

**IMPACTS OF OPINION LEADERS IN INFORMATION DISSEMINATION IN A
POLITICAL PARTY: (A STUDY OF ELECTORATES IN IKORODU LOCAL
GOVERNMENT AREA OF LAGOS STATE)**

BY

**OKEOWO, Taiwo Olatunde Ph.D.
Department of Mass Communication,
Lagos State University of Science and Technology
Ikorodu, Lagos, Nigeria.**

And

**ARISOYIN, Olanrewaju Amos
Department of Mass Communication,
Trinity University,
Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria.
ORCID: 0009-0003-9751-1236**

ABSTRACT

Information dissemination and management are critical aspects of what makes any society function effectively and a lot of times, people depend on the judgment of certain members of the society to take decisions on what concerns the society or government policies, while others require explanation or approval from key members of the society to determine what would be the right action to take. The study examined The Impact of Opinion Leaders in Information Dissemination in a Political Party using electorates in Ikorodu Local Government to determining the nature of the influence. The study used Two-Step Flow and Diffusion Innovation theories. The study adopted survey research method, using questionnaire and interview as an instrument of data collection, with 300 copies of questionnaires administered among residents of Ikorodu, while 245 were filled and returned. The study discovered that some opinion leaders played negative roles to influence voting behaviour, thereby eroding the credibility of elections in the community, as majority of respondents doubted the credibility of political information from opinion leaders. The study, recommended that government and the civil societies need to put in place an efficient information delivery mechanism to reduce the over-bearing influence of opinion leaders in the communities.

KEYWORDS: Opinion Leader, information dissemination, Political Party, Electorate

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Elections and voting take place all over the world to elect new leaders, especially in a democratic setting. Politicians, political parties and political leaders all over the world would make use of every

available means of persuasion to enlist the support of the electorates. The available means could be through the mass media or interpersonal relations.

The use of interpersonal relations became popular after the 1940 American Presidential Election when a study conducted by Lazarsfeld et al. as cited in Katz (1957), “that the flow and effect of mass communication messages may not be as direct as it was thought to be”. The research by Lazarsfeld discovered that most people did not vote as a result of the information that the mass media gave to them. Rather, their decisions were influenced by what they were told by friends and associates. This discovery actually led to the Two-Step-Flow hypothesis which emphasized the influence of opinion leaders in a political party and voting decisions of voters. This development has brought with it a lot of implications for a democratic society. Since then, the influence of opinion leaders has been said to keep waxing despite other campaign efforts rigorously employed by the political class.

Summers as cited in Yan, J. (2013) defines opinion leadership as a process by which “some individuals exert a disproportionate amount of influence on the behaviour of others in some given topic areas”. Rogers (1962) quoted in Shadid (2012) suggests “opinion leadership is to be viewed as a continuous variable even through it is disproportionately concentrated in a few individuals for a given topic area”.

Cosmas, C et al. (2012) defined an opinion leader as “someone whose opinions are highly respected and utilized by the respondents to help in making decisions across a variety of situations such as what types of clothes to wear, where to have major household items repaired, how to discipline the children and for whom to vote in political elections. This person can be someone with whom the respondents have personal contacts (a friend, priest, member of social group, relative, or someone in public life whose advice is derived from his/her public statements”.

Katz (2015) in his article, “where Are Opinion Leaders Leading Us” observed that people turn to opinion leaders for decisions ranging from politics to their personal lives and are almost at the mercy of opinion leaders.

The influence of opinion leaders in a political party cannot be over emphasized especially in a rural setting where voters are predominantly illiterate more especially in a country like Nigeria where it is believed that there is so much gap between the information “haves” and “have nots”. While city people may not be easily influenced by opinion leaders, rural voters are likely to be easily influenced because of their limited access to information. Rural dwellers are likely to be easily influenced because of their limited access to information unlike city people who have unlimited access to information. Due to limited information given to rural it makes it easier for opinion leader to influence them towards their opinions which are always to satisfy their interests.

There can be no meaningful democracy without a properly functioning political party system which can be achieved with help of opinion leader. It is obvious therefore, that political parties constitute the heart of democracy. The more vigorous and healthy they are the better assured is the health of the democratic process (Agbaje, 1998). It is therefore difficult to imagine any modern democracy without political parties as they are the connecting links between diverse groups of peoples and governments.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Information dissemination and management are critical aspects of what makes any society function effectively and a lot of times, people depend on the judgment of certain members of the society to take decisions on what concerns the society or government policies, while others require explanation or approval from key members of the society to determine what would be the right action to take. During political party's primary elections, the views and the wishes of the opinion leaders have always come to play while selecting candidates that will represent the community or the constituencies in an election, as against the opinion of the opinions other members of a political parties.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To determine the impact of opinion leaders in political information dissemination among electorates in Ikorodu local government.
2. To investigate how political opinion leaders influenced the voting pattern of the electorates in Ikorodu local government.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the impact of opinion leaders in political information dissemination among electorates in Ikorodu local government?
2. How does political opinion leaders influence the voting pattern of the electorates in Ikorodu local government?

