote a variety of voices and perspectives in society. It is concerned with the right to relevant information, right to answer back and use any means of communication for interaction among community, groups and culture. The theory proposed that "individual citizens and minority groups have rights of access to media (right to communicate) and rights to be served by media according to their determination of need" (McQuail, 2010). The extent to which the less powerful and politically

marginalized can obtain media access is one of the most significant debates concerning democratic processes, and it has consequences for the diversity of information and interpretive frameworks through which we understand society (Hong, 2014). Professional journalism provides a public service by working as watchdogs, actively collecting information in the public interest, and most importantly of journalism is its watchdog function rooted in the theory of democratic participant media and is championed by those who argue that the public has a right to know. The watchdog function is the idea that the news media serve the public as a check on the operation of their government. By watching over the powerful few in society on behalf of the many, the media claims to guard the public against tyranny (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001).

Citizen participation in news production ultimately influences the media's role within the public sphere. According to democratic theory, journalism is an integral part of democracy – informing citizens of important facts and issues so that they can make governing decisions. Because citizen journalists have diverse interests and opinions – more so than mainstream or other forms of professional journalism possibly could, citizen journalism has been regarded as an ideal form of public participation in political debate and increases the diversity of voices contributing to public discourse. Citizen journalism can be viewed as a direct response to lapses in the performance of the traditional mass media role in the public sphere. Even though the “democratic role” is a core value of journalism, it has been an obstacle to maintaining exclusive rights and professional status for journalists.

Method of data collection

Data in this study were gathered through a survey. At the initial stage, data were gathered through a web-based online survey. The survey was carried out from 22nd May to 23rd June 2022 among respondents aged 18 and above in Nigeria who were social media users during the election.

Respondents were asked a series of questions based on a Google form questionnaire. For the sample used, representative of the number of registered voters of the Nigerian people who participated in the 2019 general election were 84,004,084. In determining the size of the population, the Yamane sampling technique was used to determine the number of participants selected for the survey. The sample size of 400 was arrived at using the formula. From the online survey, 373 respondents filled out the questionnaire with a response rate of 90% was achieved in the research.

Participants shared links through the various social media platforms selected for the study (WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram), which they used to access the questionnaire. To assess the role of citizen journalism in the 2019 general election, five Likert scale questions were used in the study. Respondents got a list of statements on citizen journalism roles in the 2019 general election indicated on a scale of 1(strongly agreed) to 5(strongly disagree).

Analytical framework

In testing the hypothesis, the study performed a hierarchical regression. In the regression, the first control variables were entered. The control variables are age, gender, and educational qualification. It was necessary to include these control variables in the regression equation because these may affect competitive advantage sustainability directly. The hierarchical model in line with the theoretical underpinning is specified as follows:

$$Y = f(\text{Control variables, main variables of interest}) \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

In line with the objective of the study, the hierarchical model is generated from equation (1) as follows:

$$PPCC_i = \lambda_0 + \lambda_1 AGE_i + \lambda_2 GENDER_i + \lambda_3 LE_i + \lambda_4 CJ1_i + \lambda_5 CJ2_i + \lambda_6 CJ3_i + \lambda_7 CJ4_i + \lambda_8 CJ5_i + \varepsilon_1 \dots \dots \dots (2)$$

Where:

PPCC = Political parties, candidates and citizens access to new media (Dependent variable)

CJ = Citizen Journalism in the era of new media (Independent variable).

AGE = Age one of the control variables

GEN = Gender/Sex one of the control variables

LE = Level of education as one of the control variables

MS = Marital status

$\lambda_0, \lambda_1 - \lambda_8$ = the estimated coefficients of the impacts of CJ on PPCC

$\varepsilon_1 - \varepsilon_4$ = the error terms

Descriptive analysis

Demographic characteristics of the respondents

This section presented an analysis of responses based on respondents' socioeconomic characteristics. Age, gender, marital status, and educational qualification are the variables examined. Table 1 shows the results of this socioeconomic characteristic analysis.

