

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION: EMPOWERING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN SELECTED SOUTHEAST STATES, NIGERIA.

By

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Abstract

This article explores the role of Artificial Intelligence(AI) in enhancing political Communication and Empowering Political Participation in Selected Southeast States in Nigeria.

In recent years, AI technologies have revolutionized various sectors, and their potential to transform political engagement and communication is increasingly recognized. This survey examines the current state of political participation in southeast Nigeria, identifies challenges faced by citizens, and demonstrates how AI applications can address these issues, leading to more inclusive, transparent, and engaging political processes using technology determinism and agenda setting theories. Deploying purposive sampling, to select 400 respondents from selected states of Ebonyi and Enugu States, Nigeria. Findings show 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. Findings, however, 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. Results also demonstrate that AI application could be an excellent strategy for futuristic political development in the region. The study therefore recommends among other things, a training and retraining of staff members of Ebonyi State Independence electoral commission (EBSIEC) and Enugu State Independence electoral commission (ENSIEC) with other stakeholders to manage Artificial Intelligence apparatus effectively.

Key words: *Artificial Intelligence, Political Communication, Political participation, Ebonyi and Enugu States, Nigeria*

Introduction

In recent years, the advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies has permeated various aspects of society, revolutionizing industries and transforming conventional practices. One area where AI holds significant potential for positive impact is in political communication and participation.

Ebonyi and Enugu States, located in the southeastern region of Nigeria are a bustling hub of political activities, but their citizens face challenges in fully engaging with the democratic process. This paper aims to explore how AI can empower political participation in Ebonyi and Enugu States by enhancing communication channels, promoting transparency and increasing citizen engagement in the decision

making process. Ebonyi and Enugu States have some rich political histories, with diverse populations that actively participates in local, state and National elections. However, existing barriers 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, Ebonyi and Enugu States can create a more inclusive and dynamic political landscape that enable individual 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 into the current state of political participation in Ebonyi and Enugu States, highlighting the challenges faced by citizens and the opportunities for leveraging AI to overcome these obstacles. By exploring case studies, theoretical frameworks, and practical contents. This paper will provide insight 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 to actively participate in the democratic governance of both Ebonyi and Enugu States respectively. By exploring the inter-section of AI and political communication, this paper aspires to provide a roadmap for policy makers, technologists, and civil society actors to leverage technology for the collective benefits of Ebonyi and Enugu States' 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.

Ways in which AI can empower political participation in Ebonyi and Enugu States;

AI-powered Chabot's:

Political leaders can use AI –powered Chabot's on their websites or social media platforms to answer citizen's inquiries, provide information on government policies and initiatives, and gather feedback from the public. This can enhance communication between leaders and constituents and make information more accessible to the public.

Data analytics for decision making:

AI-algorithms can analyze vast amount of data to identify trends, sentiments and public opinion on various political issues in Ebonyi and Enugu States. By using data analytics, political leaders can make

informed decisions, prioritize public needs, and tailor policies to better serve the interest of the communities.

An Overview of political landscapes in Ebonyi and Enugu States:

Ebonyi and Enugu States located in the southeastern part of Nigeria are known for their riches, cultural heritages, and vibrant political landscapes. As two out of 36 states in Nigeria, Ebonyi and Enugu States plays a significant role in the political dynamics of the country. Here are the overviews of their political landscapes:

Governance structures:

Ebonyi and Enugu states operates under a democratic system of governments, with Governors as the chief executives and state legislatures responsible for making laws. These states were further divided into three (3) senatorial zones, namely; Ebonyi North, Ebonyi Central, Ebonyi South.

Enugu East, Enugu North, and Enugu West respectively.

Political parties:

Ebonyi and Enugu States are home of various political parties, with the dominant parties including the People's Democratic Party (PDP) All Progressive Congress, (APC) and Labor Party, (LP). Political activities such as campaign rallies, and elections were integral parts of their political landscapes.

Political leaders:

Ebonyi and Enugu States have produced notable political leaders who have played significant roles in shaping these states' governance and policies. These leaders include past and present Governors, Senators, Members of House of Representatives, and other influential figures in the political arena.