CONCEPT OF OPINION LEADERSHIP

Opinion leadership as defined by Rogers et al (1988), is the ability to informally influence individual's attitudes or behaviour in a desired way with relative frequency. Severin and Tankard (1979) refer to opinion leaders as members of small social group who influence other members of their group. Another way in which Severin and Tankard (1979) look at opinion leadership, is that it is a two-step flow of communication, in which messages flow from the media first and reach the opinion leaders, who then pass them to associates or followers who look to them as influential.

Goldsmith and Flynn, (1994) opine that Information dissemination and management are critical aspects of what makes any society function effectively and a lot of times, people depend on the judgement of certain members of the society to take decisions on what concerns the society or government policies, while others require explanation or approval from key members of the society to determine what would be the right action to take. From a marketing perspective, opinion leaders are characterized by influence, interpersonal word-of-mouth communication, expertise, and innovative behavior (Goldsmith and Eastman, 1996). It is also believed that opinion leaders have an enduring involvement with a product class, which motivates them to seek and share information with others. Political parties have resorted to patronage opinion leaders in information dissemination to effectively deploy patronage and overcome the problems of voters' compliance, which it generates. Rogers (1962) quoted in Shadid (2012) suggests "opinion leadership is to be viewed as a continuous variable even through it is disproportionately concentrated in a few individuals for a given topic area". Summers as cited in Yan (2013) defines opinion leadership as a process by which "some individuals

exert a disproportionate amount of influence on the behaviour of others in some given topic areas". Rogers (1962) quoted in Shadid (2012) suggests "opinion leadership is to be viewed as a continuous variable even though it is disproportionately concentrated in a few individuals for a given topic area".

Cosmas, et al. (2012) defined an opinion leader as "someone whose opinions are highly respected and utilized by the respondents to help in making decisions across a variety of situations such as what types of clothes to wear, where to have major household items repaired, how to discipline the children and for whom to vote in political elections. This person can be someone with whom the respondents have personal contacts (a friend, priest, member of social group, relative, or someone in public life whose advice is derived from his/her public statements".

Corey (1971) defines the term opinion leader as "trusted and informed people who exist in virtually all primary groups". Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) see the concept as "mediators between mass media and mass audience. Rogers and Mowen quoted in Yan (2013) define Opinion Leadership as the degree to which an individual is able to informally influence other individual's behaviours, attitudes or overt behaviour in a desired way with relative frequency. It is noteworthy that opinion leaders could be influential at certain times on certain issues but not all the times and on all the issues. Different studies have shown that men are more likely than women to be opinion leaders in the realm of public affairs because men have more chances to get outside the home to meet people and talk politics (Katz, 1957).

A middle aged, fairly educated man may be an opinion leader in politics while an elderly man with rich cultural experience could be an opinion leader in issues relating to culture. The Rovere study also discussed the flow of personal influence. It is also noteworthy that opinion leaders could be influential at certain times on certain issues but not all the times and on all the issues. The subject matter or the topic of discourse has a lot to do with who will lead and who will follow. In politics says Katz, "the educated ones will lead while in traditional values, the older village man and in fashion and movies, the young ones. Therefore, a leader in one sphere may become a follower in another sphere. Katz identified three factors that dictate influence as including:

1. Personification of certain values (who one is)
2. Competence (what one knows)
3. Strategic social location (whom one knows).

Cosmas, S (1980) has merged all the attributes into 7 broad categories; Practical, Authoritarian, General Expert, Accessible, Peer Expert, Self-centered and Opinionated. Cosmas, C (1980) concludes that people within and across cultures do use some basic dimensions to evaluate their opinion leaders. Different cultures apply different degrees of importance.

Looking at opinion leadership from the angle of politics, Feick and Price quoted in Craig, C (2002) opines that involvement appears to be the predominant explanation for opinion leaders' conversations about politics. The study describes the opinion leader as the "interested and involved consumer that exerts influence over the attitudes and behaviours of others".

According to Babawale and Ashiru, [2006], political parties are saddled with the responsibility of recruiting competent individuals for political leadership through periodic elections, educating the electorate through political rallies and dissemination of information about government policies as well as serving as a vehicle for the articulation and aggregation of the interests of people, without

involving opinion leader all these responsibility may be achieved, because opinion leaders have power to led and misled the political member, electorate about a particular political party.

2.1.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF OPINION LEADERS

Researchers have found out that opinion leaders are found at all levels, and have concluded that factors such as technical competence, monomorphism and polymorphism, social and physical accessibility, homophily and heterophily, differentiate leaders from their followers. These will be discussed individually below.

2.1.3 TECHNICAL COMPETENCE

Personification of values or who one is, is another way of saying that the influential is someone that his or her followers wish to become as similar as possible with him, because of his or her admirable achievements. On the other hand, to be regarded as an opinion leader, one must be knowledgeable or competent in the area in which his or her leadership is sought. It is seldom that attention is paid to the opinions of people who lack these qualities. Other attributes that worth considering are that opinion leaders are well liked and respected by their communities for;

- i. Making wise decisions
- ii. Operating with a clear understanding local needs and conditions,
- iii. Proving successful in their particular occupations,
- iv. Willing to be of service in helping to improve conditions in their communities and
- v. Having the same economic, social and cultural background as the people they lead.