Table .1: Descriptive statistics of socioeconomic characteristics of respondents

S/N	Variable	Scale (x)	Freq. (N)	Percent (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Age Distribution				2.3753	1.0258
	18-30yrs	1	88	23.6		
	31-40yrs	2	123	32.4		
	41-50yrs	3	100	26.8		
	50 & above	4	64	17.2		
2	Sex Distribution				1.3244	0.4687
	Male	1	252	67.6		
	Female	2	121	32.4		
3	Educational Qualification				4.1582	0.5904
	Secondary school	1	10	2.7		
	Post-Secondary/ Diploma/Certificate	2	10	2.7		
	Degree	3	264	70.8		
	Others	4	89	23.9		
4	Marital status				1.7024	0.4917
	Single	1	116	31.1		
	Married	2	253	67.8		
	Separated	3	3	0.8		
	Divorce	4	1	0.3		

Source: Researcher's Computation, 2022 using SPSS 22

Age of respondents

Age distribution was used as a socio-economic variable in this study. This variable was considered based on the fact that both the young and the old (between the age of 18 years and above) participate in the election to exercise their civic rights. The findings on respondents' age distribution in Table 1 indicated that 88 out of 373 representing 23.6% of the respondents were within the age bracket of 18 - 30 years, 121 out of 373 representing 32.4% of the respondents were between the age group of 31 - 40 years, while 100 out of 373 representing 26.8% of the respondents on the other hand were between the ages of 41 - 50 years. The result further showed that those respondents between 50 years and above had 64 out of 373 representing 17.2%. The study found that the majority of the sampled respondents, about 32.4% were within the age bracket of 31 and 40 years this shows that the youths are active social media users and the least 23.6% were aged between 50 years and above. In addition to frequency and percentage of age distribution, the mean and standard deviation values which disclosed the average and variance of the age scale are 2.3753 and 1.0258 respectively.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of political parties, candidates and citizens (PPCC)

S/N	Variable	Obs	Min	Max	Mean	Std. dev
1	PPCC1	373	1.00	5.00	1.8097	1.0568
2	PPCC2	373	1.00	5.00	1.9491	1.0000
3	PPCC3	373	1.00	5.00	2.2054	0.6691
4	PPCC4	373	1.00	5.00	2.3887	0.8090
5	PPCC5	373	1.00	5.00	2.0391	0.7623
6	PPCC6	373	1.00	5.00	2.0462	0.8430
7	PPCC7	373	1.00	5.00	1.9732	0.7841
	Average	373	1.00	5.00	2.0587	0.8463

Source: Researcher's Computations and output of SPSS 22 based on Field Survey (2022).

Note: PPCC1-7 indicates political parties, candidates and citizens question 1-7 above. The mean values in the Table 2 indicated that the respondents rated averagely on statements of evaluation criteria as represented by mean = 2.0587 with a standard deviation = 0.8463. The respondents opined that they have moderate access to new media platforms in 2019 given the mean value of 1.8097 with a standard deviation of 1.0568 which in turn ensures moderate access to news on political and electoral events accessible immediately as they occurred in the 2019, given that the mean value is 1.9491 and a standard deviation value of 1.0000. In addition, the respondents agreed to have moderate access to some technological tools, media platform such as mobile phone, iPad, laptop, personal computer/desktop and used to access online news content on new media during the 2019 elections in Nigeria given that the mean value is (2.2054) with a standard deviation (0.6691). Similarly, respondents agreed to have moderate access to formats in which citizen journalists (independent individuals writing on social media) use to convey their messages given the mean value of (2.3887) with a standard deviation of 0.8090. This grants moderate access to the following area of interest (voters' registration, party primaries, campaigns, political debate, election) for news purposes during the 2019 general election in Nigeria given a mean value within the range of 2 (2.0391) and a standard deviation of 0.7623. Furthermore, the mean value of 2.0462 and a standard deviation of 0.8430 is an indication that respondents agreed that citizen

journalism (independent individuals writing on social media) gave moderate access to news on political parties, candidates, the electorates and the electoral body (INEC). Likewise, respondents agreed that citizen journalists (independent individuals writing on social media) granted them moderate access to formats (text, audio, pictures, video) that they used to convey their messages and this in turn generally granted the respondents moderate access to political parties, candidates and citizens to participate in the 2019 general election in Nigeria.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of citizen journalism (CJ) in the conduct of 2019 general election in Nigeria

S/N	Variable	Obs	Min	Max	Mean	Std. dev
1	CJ1	373	1.00	5.00	2.8613	0.8728
2	CJ2	373	1.00	5.00	1.8016	0.7608
3	CJ3	373	1.00	5.00	2.6327	1.1104
4	CJ4	373	1.00	5.00	3.2386	1.0647
5	CJ5	373	1.00	5.00	2.1635	0.8376
Average		373	1.00	5.00	2.5395	0.9292

Source: Researcher’s Computations and Output of SPSS 22 based on Field Survey (2022).

