

Innovations

Accessing the Impact of Social Media in Civil Engagement among Young Adults in Nigeria: A Survey Study

Juliet Nkonyeasua Ossai¹, Christiana Nwakaegho Nwadiokwu²,
Eseoghene Umolu-Sule³, Nathan Udoinyang⁴

¹orcid.org/0009-0007-9901-0469; ⁴orcid.org/0009-0008-2457-3045

Corresponding Author: **Nathan Udoinyang**

Abstract: *This research aims to assess impacts of social media on civil engagement among young adults in Nigeria. Study employs mixed-methods research design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. National bureau of Statistics estimates entire population at 230,700,000 as at 2024 among which the population of young adults aged 18-40 according to NBS is 63,244,000. Sample size of 400 was generated using Taro Yamane formula and was distributed to young adults within age bracket of 18-40 out of which 291 distributed questionnaires were returned and validity of research instrument ascertained using Statistical Package for Social Sciences and Cronbach alpha reliability index of 0.80. 5 Likert scale were used to answer research questions with criterion mean of 3.0 and research hypotheses tested using Pearson correlation at 0.05 level. Findings show that social media increases online activism, volunteering and community service providing platform for young adults to engage in civil activities, mobilize support and raise awareness. Facebook Instagram Twitter and WhatsApp are most used social media platforms for civil engagement in Nigeria. In terms of benefits of social media usage include desire to make positive impact and interest in social and political issues, while the barriers include inadequate finance digital literacy and fear of online harassment etc. Study concludes and recommends leveraging social media platforms to promote civic engagement and implementing digital literacy programs among others etc.*

Keywords: Social Media; Civil Engagement; Young Adult; Nigeria; Twitter (X); WhatsApp.

Introduction

Advancement in technology has major impacts on information management in democratic rule. Many citizen reporters utilize social media for promotion research

work interacting with audience and reporting government affairs. Social media use by reporters brings sense of belonging to audience. It brings reporter closer to people since internet nature of communication allows individuals source information from each other rather than traditional news agencies. Information dissemination has become decentralized and news reporting deregulated. Jost and Hipolit (2006) observe social media platforms reduce influence of elites and institutions allowing wider public participation and interactivity. Advent of social media revolutionized way people communicate, interact and engage with one another (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media platforms like Facebook Twitter Instagram and WhatsApp are essential tools for information dissemination, social mobilization and civic engagement. In Nigeria social media is vital platform for young adults to engage in civic activities such as online activism volunteering and community service (Akomolafe, 2015). Civil engagement which refers to participation of citizens in democratic process including voting, protesting and community service is essential for development and sustainability of democratic societies. In Nigeria civil engagement is crucial for promoting democratic governance accountability and transparency. However, Nigeria's democratic experience has been marred by low levels of civic engagement particularly among young adults (Omotola, 2010). Social media has potential to increase civic engagement among young adults in Nigeria by providing platform for information dissemination, social mobilization and online activism. Social media platforms can facilitate creation of online communities and networks that mobilize young adults for civic engagement (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). Impact of social media on civic engagement among young adults in Nigeria is not well understood and requires further research. This study aims to investigate impact of social media on civic engagement among young adults in Nigeria. Study will examine relationship between social media use and civic engagement including online activism volunteering and community service. Study will identify types of social media platforms used by young adults for civic engagement and investigate motivations and barriers to civic engagement among young adults in Nigeria.

Theoretical Literature

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory propounded by Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979) posits individuals derive sense of belonging from group membership which influences attitudes towards in-group and out-group members. Van Zomeren et al (2008) found individuals who identified strongly with a social group were more likely to participate in collective action.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and Gratifications Theory by Elihu Katz et al (1974) states individuals use media to satisfy specific needs like social interaction and entertainment. Smock et al (2011) found individuals used social media to satisfy needs such as information seeking and self-expression.

Social Capital Theory

Robert Putnam (1993) says social networks facilitate collective action and civic engagement building trust and cooperation. SCT suggests individuals embedded in social networks are more likely to participate in civic activities like Krishna (2002) found. Social Capital Theory is essential for building trust and democratic participation in civic engagement. Collective action is facilitated by social networks and relationships according to Social Capital Theory.

Civic Voluntarism Model

Civic Voluntarism Model by Sidney Verba et al (1995) posits civic engagement is influenced by individual resources and psychological engagement and recruitment. Individuals with more resources like time and money are more likely to engage in civic activities.