The question that most researchers have is similar to that of Katz and Lazarsfeld (1966), that is who or what influences the influentials. This is a worthwhile question, because whatever or whoever does so, makes them to be more competent than their followers. Through investigations, Katz and Lazarsfeld (1966) become convinced that opinion leaders have more especially radio and printed media. It was further suggested by Severin and Tankard (1979) that mass media channels are relatively more important than interpersonal channels for earlier adopters (most of whom are opinion leaders) than for late adopters (most whom are the followers), because at the early stages, there are few interpersonal channels available to the early adopters. Cosmopolitans is another factor that is believed to be contributing significantly to the competence of opinion leaders.

Another indication of the importance of competence in interpersonal communications is by looking at countries with a well-developed mass media system. In this setting, voters usually get political information from opinion leaders. However, they like to discuss it with somebody in whose competence and motivation they have confidence, before they decide to adopt. Voters depend on good and trustworthy information for their political participation, and in this regard, they turn mainly to voters with a higher level of technical competence than they have themselves (Van den Ban & Hawkins, 1998). Opinion leadership being the type of informed leadership is earned, and can only be maintained by technical competence, social accessibility and conformity to system's norms (Rogers, 1988).

2.1.4 SOCIAL ACCESSIBILITY

It has been established by many authors that opinion leader has to be someone who is regarded knowledgeable in the area in which his or her opinion leadership is sought. However, knowledge without accessibility to other members of a social system will prevent this knowledge becoming available to others. A study maintained, that to be a local leader, an individual must be willing to be of service in helping to improve conditions of his or her community, and also act as a mediator in spreading the teachings of extension worker to the neighbours and friends. What results from this initiative is popularity and respect from members of the community.

Apart from being more exposed to all forms of channels that communicate new ideas, opinion leaders are more socially accessible to their followers. In referring to their influence, Rogers (1958) also makes mention of credibility of the information, which is closely related to competence but not independent of accessibility.

Katz and Lazarsfeld (1966) indicated that the most promising prospect for the study of opinion leadership is that of the actual influence that is often derived from the compromise between higher estimations of competence and easier accessibility. High estimations of someone's competence and trustworthiness make that person more likely to influence, but since such person are often not accessible persons in the immediate environment, may thus often be able to exert influence at the right moment when it is needed. Off course, there cannot be frequent contacts unless individuals are physically accessible to one another. This means that the closer the individuals are to each other, the more they are likely going to have frequent discussions. The frequent contact also results in the development of norms of behaviour, implying that outsiders are often not trusted, especially by traditional villagers. Any deviance is normally discussed extensively in the neighbourhood. Contrarily, the problem with local ideas is that they may not be as valuable as those from outside, due to similarities that people who exchanges information often have.

2.1.5 DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE ON POLITICAL PARTIES AND INTRA-PARTY POLITICS.

For democracy to be achieved and sustained, intra-party democracy is inevitable. The political system may vary from one country to another. This variation does not dilute the significant aspect of its expectation as a system or an institution that will guarantee free and fair intra or inter party elections. Intra-Party Politics can only be described as free and fair if the conduct does not deliberately disenfranchise a population of an individual. An environment should be created for the exercise of choices by the members in electing those that should represent them at any tier or arm of the government. When the party members are unmolested and unrestricted, to exercise their choices of representations in any intra or inter-party politics, the end product of such duty should reflect the choice of the people (Mahajan, 2000).

Furthermore, rather than being a political asset and a legitimate force, since independence, intra-party politics in Nigeria, have become a political liability, a source of instability and decay. The various experiences with party politics in Nigeria have brought the worst in political thuggery and brigandage, unmediated and unrestrained violence. It was characterized by Wanton destruction of lives and property (Yaqub, 2003). In fact, the so-called party politics in Nigeria has been linked by several Nigerian scholars to warfare (Ake, 2001).

Political parties are undoubtedly the most important of all political organizations in any democratic polity. They represent the most important medium by which aggregates and groups within a political system compete in their quest to control the institutions of governance in the state and ultimately determine the formulation and implementation of public policies. It is hardly inconceivable to think of democracy without functioning political parties and party system. Indeed, political parties and party system are the heart of a stable and viable democracy in view of the numerous functions they perform in the democratic process. While political parties exhibit a high level of variation in their ideological and organizational structure, it is agreed that modern political parties perform important functions in the running of democratic states. These functions however depend largely on the type of parties in the system, their history, the party system and the electoral system (Nnoli, 2003). Indeed, the goal of political parties is to gain control of the levels of government and thus realize their policies and programmes (Odofin and Omojuwa, 2007).

Though contesting and winning elections are the central role of political parties, yet they perform other functions which are also essential to the smooth functioning of a democratic system. Among other things, political parties organize and aggregate public opinion, transmit public demands to the government and vice versa, recruit political leaders, engage in oversights in the implementation of public policies, political mobilization and socialization as well as in the provision of welfare services, particularly in third world democracies (Lapalombara and Anderson, 2001; Agbaje, 1999).

Political parties also work as intermediaries between the multitude of political individuals and the policy makers in government, build influence into aggregates so that they will have greater effect on the policy makers and the policies they make. They also codify and simplify information about government, politics and policies as it moves back to the individual. It is by acting as the link between governments and the governed in today's modern democracies that political parties articulate, aggregate, protect and advance the interest of the public (Beck and Sorauf, 1992).