Political participations;

The citizens of Ebonyi and Enugu States actively participates in the political process through voting, engaging in political discussions, attending rallies, and voicing their opinion on various issues affecting their states. Civil society groups, organizations and advocacy groups also contribute to the political discourse in Ebonyi and Enugu States.

Key issues:

Like other states in Nigeria, Ebonyi and Enugu States faces a range of political and socioeconomic challenges, including infrastructural development, health care, education, and security. Political leaders

and stakeholders work towards addressing these issues and implementing policies to improve the lives of residents.

Traditional institutions:

Traditional rulers and institutions also play a significant role in the political landscapes of Ebonyi and Enugu States, representing the cultural heritage and values of the people. Their influence can often intersect with decision-making process.

Future prospect:

The political landscapes of Ebonyi and Enugu States continues to evolve with efforts focused on promoting good governance, accountability, and inclusive development. The states' political leaders and citizens are committed to building a prosperous and peaceful environment for all residents.

Summarily, the political landscape of Ebonyi and Enugu States are characterized by a mix of political parties, active citizens' participations, leadership diversities, and commitments to addressing key issues facing the states. Ebonyi and Enugu States' political dynamics reflects their unique histories, traditions, and aspirations for a better future of all residents.

Political Communication Challenges in Ebonyi and Enugu States: A Closer Look

(1) Lack of Access to information;

Citizens in Ebonyi and Enugu States may face challenges in accessing accurate and timely information about political events, candidates, and policy decisions. This lack of transparency can hinder their ability to make informed decisions and actively participate in the process.

(2) Limited civic engagement:

Apathy and disengagement among the populace can be a significant barrier to political communication and participation in Ebonyi and Enugu States. Factors such as low voter turnout, lack of trust in political institutions, and perceived inefficacy of individual involvement may contribute to this issue.

(3) Influence of traditional and social media:

The influence of traditional media outlets and social media platforms on political communication in Ebonyi and Enugu States can pose challenges in ensuring balanced, accurate, and unbiased information that reaches the public. Misinformation, sensationalism, and the spread of fake news can impact the political discourse and public opinion.

(4) Political polarization:

Divisive politics and ideological differences in Ebonyi and Enugu States may lead to polarization among the population, inhibiting constructive dialogue and collaboration. This polarization can hinder effective political communication and impede efforts to promote inclusivity and diverse perspectives.

(5) Limited civic education and awareness:

The lack of comprehensive civic education programmes and initiatives in Ebonyi and Enugu States may contribute to challenges in political communication and participation. Greater efforts to raise awareness, promote civic literacy, and empower citizens to engage in political processes are essential to overcoming these obstacles. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach that prioritizes transparency, inclusivity, civic engagement, and media literacy.

By fostering a culture of open communication, active participation, and mutual respect, Ebonyi and Enugu States can work towards building a more vibrant and responsive political landscapes that serves the interest of their citizens.

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 Ebonyi and Enugu States Nigeria. The specific goal of study includes;

To examine the current state of political communication in Ebonyi and Enugu States, identifying the challenges faced by citizens in accessing relevant information, engaging with political processes, and participating in governance decisions.

To explore the concept of AI and its applications in the realm of political communication, including AI-powered tools, algorithms, and platforms that can facilitate dialogue between political leaders and constituents.

To assess the potential benefits of integrating AI technology in political processes, such as enhancing transparency, improving citizen engagement, and promoting accountability in decision-making.

Scope of the study.

This study focuses on exploring the impact of Artificial intelligence (AI) on political communication and political participation in Ebonyi and Enugu States, Nigeria. The scope of the study includes;

Analyzing the current states of political communication in Ebonyi and Enugu States, identifying challenges in information dissemination, citizen engagement, and participation in governance process.

Examining the potential applications of AI in enhancing political communication, including AI-powered tools, platforms, and algorithms that can improve dialogue between political actors and constituents.