Empirical Literature Review

Udoinyang and Osajie (2024) investigated impacts of social media on Nigeria economy using endsars and bad government protests as case study. Primary data was used in research. The entire Nigeria population were used for this study. Its total population was estimated at 140,003,542 according to 2006 census. National bureau of Statistics estimates it to be 221,769,883 by third quarter of 2023. The study found out that decrease work hours and productivity, disruption of economic activities, destruction of public and private infrastructure, spread of misinformation, fake news and propaganda that harm businesses and the economy, reduce job-seeking efforts thereby leading to unemployment and decrease in labour force, reduce consumer confidence and spending, weakened naira (Nigerian currency), disrupt businesses, markets, and transportation and strained government resources, spread of false information thereby damaging Nigeria's democratic process, disrupt government operations and hinder democratic processes, algorithms that create echo chambers, exacerbating divisions within Nigerian society, damaging of property and harming of citizens, intimidation and silencing of opposing voices, divisions within Nigerian society that serve as a threat to Nigeria democracy, perpetuate negative narratives about the democratic institutions of Nigeria, pose security risks for citizens and government officials, manipulation of public opinion, threats to Nigeria's national unity, discourage civic engagement, increase tensions between different groups,

undermine trust in electoral processes and eroding democratic norms and values are all the impacts of social media and protest on Nigeria economy and democracy. The study concluded that though social media is one of the modern technology enjoyed by man in all works of life but the negative impact must be carefully avoided so as not to disrupt the economic and political system of governance in a country and recommended that government should develop social media regulations and guidelines, promote digital literacy and online safety, encourage responsible social media usage, address underlying socio-economic issues driving protests and foster dialogue between government, citizens, stakeholders and democratic reforms.

Abdelaziz and Elsayed (2023) examined impact of social media on civic engagement among young adults in Egypt. Mixed-methods research design was employed with sample of 500 young adults aged 18-30. Study found social media use increases civic engagement by providing platform for information dissemination and social mobilization. Online activism is most common form of civic engagement among young adults in Egypt. Twitter and Facebook are most widely used social media platforms for civic engagement and social media use is positively correlated with civic engagement among young adults in Egypt. The study concluded that social media plays significant role in promoting civic engagement among young adults in Egypt.

Moyo and Mhlanga (2023) conducted research on civic engagement and social media use among young adults in South Africa recently. Their study utilized a survey design with a sample size of 1000 young adults aged 18-35 to investigate social media's impact. Findings from the study shows that social media use is positively correlated with civic engagement among young adults in South Africa apparently. Instagram and Facebook are widely used for civic engagement and online activism is common among young adults, social media increases civic engagement by providing a platform for information and social mobilization somehow. The study recommended for the leverage of social media platforms to promote civic engagement among young adults in South Africa.

Adegoke & Oyeboade (2022) investigated social media and civic engagement in Nigeria. A survey research design, with a sample of 1,200 young adults aged 18-35 were employed in the study. Findings from the study shows that Facebook and WhatsApp are the most widely used social media platforms for civic engagement, that social media use is positively correlated with civic engagement among young adults in Nigeria and recommended that policymakers and practitioners should leverage social media platforms to promote civic engagement among young adults.

Mrosso & Mrosso (2022) carried out a research on social media and youth civic engagement in Tanzania. With the use of survey research design, a sample of 800 young adults aged 18-30 were used for the study to find out that social media increases civic engagement by providing a platform for information dissemination and social mobilization, online activism is the most common form of civic engagement among young adults in Tanzania, Instagram and Facebook are the most widely used social media platforms for civic engagement in Tanzania. The study concluded that social media plays a significant role in promoting civic engagement among young adults in Tanzania.

Amoakohene & Amoah (2020) examine the impact of social media on youth civic engagement in Ghana. Mixed-methods research design, with a sample size of 500 young adults aged 18-30 were used in the study to find out that twitter (X) and Facebook are the most widely used social media platforms for civic engagement, social media use increases civic engagement by providing a platform for information dissemination and social mobilization among young adult in Ghana, online activism is the most common form of civic engagement among young adults in Ghana. The study recommended and concluded that social media plays a significant role in promoting civic engagement among young adults in Ghana.