Political parties are the most obvious feature in a democratic system. The role of parties in modern competitive democracy is as dominant as the role of corporations in modern capitalist economies. It is indeed difficult to conceive modern democratic system without organized political parties and functioning party system. The activities of political parties permeate much of peoples' lives in democratic system (Engelmann and Mudred, 1967). Parties are not just central to elections and policy making, but under their banner, mass publics are mobilized for good or evil, revolutions are fomented, political dissidents are arrested, tortured and killed, and ideologies are turned into moral imperatives. Not only in democracies, but all conceivable political systems appear unable to function properly without the presence of one or more parties (Lapalombara and Andersons 2001).

Political parties play significant roles in all political systems; they are however more important in plural democracies, whose health often depends on the success of parties in linking the people to the political process (Magill, 1996). The nature and functions of parties vary with the nature of governance and the characters of the people, both of which it links. Parties take different forms under different regimes. While their functions and degree of importance vary from nation to nation, party to party and from time to time (Nnoli, 2003).

In modern day where the dominant form of democracy is indirect or representative, political parties are the principal mechanisms for ensuring citizens' participation and representation in public policy decision-making (Agbaje, 1999); and in fact, through which individuals share the democratic values.

Thus, a political party is an organized group of individuals who share similar political beliefs, opinions, principles, aspirations and interests with the sole aim of capturing political power and exercising it through the formation of government. In democracies, a political party is more or less permanent institution with the goal of aggregating interests, presenting candidates for elections with the purpose of controlling governments and representing such interests in government. It is thus; a major vehicle for enhancing participation in governancell (Epstein, 1980).

Political parties are saddled with the responsibility of recruiting competent individuals for political leadership through periodic elections, educating the electorate through political rallies and dissemination of information about government policies as well as serving as a vehicle for the articulation and aggregation of the interests of people. Thus, they served as the pivot upon which the entire political process revolvesl.

2.1.6 INFLUENCE OF POLITICAL OPINION LEADERS ON VOTERS BEHAVIOUR

Decades ago, Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1944) developed the two-step flow theory of communication to explain how voters make up their minds in presidential elections. According to their findings, influence about voter choice does not flow directly from the news media to the public. Instead, opinion leaders serve as mediators who disseminate information and opinions to the masses. Opinion leaders, in other words, play a significant role in public opinion formation by setting and suggesting political agendas for their social circles (Weimann & Brosius, 1994).

Previous research has shown that personal involvement with an issue is an important factor in predicting opinion leaders' participation, as is level of issue interest (Shah & Scheufele, 2006). Media hostility can also contribute to opinion leaders' active behavior, as part of a tendency to counteract perceived 'wrong' interpretations promoted by the media (Rojas, 2010). If that is indeed the case, opinion leaders on both sides of an issue will likely push their followers to more extreme views, and thus contribute to political polarization.

According to Flynn, Goldsmith and Eastman (1996), even though it is the influence of opinion leaders on others' decisions that is vital to the concept of opinion leadership, when measured by self-reports, this construct has mostly been measured using Childer's (1986) version of King and Summers' (1970) product-specific opinion leadership scale. Childer's scale continues to be a fruitful measure more than three decades after it was first delineated, with Eiamkanchanalai and Assarut (2016), and Jungnickel (2018) among numerous examples of current usage. Similar to Rogers' idea of a 'diffusion of innovations' (2003), this issue-specific scale measures the extent to which individuals spread political ideas. It is assumed that opinion leaders who are influencers are likely to communicate to others about their involvement in a particular subject (Engel et al., 1990).

In fact, there are opinion leadership scales which measure such construct in more general terms (Nisbet & Kotcher, 2009). These scales assume to a certain degree that those who acquire particular traits, such as being outgoing or confident, are more likely to exert influence on others. However, we contend that opinion leadership is domain specific (Childers, 1986; Roch, 2005), primarily because opinion leadership requires interest in and knowledge of an issue (Gatignon & Robertson, 1991). Even though an opinion leader may impact others' views when it comes to political news, for instance, he or she may still be a follower when it comes to entertainment or sports news. It follows that opinion leadership requires domain-specific interest and knowledge.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.2.1 THE TWO STEP FLOW THEORY

The Two-Step-Flow hypothesis will serve as a theoretical basis for this study. The theory was developed by Lazarsfeld, et al. in 1944. The evidence of the 1940 voting study on America's presidential election led to the formulation of the hypothesis. It highlighted the impact of personal influence in reference to those who made up their minds late and those who changed their minds during the campaign. The two categories were more likely to mention personal influence as having figured prominently in their decisions. A lot of them said they participated in the discussion of the election than listening to a campaign speech or a newspaper editorial. They, therefore, concluded that personal contacts appear to have been both more frequent and more effective than mass media. Lazarsfeld et al. say "Ideas often flow from radio and print to opinion leaders and from these to the less active sections of the population". Gutlin (1995) asserts that the thrust of this theory is that media messages reach people not so much directly as through the selective, partisan and complicating interpolation of opinion leaders.