Note: CJ1-5 indicates citizen journalism in the 2019 general election in Nigeria question 1-5 above.

The mean values in Table 3 revealed that the respondents rated average on statements of evaluation criteria regarding citizen journalism in the conduct of the 2019 general election as represented by mean = 2.5395 with a standard deviation = 0.9292. The respondents were neutral that the following (identifying fraud, overloaded information, unethical news reporting and misinformation) describe citizen journalism, given the mean value of 2.8613 with a standard deviation of 0.8728. However, respondents agreed that citizen journalism has made access to political information more efficient than before by giving young voters a quick way to learn about politics, given that the mean value is 1.8016 and a standard deviation value of 0.7608. Again, the respondents were neutral on whether Citizen Journalism can be a threat to political parties and damaging to candidates’ campaigns given that the mean value is 2.6327 with a standard deviation 1.1104. Similarly, respondents disagreed that Citizen Journalism played a negative role by dividing the opinion of citizens in the 2019 general elections given the mean value of 3.2386 with a standard deviation of 1.0647. Equally, respondents rated the impact of citizen journalists in the 2019 general elections as impactful in shaping the election, given the mean value of 2.1635 and a standard deviation of 0.8376. This further depicted the impact of citizen journalism in the era of new media in the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Test of research hypothesis

Hierarchical regression was used to test the hypothesis. Hierarchical regression is a type of regression model in which the predictors are entered in blocks. Each block represents one step (or model). The order (or which predictor goes into which block) to enter predictors into the model is decided by the researcher, but should always be based on theory.

In the regression, the first control variables were entered. The control variables are age, gender, and educational qualification. It was necessary to include these control variables in the regression equation because these may affect political parties, candidates and citizens directly.

Hypothesis

H₀ - Citizen journalism in the era of new media has no significant impact on political parties, candidates, and citizens with regards to the nature of access to online sources in the 2019 general elections.

H₁ - Citizen journalism in the era of new media has significant impact on political parties, candidates and citizens with regards to the nature of access to online sources in the 2019 general elections.

The data obtained from the questionnaire were computed and the results investigated with regards to the citizen journalism in the era of new media in the conduct of 2019 general elections. It was on the basis of the analysis that inferences were drawn. The test of hypothesis began with the one-way analysis of variance also known as the F-test to determine if there were differences in the means of the variables for the analysis.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) test on political parties, candidates and citizens

The first is to examine whether there is no significant difference in the political parties, candidates and citizens with regards to the nature of access to online sources by citizens in the 2019 general elections. The analysis was tested at a 5% (0.05) level of significance. The decision rule was to reject the null hypothesis of no significant differences in the political parties, candidates and citizens about the nature of access to online sources by citizens in the 2019 general elections if the P-value of the F-statistic is less than the significance value of 0.05 and accept otherwise. Table 4 presents the result of the F-statistic with the corresponding P-values which can be compared to the 0.05 significance level to enable a decision to be taken.

Table 4: ANOVA test on political parties, candidates and citizens

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	22.625	9	2.514	9.244	0.000*
Residual	98.714	363	0.272		
Total	121.339	372			

Source: Researcher’s Computations and Output of SPSS 22 based on Field Survey (2022).

Note: Predictor: Constant, Age, Gender, M/Status, Education, CJ1-5; Dependent variable: PPCC

Regarding the ANOVA test on political parties, candidates, and citizens with regards to the nature of access to online sources by citizens in the 2019 General Elections, the significance level is less than the 0.05 significance level. This means that there were significance differences in the political parties, candidates and citizens with regards to the nature of access to online sources by citizens in the 2019 general elections; hence the null hypothesis was rejected.

Coefficient estimation

In order to explore whether the independent variables had a significant impact on the dependent variables, hierarchical regression analysis was conducted. Table 5 showed the regression analysis results for the variables of political parties, candidates and citizens with regards to the nature of access to online sources by citizens.