Investigating the benefits and limitations of integrating AI technology in political processes, such as increased transparency, enhanced citizen participation, and informed decision making.

Research questions:

- (1) What are the challenges by the citizens of Ebonyi and Enugu States in participating actively in political process?
- (2) Does the EBSIEC and ENSIEC utilizes AI technology in facilitating dialogue between political leaders and constituents?
- (3) What are the benefits of AI technology in political processes in Ebonyi and Enugu States, Nigeria?

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 employed 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 theorists, we can better understand the historical context and intellectual theories in the study of technology, media and society.

Literature Review:

Role of Artificial Intelligence in Enhancing Political Communication and Participation in Developing Countries. A Study of Enugu State, Nigeria.

Okonkwo, N., Ogbonna, C., & Okafor, A. (2020) *Journal of Political Science and International Relations*.

It delves into the impact of AI on political communication and participation in Enugu state Nigeria. It also examines how AI technologies can be leveraged to enhance citizen's 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 more inclusive and responsive political system. The paper explores further 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's 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.

Okoro, J., Anyanwu, M., & Odih, L. (2021) study on AI-powered Chabot's in political communication. A study of Enugu State, Nigeria. *African journal of political science*.

The article focuses on the use of AI-powered Chabot's in political communication in Enugu State, Nigeria. The authors examine how Chabot's can facilitate real time interaction with citizens, provide information on political issues, and enhance engagement with political actors. They discuss the potential

of Chabot's to bridge the communication gap between politicians and citizens, ultimately empowering political participation in the region.

Data Analytics and political participation: A study of AI applications in Enugu by Nnamdi, C., Maduka, A., & Chukwuma, O. at the *International Conference on Data science and machine learning (2018)*.

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 southeastern region 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 landscapes in Ebonyi and Enugu States while also acknowledging the challenges and ethical considerations that need to be addressed for responsible and effective implementations.

Research 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 Ebonyi and Enugu States. Survey research was therefore, essential in collecting data for a population too large to be observed directly. The study adopted the questionnaire as a measuring instrument, while statistical package for the social science (SPSS) version.22 and simple frequencies, figures and percentages (SFFP) were utilized for data analysis.

Population and sampling techniques:

The study population comprises the entire residents of the two states selected in southeast, Nigeria. The study population comprises 9,403,253 residents (Ebonyi=4,007,155. Enugu=5,396,098 according to the population recorded by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS,2023).

Table 1 Projected population estimates for selected states in Southeast, Nigeria (2023).

S/n	State	Population(2006)	Population(2023)
1	Ebonyi	2,176,947	4,007,155
2	Enugu	3,267,837	5,396,098
		Total	9,403,253

National Bureau of statistics(NBS,2023)

Sample size:

A sample size of 400 will be drawn from the study population of 9,403,253. The researcher arrived at this number using the Cochran formula of sample size determination. Cochran's formula is optimal for this study because it involves large or uncertain populations, and it offers a standardized method for calculating the sample size. $SS = (z\text{score})^2 \times p(1-p)$

(margin of error)²

Where

Ss = sample size

Z-score =1.96

P =0.5

Margin of error =0.05

SS=384.16

Round to the nearest whole number n=384

Data analysis and Discussion:

Data for this analysis was collected from a sample size of 384 residents of Ikwo LGA of Ebonyi Central=192 and Enugu North LGA of Enugu East=192 who are traders and civil servants.

A response rate of ninety-five (95%) percent recorded; that 350 questionnaires were completed and returned.

Table Demographic patterns of respondents.**Age**

variable	Frequency	Percentage
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%

Source: Field survey, 2025

Sex

variable	Frequency	Percentage
Male	250	75%
Female	100	25%
Total	350	100%

Source; Field survey, 2025.

The demographic data presented in table one indicates that out of the sample population for the study, 75 percent of the respondents were males, while 25 percent of the respondents were females. The findings affirm that more males are traders in Nigeria than females. In the age distribution of the respondents, 40 percent of the respondents were 25-34 years, 20 percent were 18-24 years, while 15 percent constitute respondents within the age brackets of 45-54 years. The findings imply that most of the respondents are young people aged 18-34 years. These respondents regarded as millennial are most likely to use AI technologies for political engagement more than other age brackets.