The theory is one of the first theories of mass communication which recognized that many variables intervene to modify the effect of messages on audience response.

Katz (1957) documented that media messages first reach opinion leaders who in turn pass the message to their associates who look up to them for information. These opinion leaders, in the words of Baran and Davis (2003) also pass on their own interpretations in addition to the actual media content. It is also emphasized that the second stage in the formulation of the hypothesis was concerned with the flow of personal influence.

Lazarsfeld et al. (1944) asked if some people were more important in the transmission of influence. They discovered that opinion leaders were more interested in the election. They are found on every level of society and they share the same characteristics with the people they influence.

Other researches that stemmed out as a result of the two-step-flow include Merton's Study of Interpersonal Influence and Communication Behavior in Rovere. The Decatur Study of decision-making in marketing and the Elmira Study of the 1948 Elections. The Rovere study tried to identify who opinion leaders were while the Decatur and Elmira studies revealed that the opinion leaders themselves often confessed that their own decisions were still influenced by other.

Katz (1957), therefore, opined that it then became apparent to think about the opinion leaders of opinion leaders. This has made some scholars to talk about the multi-step flow. Katz (1957) emphasized that the 1940 study showed that personal influence affected voting decisions more than the mass media did, especially for those who changed their mind during the campaigns. The study also discovered a high degree of homogeneity of political opinion among members of the same primary groups: families, co-workers and friends.

2.2.2 DIFFUSION OF INNOVATION THEORY

Propounded by Ryan and Cross (1943), it is summarized thus:

- i. That the media as well as interpersonal contacts provide information and influence opinion and judgement.
- ii. Opinion leaders exert influence on audience behaviour via their personal contact called change agents and gatekeepers.

- iii. The information flows through networks; the nature of networks and the roles opinion leaders play in them determines the likelihood that the innovation will be adopted.
- iv. Diffusion of innovation theory predicts that media as well as interpersonal contacts provide information and influence opinion and judgement.

While passing information, opinion leaders also relay their own interpretations of the message received from the media. Thus, bringing their personal influence into the message received and message relayed to the general audience. Ifedayo (2003) says, “this is common in developing countries especially Nigeria where retired public servants who have access to the mass media get information and relay same to the villagers. It is possible for them to interpret the message and put their own influence while relaying the message”. Based on Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) and Lazarsfeld and Stanton (1944), the researchers found proof that the opinion leaders also have opinion leaders whom they rely on for information.

With reference to the Diffusion of Innovation theory, the focus is on how news ideas and discoveries are spread to members of a social system. According to Bitner (2003), „the media presents information that makes use aware of the existence of an item. From there, the person gets interested, constantly evaluates the item, takes a trial of the item and finally acquires it.

Ifedayo (2003), buttresses this point further by saying, “the paradigm holds that the media have a crucial role to play in the process of diffusion of innovation because they create awareness among a large number of people at the same time. While Katz (1996) in Ojobor (2002) states that, for a new idea or innovation to diffuse, there must be awareness stage, interest stage, evaluation stage, trial and adoption stages.

Rogers (1995), states that there would be an increased rate of diffusion if potential adopters perceive the innovation as:

- v. To have a relative advantage: the relative degree to which it is perceived to be better than what it supersedes.
- vi. To be compatible with existing values, past experiences and needs.
- vii. As not overly complex, difficult to understand and use.
- viii. As trial-able: the degree to which it can be experimented with on a limited basis.
- ix. As offering observability: visible results.

2.2.3. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Amos (2016) analyzed the Influence of Opinion Leaders on Voting Decision of Rural Voters: An Evidence from Ayetoro, Ogun- State of Nigeria. The study examined the influence of opinion leaders on the voting decisions of the rural voters with a view to determining the nature of the influence, whether positive or negative. It was discovered that a number of the opinion leaders played very negative roles during the last election, thereby eroding the credibility of elections in the community that was studied.

Ewomazino and Sam (2015) evaluated the impact of Opinion Leaders in Information Dissemination in Rural Development: The Case of Okada Town Nigeria. The study adopts two theoretical basis and that is the two-step flow and the diffusion of innovation theory. This work adopted the survey research. In conclusion to think of opinion leaders as people who are more interested and informed,

who acquire and maintain credibility and trust over time in a stable circle of relatives and acquaintances, is clearly too restrictive and unrealistic.

Tsang, S. J., & Rojas, H. (2020) studied Opinion leaders, perceived media hostility and political participation. This study relies on Colombian national survey data collected by a local professional polling firm, Deproyectos Limitada, from August 29, 2012 to September 17, 2012. Respondents were drawn from 10 cities in Colombia as part of a biennial study of communication and political attitudes. The sample was designed to represent Colombia's adult urban population, as 75 percent of Colombia's 46 million inhabitants live in urban areas (2012). A multistep, stratified, random-sample procedure was used to randomly select households based on city size and census data. The number of households was determined for a given city, and a number of city blocks were then selected randomly according to housing district and strata. Finally, individual households were randomly selected within each block, and the study used the 'adult in the household who most recently celebrated a birthday' technique to identify an individual respondent at random. Data from a national representative survey in Colombia show not only that opinion leaders perceive more media bias and hostility, but also that the degree of their perceived media hostility is capable of motivating higher levels of political talk and participation.