Table 5: Results of hierarchical regression of the impacts of CJ on PPCC with regards to access to online sources

Variable	Coefficient	Std error	t-statistic	Sig.
Constant	1.351*	0.249	5.418	0.000
Age	0.004	0.034	0.130	0.097
Sex	0.163*	0.059	2.775	0.006
Marital Status	-0.099	0.071	-1.389	0.166
Education	-0.038	0.049	-0.782	0.435
CJ1	0.124*	0.035	3.560	0.000
CJ2	0.134*	0.040	3.339	0.001
CJ3	0.042	0.028	1.518	0.130
CJ4	-0.008	0.030	-0.258	0.796
CJ5	0.1258*	0.036	3.483	0.001

Source: Researcher’s computations and output of SPSS 22 based on Field Survey (2022).

Note: Dependent variable: PPCC; * indicates significance at 1% and 5% levels respectively.

The findings from the regression analysis in Table 5, using the political parties, candidates, and citizens as the dependent variable showed that of the control variables in the model, only gender/sex and the constant are statistically significant at the 1% level, while age, marital status, and educational qualification are not significant. The more participants are males (being the reference variable) the more political parties, candidates, and citizens have access to citizen journalism in the general elections. The value of gender with its corresponding p-value (0.163; p-value < 0.05) indicated the level of significance. In the absence of the independent variables in the model, the model takes a mathematical value of 1.351; p-value < 0.05) implying that political parties, candidates, and citizens' access to citizen journalism increases.

The main independent variable, components of political parties, candidates, and citizens dimension, was entered into the regression equation. When the components of political parties, candidates and citizens dimension were entered at disaggregated level, only CJ1 (identity fraud, overloaded information, unethical news, and misinformation) describe citizen journalism, CJ2 (Citizen journalism has made access to political information more efficient than before by giving young voters a quick way to learn about politics) and CJ5 (rate the impact of citizen journalists in the 2019 General Elections) were statistically significant. Results from Table 5 further showed that a unit increase in CJ1 would increase PPCC by 0.126; p < 0.05 unit. This implied that as citizens journalism description increases, political parties, candidates and citizens gained more awareness. In addition, a 1 unit increase in Citizen journalism creating access to political information more efficiently than before by giving young voters a quick way to learn about politics (CJ2) would increase political parties, candidates, and citizen's access to citizens'

journalism by 0.134; $p < 0.05$). Additionally, a unit increase in the rate of the impact of citizen journalists in the 2019 General Elections (CJ5) would lead to an impact in shaping the general elections on the part of political parties, candidates and citizens by 0.125; $p < 0.05$. The model explained 1.86% of the variance in the political parties, candidates and citizens due to the disaggregated components of citizens' journalism dimension. Additionally the model was significant with $R^2 = 0.186$; $Adj R^2 = 0.166$; $F = 9.244$, $p < 0.000$. These results support H_1 that Citizen Journalism has significant impact on political parties, candidates and citizens with regards to the nature of access to online sources in the 2019 General Elections.

A. Normality of data

To check the robustness of the analysis on the impact of citizen journalism (CJ) on political parties, candidates and citizens with regards to the nature of access to online sources in the 2019 general Elections, normality and Q-Q plots were carried out.

Normality test was conducted to ensure that the data used for analysis are normally distributed and require a parametric analysis. When the data is non-normal, a non-parametric analysis will be required. Normality test was conducted using the histogram. The normality test was conducted for PPCC. The result is presented as follows:

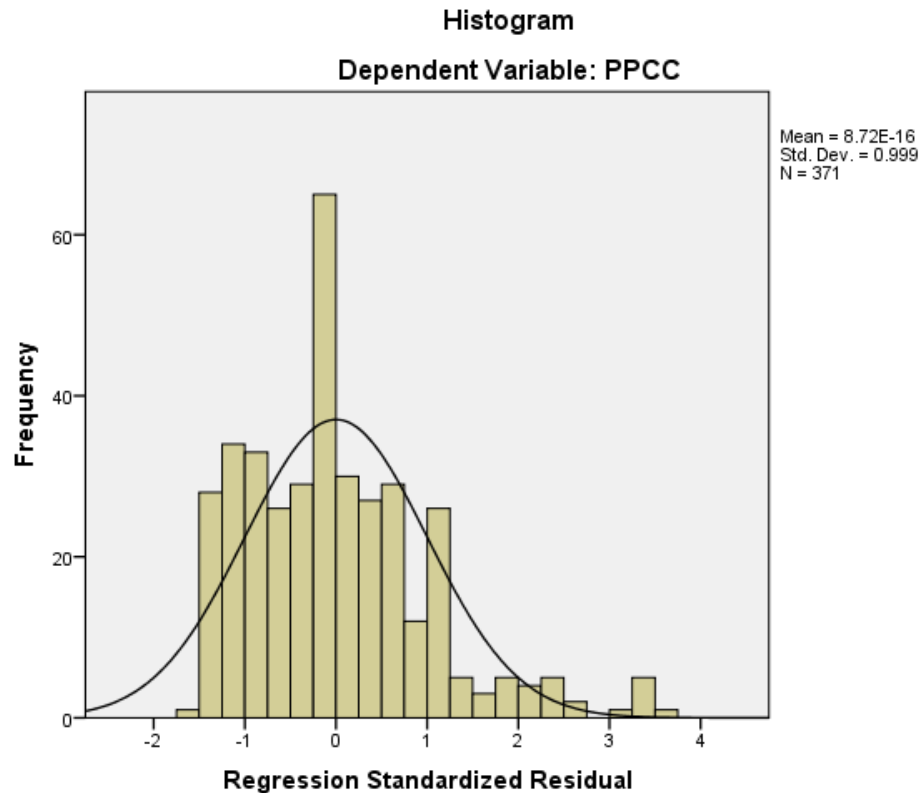


Figure 1: Normality test for political parties, candidates, and citizens

Figures 1 show the histogram for the test of normality. The histogram provides a useful graphical representation of the data. From the diagrams, the histogram shows that the data is normally distributed given that bell shaped curve is symmetric.

Consequently, to further verify the normality of the data, the Normal Q-Q plot provides a graphical way to determine the level of normality. The black line indicates the values your sample should adhere to if the distribution is normal. The dots are the actual data, if the dots fall exactly on the black line, then the data is normal. If they deviate from the black line, the data are non-normal. The normal Q-Q plot is presented thus:

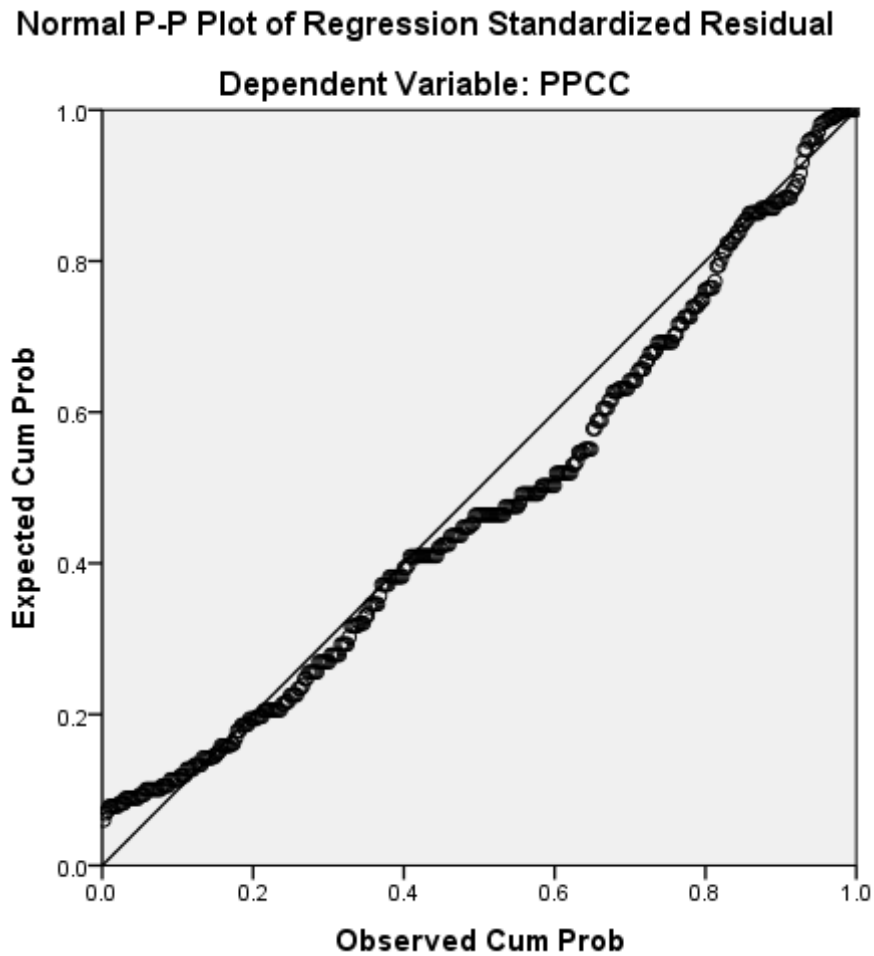


Figure 2: Normal Q-Q plot Test for Political parties, Candidates and Citizens

Discussion of findings

Citizen journalism is playing a fundamental role in democratic process all over the world. In Nigeria it has played a key role in 2019 general election, therefore the current literature is expanding on citizen journalism and its role in strengthening democratic processes in Nigerian's general election. Notably, the social media has influence the practice of democracy in Nigeria. It is obvious today, how the new media space provides an interactive realm where ordinary citizen have now become news producers. The finding

is in line with the democratic participant media theory that relates to the needs, interests and aspiration of the active receiver in a political society. It is concerned with the right to relevant information, to answer back, and use any means of communication for interaction in small-scale setting of community, groups and sub-culture. The theory strongly opposes the commercial political or bureaucratic control of the media which exist to serve audience, not the interests of government or commercial enterprise but calls for a decentralization of the media. Citizen journalism is leading the trend among the many newly form of journalism taking place in Nigeria.

Result shows that citizen journalism gave moderate access to political parties, candidates and citizen's in the 2019 general election as shown in Table 2 with a mean score of 2.0587 and standard derivation of 0.8863. Thereby fostering political discourse among parties, politician and among citizenry in the country. This is unlike the situation in the previous election whereby the coverage of the general elections by mainstream media was restricted to only the major political parties who had access to reportage. EU report (2019). This indicate how the social media through its various platform gave voice to the various political parties and candidates who ordinary will not have been covered in the process of electioneering, this has made the election more open. In order to obtain a robust, reliable and valid result, the study ensures the absence of outliers so that response is within the normal baseline as seen in other studies like Kaufhold and Zuniga (2010). Significant access was given to political parties, candidates and citizen by citizen journalists as shown in the results of Hierarchical Regression of the Impacts of CJ on PPCC with regards to Access to Online Sources were statistically significant. Results from Table 5 further showed that a unit increase in CJ1 would increase PPCC by 0.126; $p < 0.05$ unit. This implied that as citizens journalism description increases, political parties, candidates and citizens gained more awareness. In addition, a 1 unit increase in Citizen journalism creating access to political information more efficient than before by giving young voters a quick way to learn about politics. Additionally, (CJ2) increases political parties, candidates and citizen, access to citizen journalism, by 0.134; $p < 0.05$). Subsequently, a unit increase in the rate of the impact citizen journalism in the general elections, would lead to shaping the 2019 elections with regards to political parties, candidates and citizen in (CJ5) by 0.125; $p < 0.05$. This show how statistically significant the result were when enter into the model.

Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected because the model was significant with $R^2 = 0.186$; $Adj R^2 = 0.166$; $F = 9.244$, $p < 0.000$. These results support H_1 that citizen journalism has significant impact on political parties, candidates and citizens with regards to the nature of access to online sources in the 2019 general elections.

Conclusion

The analyses presented above show how citizen journalism gave significant access to political parties, candidates and the citizenry in the 2019 general election. The citizen journalism role has brought about changes in Nigeria's political process. This has changed the way political communication takes place in the country. Political actors and stakeholders such as Politicians, Political parties and electorates should take advantage of citizen journalism by using the various social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Blogs) in reaching out to voters or politicians. People are able to voice their opinion, engage with their politician and connect with like-minded individuals without being denied access to the media or any restriction from any media organization.

This study advocates for robust learning for the public on their involvement in the news making process.

Responses from the survey show how respondents had access to new media technologies and the majority of them access most of the social media platforms. Most of them agreed that they access political news or information through citizen journalism content; this specified a growing desire for participation and involvement in the political process of Nigeria. But the challenge the respondents had was the issue of overcrowded/overloaded messages that take place in the new media space. Individuals and policy makers must come up with ways this issue can be addressed.

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