Most of the study above focused on the impact of social media on civic engagement among young adults in Nigeria, but did not explore the specific mechanisms by which social media influences civic engagement, impact of social media on civic engagement among young adults in Ghana, but did not explore the differences in civic engagement between urban and rural areas, the relationship between social media use and civic engagement among young adults in South Africa but did not explore the role of social media in facilitating civic engagement among marginalized groups, the impact of social media on civic engagement among young adults in Egypt but did not explore the role of social media in facilitating civic engagement among young adults in the context of social movements. This study will investigate the specific mechanisms by which social media influences civic engagement among young adults in Nigeria, including the role of social media in facilitating information dissemination, social mobilization, and online activism. This study will also explore the differences in civic engagement between urban and rural areas in Nigeria, and investigate how social media use varies across these contexts, investigate the role of social media in facilitating civic engagement among marginalized groups in Nigeria, including women, ethnic minorities, and individuals with disabilities. This study will also investigate the role of social media in facilitating civic engagement among young adults in the context of social movements in Nigeria, including the #End SARS movement and other social justice movements.

Methodology

This paper aims to assess the impacts of social media incivil engagement among young adults in Nigeria. The study will employ a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative approach will involve a survey research design, while the qualitative approach will involve in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Primary and secondary data were used in the research. The population of this study includes the entire population of young adults aged 18-40 in the total population of Nigeria as estimated by NBS in 2024. National bureau of Statistics estimates the entire population at 230,700,000 as of 2024 among which 63,244,000 fall within the age bracket of 18-40. The population will be stratified into urban and rural areas to ensure representation from both contexts. Through the use of Taro Yamane formula, a sample size of 400 was generated and distributed to young adults within the age bracket of 18-40 of which 291 of the distributed questionnaire returned. The research instrument used in this study is a closed self-administered questionnaire titled Social Media and Civil Engagement Among Young Adults in Nigeria (S.M.C.E.A.Y.A.N). It allows the researchers to access important information for the study. Data are presented using descriptive statistics tools such as tables, and percentages. On the other hand, the research questions were analysed using 5 Likert scale with a mean and standard deviation criterion of 3.0; A total score below 3.0 indicated that the participant disagreed with the research question, while a total score above 3.0 indicated that the participant agreed with the research questions. Social Science Statistical Software (SPSS) was used and Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.80 level of significant were employed to determine the reliability of the instrument. Purposive sampling techniques were used in the study. To be clear, the sample size of 400 will be distributed equally to each of the eight (8) states selected for the study (2 states) per region in Nigeria [North (Abuja and Kano), South (Delta and Rivers), East (Anambra and Enugu) and West (Lagos and Ogun)]. Purposive sampling was chosen for use in this study because it provides a nonprobability of sample selected based on characteristics present in specific populations and across the study practices. It can also help researchers identify common misconceptions within each group.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The data was presented to suit the research objectives. Primary and secondary data were reviewed and questionnaire was distributed based on region, state, specific demographic characteristics such as age, gender, status and all other demographic variables were calculated using percentages.

Table 1. Regional, State and LGA Distributions of the Questionnaires

Region	No. of State in Region	Names of State Selected	No. of Questionnaires Distributed	No. of Questionnaires Returned
North	18	Abuja Kano	50 50	39 31
South	6	Rivers Delta	50 50	42 40
East	5	Anambra Enugu	50 50	34 37
West	7	Lagos Ogun	50 50 400	36 32 291

Source: authors compilation (2025)

Table 2. Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Socio-Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	167	57.4
Female	124	42.6
Total	291	100
Status		
Single	185	63.6
Married	106	36.4
Total	291	100
Age Range		

18-25 years	92	31.6
26-33 years	112	38.5
34-40 years	87	29.9
Total	291	100
Highest Educational Qualification		
FSLC/WAEC	54	18.6
NCE/ND	77	26.5
HND/BSC	101	34.7
MSC/PHD	59	20.2
Total	291	100
Total	291	100

Source: Authors Survey, 2025

Data in table 1 above, illustrate the details of the regional and state distribution of the population. The population was distributed equally (50) to each region which was shared equally (50) to two states that was selected from each of these region. Among the 291 respondents, majority are single accounted for 185(63.6%) of the total. The gender distribution is 124 females (42.6% of the total) and 167 males (57.4% of the total). When it comes to age, most of the respondents are over 26-33 years of age; Similarly, when asked about their educational status, the highest respondents have HND/BSC 101 (34.7%) and the lowest respondents have FSLC/WAEC.