2.2.4 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE

In conclusion, recent developments in political communication, including the popularization of politics and the introduction of new technologies, lead inevitably to questions about the meaning and the purposes of opinion leadership in contemporary democracies. The study made use of two theoretical framework which are: Diffusion of Innovation and Two-Way Flow theory. The study has provided evidence into the role and impact of opinion leaders in information dissemination in political party and among voters.

3.1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research deigns adopted for this study is survey method. Survey method involves careful probability sampling, which provides a group of respondents whose characteristics may be taken to reflect those of the large population. Okoye (1996) opines that: "survey is a method which is geared towards the study of people, their attitudinal frame of mind, and their systems, motivational range and manifestation", where the results are used to answer the research questions and test the relevant hypothesis. However, 300 electorates in Ikorodu local government area of Lagos State were randomly selected as the population of this study.

4.1 DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

Data analysis is an explanation of factual information generated in the course of a study". Nwodu (2006). Also, Ikeagwu (1998) said that data can be analyzed to "further the overall goal of understanding social phenomena achieved through the processes of description, explanation, and prediction". During the course of the field survey, the researcher administered three hundred copies of questionnaires and was able to collect 245 (Two Hundred and Forty-Five). Below is the table presentation and descriptive analysis of the data gathered from the respondents.

4.2 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table 1: Age distribution of Respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
18-25 years	112	46%
26-35 years	87	35%
36-45 years	36	15%
46 years and above	10	4%
TOTAL	245	100

Source: Field survey 2023

Table 1 shows that 112 respondents representing 46% of the respondents were the ages of 18-25 years, 87 respondents representing 35% were in the ages of 26-35 years, 36 respondents representing 15% were in the ages of 36-45 years while the remaining 10 respondents representing 4% were 46 years and above. It is clearly noted that majority of the respondents were in the ages of 18-25 years old.

Table 2: Impact of opinion leaders in political information dissemination

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
High	213	87%
Little	10	4%
Don't know	22	8%
Total	245	100

Source: Field survey 2023.

The study shows that 87% of the respondents believed that political opinion leaders play important role in political information dissemination, 4% of the respondents said political opinion leaders play little or less role in political information dissemination while 8% of the respondents don't know if political opinion leaders play important role in political information dissemination.

Table 3: How political opinion leaders influence the voting pattern of the electorates

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Positive	120	49%
Negative	21	9%
Indifferent	104	42%

Source: Field survey 2023

The study shows that 49% of the respondents agreed that political opinion leaders have influence on voting pattern of the electorate, 9% of the respondents said political opinion leaders do not have influence on voting pattern, while 42% of the respondents felt indifferent on how political opinion leaders influenced the voting pattern of the electorates.

4.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Finding shows that opinion leaders played important role in political information dissemination to the electorates in their communities. Therefore, this study agreed with Kavanaugh et al. (2006) that opinion leaders who are active on blogs tend to have higher levels of political interest and are more likely to engage in political activities. In addition, given that opinion leaders are likely to be more concerned and more knowledgeable about an issue, they are expected to hold higher political efficacy. In other words, they are likely to be more confident in their ability to understand politics and to influence the political process and policy decisions, whether through voting, attending demonstrations, or by participating in political deliberation.

In conclusion, this study shows that the opinion leaders have a positive impact of political news dissemination among the electorates in their communities. According to the findings, in line with Weimann & Brosius, (1994), influence about voter choice does not flow directly from the news media to the public. Instead, opinion leaders serve as mediators who disseminate information and opinions to the masses. Opinion leaders, in other words, play a significant role in public opinion formation by setting and suggesting political agendas for their social circles

5.1 SUMMARY

Information dissemination and management are critical aspects of what makes any society function effectively and a lot of times, people depend on the judgment of certain members of the society to take decisions on what concerns the society or government policies, while others require explanation or approval from key members of the society to determine what would be the right action to take. It is also widely held that no credible election can take place without the informed participation of the voters. Unfortunately, some of the voters are not well-educated and, therefore, rely on information received from opinion leaders. The study examined The Impact of Opinion Leaders in Information Dissemination in a Political Party using electorates in Ikorodu local government with a view to determining the nature of the influence, whether positive or negative. The study used a survey research method. However, questionnaire was used as an instrument of data collection. The researcher administered three hundred copies of questionnaire among electorates in Ikorodu and was able to collect two hundred and forty-five successfully filled questionnaires.

5.2 CONCLUSION

Recent developments in political communication, including the popularization of politics and the introduction of new technologies, lead inevitably to questions about the meaning and the purposes of opinion leadership in contemporary democracies.

It is safe to conclude from the findings that majority of the respondents depend on radio and television than the political opinion leaders for political decisions. Majority of the respondents disagreed that some political opinion leaders are not perceived as credible. However, monetary inducement influenced their voting decision meant that poverty and illiteracy negatively influenced the voting decision of the people. These inducements came from politicians who were desperate to win at all cost because they were unpopular or because they considered the people as lacking the

capacity to make informed decisions. The influence of opinion leaders in this community is not enormous as people who are relatively educated get their political information from radio and television.