Other tables generated in this study were used to answer the various research question one that sought to find out the challenges faced by the citizens of Ebonyi and Enugu States in participating actively in politics.

RQ1: What are the challenges faced by the citizens of Ebonyi and Enugu States in participating actively in political processes?

Table 2

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
High tariff cost		40%
Connectivity issues	<u>195</u> <u>55</u> <u>40</u>	20%
Availability of technology		15%
Media literacy		13%
No idea	<u>35</u> <u>25</u> 350	12%
Total		100%

Source: field survey.2025.

Response on table 2 demonstrate that significant challenges to effective use of AI among traders and civil servants for political communication between political leaders and constituents are high tariff cost (40%) and connectivity issues (20%). Availability of technology (15%) was mentioned as another obstacle, while media literacy (13%) was the least challenge to AI adoption among selected traders and civil servants of Ebonyi and Enugu States. The finding here imply that technological know-how is no longer a serious threat to the internet and Artificial Intelligence has come to stay in Nigeria. Table 2 data is in agreement with the 2019 www.internetworldstats.com report on African internet penetration and demonstrate that media are setting existing political agenda for Nigerians.

RQ2: Does EBSIEC and ENSIEC utilizes AI tools in facilitating dialogue between political leaders and constituents?

Dispositions on respondents towards the utilizations of AI tools. **Table 3**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	200	50%
Negative	100	25%
indifferent	30	15%
No idea	20	10%
Total	350	100%

Source; Field Survey.2025.

Data in table 3 indicates that a higher percentage of respondents (50%) have positive disposition towards the utilization of AI by EBSIEC and ENSIEC and politicians in Ebonyi and Enugu, while (25%) has a negative disposition, 155 of the respondents are indifferent to that effect. The results suggest among other things that for artificial intelligence to contribute substantially to the development of the political process in Nigeria especially in Ebonyi and Enugu States, more work need to be done in order to elicit more positive disposition to AI tools.

RQ3: What are the benefits of AI technology in political process in Ebonyi and Enugu States, Nigeria?

Table 4: responses on the benefits of AI in political communication and participation.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Necessary for political development	195	50%
Not necessary	60	15%
To an extent important	75	30%
No opinion	20	5%
Total	350	100%

Source; field survey, 2025

The potentialities of artificial intelligence as a veritable tool for political development, according to table 4, is yet to be appreciated by a good number of respondents (50%). However, (30%) and (15%) of the respondents think that AI is not necessary and to an extent significant respectively for political development. The findings therefore, shows that the majority of respondents (95%) regard artificial intelligence as an indispensable tool for political communication, participation and development. The findings further substantiate <https://napoleoncat.com> report on connectivity static in Nigeria. It is reasonable to see Nigeria as people eager to affect the political process using new technologies such as AI-logarithms, Chabot's etc.

Discussion of findings

The potentialities of AI to revolutionize political communication and development in empowering political participation is yet to be appreciated by a good number of respondents. At present, political discussions online are a privilege for those with access to smart devices, computers and the internet from which AI-powered Chabot's, data analytics for decision-making, personalized communication, online engagement platforms, predictive analytics election forecasting are domiciled. Those who would benefit the most from the democratizing potential of artificial intelligence (AI) technology do not have much access to it such as Artificial intelligence logarithms. Findings in literature demonstrate the tents of the technology determinism theory and the agenda-setting theory. It also shows that more males in Ebonyi and Enugu States are traders than their female counterparts. The study concludes that the selected traders and civil servants in the local governments in the two selected senatorial zones of Ikwo Local Government Area of Ebonyi Central and Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu East Senatorial Zone of Enugu State Nigeria respectively affirms their conversant use of AI applications which fall in line with Moriah, and 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 this 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. More research needs to be done; for example, on the consequences of Artificial intelligence.

Recommendation

The study therefore 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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