5.3 RECOMMENDATION

- i. Government should provide an efficient information delivery mechanism that would guide the voting decisions of the people. The information delivery mechanism must be one that will take special cognizance of the information needs of the rural communities.
- ii. Government and electoral bodies like INEC should evolve a communication channel that would be targeted at the conscience of the opinion leaders so that they can credibly and truthfully guide the voting decisions of the people.
- iii. Professional communicators also have a role to play. Since radio is a good medium to reach the rural dwellers, media professionals are advised to come up with politically educative enlightenment programmes that rural dwellers would find appealing. This will reduce the influence of the opinion leaders, some of who deliberately misinform the rural voters for selfish reasons.

REFERENCES

- Agbaje A (1998). *Parties of the Electoral Process in a Democracy*. In: Ayoade, A. Ayoade (ed.) *Democracy: its Meaning & Value*. Ibadan: Vantage Press.
- Ake, C. (2001), *Democracy and Development in Africa*, Ibadan. Spectrum Books Limited.
- Amos, K. (2016). *Analysis of the Influence of Opinion Leaders on Voting Decision of Rural Voters: An Evidence from Ayetoro, Ogun- State of Nigeria*. *Journal Of Humanities And Social Science*, 1 (21) PP 46-53
- Ayeni-Akeke, O. (2008), *Foundation of Political Science*, Ibadan: Ababa Press.
- Babawale T, Ashiru D (2006). "*Funding Political Parties in Nigeria*" in *Money, Politics and Corruption in Nigeria*, by IFES "Nigeria Election Support 2007" Programme, Abuja.
- Beck, P. and Sorauf, F. J. (1992), *Party Politics in America* (7th Edition). New York: Harper Collins Publisher Incorporation.
- Butler, A. (2010), *Paying for Politics: Party Funding and Political Change in South Africa and the Global South*. (Auckland and Dunkeld: Jacana Media and Konrad Adenauer Foundation).
- Childers, T. L. (1986). Assessment of the psychometric properties of an opinion leadership scale. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 23(2), 184-188. <http://doi.10.2307/3151666>
- Cosmas C. Stephen and Sheth N. Jagdish, (1980). *Identification of Opinion Leaders Across Cultures: An Assessment for Use In The Diffusion Of Innovations And Ideas Source*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol: 11, p. 66-73
- Cooper, C. R. and Schindler, P. S. (2008). *Business research methods (10th ed.)*. Boston: McGraw-Hill
- Corey, L. G. (1971). *People who claim to be opinion leaders: Identifying their characteristics by self-report*. *Journal of Marketing*, 35(4), 48-53.
- Elihu Katz (1957). *The Two-Step Flow of Communication: An Up-to-Date report on a report Hypothesis*. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 21.
- Engelmann, C. and Mudred, A. (1967), *Political Parties and Canadian Social Structure*. Ontario: Prentice Hall of Canada Ltd.
- Engel, J., Blackwell, R., & Minard, P. (1990). *Consumer behavior* (6th ed.). Chicago: The Dryden
- Epstein, L. (1980), *Political Parties in Western Democracies*. New Jersey: Transaction Books.
- Ewomazino, D. A. and Sam, O. U. (2015). *Impact of Opinion Leaders in Information Dissemination in Rural Development: The Case of Okada Town Nigeria*. *Journal of Social Science*. 2(5), pp. 45-53

- Flynn, L. R., Goldsmith, R. E., & Eastman, J. K. (1996). Opinion leaders and opinion seekers: Two new measurement scales. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 24(2), 137-147. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0092070396242004>
- Goldsmith, R. E. and Flynn, L. R. (1994). *Opinion leadership for vacation travel services advances in business studies*. 4: 17-29.
- Goldsmith, R. E. and Eastman, J. K. (1996). *Opinion leaders and opinion seekers: Two new, advances in business studies*. 4: 20-29.
- Ibituru, I. P. Inyang, E. N. & Jaquelyn, I. A. (2017). Television cartoon and its influence on children: CRUTECH Journal of communication Vol.1 No.1.
- Ikeda, K. I., & Boase, J. (2011). Multiple Discussion Networks and Their Consequence for Political Participation. *Communication Research*, 38(5), 660-683.
- Inglehart, R. (1990). *Values, ideology and cognitive mobilization in new social movements* (pp. 43-66). Taylor & Francis.
- Jungnickel, K. (2018). New methods of measuring opinion leadership: A systematic, interdisciplinary literature analysis. *International Journal of Communication*, 12, 23. Retrieved from <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/8534/2387>
- Kat.Z E. and P. Lazerfield (1955). *Personal Influence*, Glencoe Free Press.
- Kavanaugh, A., Zin, T. T., Carroll, J. M., Schmitz, J., Pérez-Quinones, M., & Isenhour, P. (2006, May). When opinion leaders blog: New forms of citizen interaction. Proceedings from the 2006 inter-national conference on digital government research (pp. 79-88). San Diego, California, USA.
- Kenski, K., & Stroud, N. J. (2006). Connections between Internet use and political efficacy, knowledge, and participation. *Journal of broadcasting & electronic media*, 50(2), 173-192.
- King, C. W., & Summers, J. O. (1970). Overlap of opinion leadership across consumer product categories. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 7(1), 43-50.
- Kumar, R. (2005) *Research Methodology A Step-by-step Guide for Beginners*, 2nd edition, Pearson Education, Australia
- Lapalombara, J. and Anderson, J. (2001), —Political Parties‖, *Encyclopedia of Government and Politics* (Volume I). (Eds.) Mary Hawkesworth and Maurice Kogan. London and New York: Routledge.
- Lazarsfeld, P. F. and Stanton, F. (1944). *Radio research 1941*. Duell, Sloan and Pearce: New York.

- Mahajan, V.D (2000), *political theory*, New Delhi, India: S. Chand and company limited.
- Magill, F.N. (1996), *International Encyclopedia of Government and Politics*, (Volume Two). London and Chicago: Fitzroy and Dearborn Publishers.
- Moveh, D. O. (2015), A study of the Integrative and Regional Tendencies of Political Parties in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, *Kaduna Journal of Political Science*, Vol.2 No.1, p.3
- Mugenda, O. M. & Mugenda, A. G., (2003). *Research methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. 2nd. Rev. ed. Nairobi: Act press.
- Nnoli, O. (2003), *Introduction to Politics* (Second Edition). Enugu: Pan- African Centre for Research on Peace and Conflict Resolution.
- Nisbet, M. C., & Kotcher, J. E. (2009). A two-step flow of influence? Opinion-leader campaigns on climate change. *Science Communication*, 30(3), 328-354. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1075547008328797>
- Nworgu, B. G. (2006). *Educational Research Basic Issues and Methodology*; Nsukka: University Trust.
- Odofin, A.P and Omojuwa, K.A; (2007), —The Challenges of Democracy in Nigeria A-Y Sule Digital (Nig.) Printers.
- Ogundiya, I.S. (2008), —On Democracy, Legitimacy, and Accountability: Lessons from Nigeria, *Ibadan Journal of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 6. No. 2
- Ohaja, E. U. (2003). *Mass Communication Research Project Writing*, Lagos; John Letterman
- Onabule, D. (2009), *So, Zik and Balewa conspired against Awolowo?* <http://www.duroonabule@gmail.com>,_retrieved on 13 September, 2020
- Osuala E.C. (1986). *Introduction to Research methodology*. Onitsha: African FEP publishers.
- Reilly, B.(2008), *Political Parties in Conflict-prone Societies: Encouraging inclusive Politics and Democratic Development*". United Nations University Policy Brief, Number 2
- Rogers, E. M. (1995). *Diffusion of innovations*. 4th ed edn: Free Press: New York. 15-16.
- Rogers, E.M & Shoemaker, F.F. (1971). *Communication of Innovation: A Cross Cultural Approach*, New York: Free Press.
- Roch, C. H. (2005). The dual roots of opinion leadership. *The Journal of Politics*, 67(1), 110-131. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2005.00310.x>
- Rojas, H. (2008). Strategy versus understanding: How orientations toward political conversation influence political engagement. *Communication Research*, 35(4), 452-480. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650208315977>

- Rojas, H. (2010). 'Corrective' actions in the public sphere: How perceptions of media and media effects shape political behaviors. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 22(3), 343-363. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edq018>
- Shadid, A and Irshad, W (2012) *Opinion Leadership and its Role in Buyer Decision Making*. "http://aocry.org/archire". Retrieved: August 15, 2020
- Shah, D. V., Cho, J., Eveland, W. P., Jr, & Kwak, N. (2005). Information and expression in a digital age: Modeling internet effects on civic participation. *Communication Research*, 32(5), 531-565. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650205279209>
- Shah, D. V., & Scheufele, D. A. (2006). Explicating opinion leadership: Nonpolitical dispositions, information consumption, and civic participation. *Political Communication*, 23(1), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009365000027002001>
- Sobowale, I. (1985). Nigeria press coverage of national issues. In Akinfeleye, et al (eds.) Nigeria mass media and national crisis. Lagos: Nigeria Press Council, F. M. Ventures Ltd.
- Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995). *Voice and equality: Civic voluntarism in American politics*. Harvard University Press.
- Weimann, G. (1994). *The influential's: People who influence people*. State University of New York Press. Weimann, G., & Brosius, H. B. (1994). Is there a two-step flow of agenda-setting? *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 6(4), 323-341. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/6.4.323>
- Wright, C. R. (1986). *Mass communication: A sociological perspective* (3rd ed.). Random House.
- Yan, J. and Glen, T.C (2014). *Word-of-Mouth and Opinion Leadership*. "dspace/bitstream/123456789/505/1" Retrieved: September 1, 2020.
- Yaqub, N. O. (2003), Inter and intra-party conflicts and the future of democracy in Nigeria, in Olasupo, B. A. (eds), *Electoral Violence in Nigeria: Issues and Perspectives*. Lagos: Frederick Ebert Stiftung.
- Yaqub N. (2002), The Military, Democratic Transitions and the 1999 Elections in Olurode L. and Anifowoshe, Remi (Eds.), *Issues in Nigeria's 1999 General Elections*. Lagos, Nigeria: John West Publications Ltd and Rebonic Publications Ltd pp: 76 - 105.