Data Analysis

In order to determine the appropriateness of the research questions, the data of this study are presented and analysed below using standard deviation, SPSS software and Cronbach alpha correlation test of 0.80 coefficient level.

Research Question

What are the impacts of social media in civil engagement among young adults in Nigeria?

Table 3. Respondents' views on the impact of social media in civil engagement among young adults in Nigeria.

S/ N	Factors	Me an	Standa rd Deviati on	Decisi on
1	Relationships between Social Media Use and Civil Engagement Social media use increase online activism, volunteering, and community service among young adult in Nigeria.	3.6	3.4	Agree d
2	Young adults who use social media more frequently are more likely to engage in civil activities, such as signing online petitions, participating in online discussions, and attending community events.	4.2	4.1	Agree d
3	Social media provides a platform for young adults to engage in civil activities, mobilize support, and raise awareness about social and political issues. Social Media Platforms Used by Young Adults for Civil Engagement	3.4	3.3	Agree d
4	Majority of young adult in Nigeria used Facebook for online activism, volunteering, and community service.	3.8	3.4	Agree d
5	Twitter (X) are used for online activism, mobilizing support, and raising awareness about social and political issues by young adult in Nigeria.	4.4	4.0	Agree d
6	Youths in Nigeria used Instagram for online activism, volunteering, and community service, particularly through visual content.	4.1	3.7	Agree d
7	WhatsApp are used by young adult in Nigeria for mobilizing support, coordinating community events, and sharing information about social and political issues.	3.5	3.3	Agree d

	Motivations and Barriers to the use of Social Media in Civil Engagement among Young Adults in Nigeria			
8	The desire to make a positive impact in the society is one reason while young adult make use of social media.	4.0	3.6	Agreed
9	Interest in social and political issues.	3.5	3.7	Agreed
10	Sense of responsibility to contribute to the community.	4.1	3.7	Agreed
11	Opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals makes young adult to use social media.	3.3	3.2	
12	Inadequate finance to acquire device that contain social media serve as a barrier to young adult from participating in civil engagement.	4.0	3.6	Agreed
13	Limited digital literacy is a barrier to social media uses in Nigeria.	4.8	4.2	Agreed
14	Fear of online harassment.	3.0	2.8	
15	Lack of trust in institutions and government hinders young youth from civil engagement through the use of social media.	4.3	4.1	Agreed
16	Limited opportunities for civic engagement in rural areas limit youth involving themselves in using social media in civil engagement.	3.6	3.4	Agreed
				Agreed
	Aggregate Mean	3.8	3.9	Agreed

Source: Authors survey, 2025.

Discussion of Findings

Table 3, 1-16. The research question aims to discuss the impacts of social media in civil engagement among young adults in Nigeria. From table 3 above, it can be deduced that social media increased online activism, volunteering, and community service, provides a platform for young adults to engage in civil activities, mobilize support, and raise awareness about social and political issues. When it comes to the types of social media platform used by young adult for civil engage in Nigeria, the study found out that majority of young adult in Nigeria used Facebook, Twitter (X) and WhatsApp for online activism, volunteering, and community service, when it comes to motivation for the use of and barriers of social media by young adult for civil engagement, the study found out that the desire to make a positive impact in the society, interest in social and political issues, the sense of responsibility to contribute to the community, opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals makes young adult to use social media for civil engagement while inadequate finance to acquire device that contain social media, limited digital literacy, fear of online harassment, lack of trust in institutions and government, and finally, limited opportunities for civic engagement in rural areas served as a barrier to young adult from participating in civil engagement. The study is in line with some of the findings of Abdelaziz & Elsayed (2023), Moyo & Mhlanga (2023), Adegoke & Oyeboade (2022), Mrosso & Mrosso (2022) and Amoakohene & Amoah (2020) that social media increased online activism, engagement and that Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are the most social media platform used by young youth for civil engagement. But when it comes to Nigeria, not just Facebook, Twitter (X) and Instagram are used by young adult for civil engagement, WhatsApp are also used by young adult for civil engagement. The findings from the study was able to filled in the gap identify from the related empirical literature by reviewing the benefits and hindrance of the use of social media by young adult in civil engagement which is among the aim of the study.

Conclusion

This study investigates relationship between social media use and civic engagement among young adults in Nigeria. Study found significant positive relationship between social media use and civic engagement including online activism, volunteering, community service. Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram and WhatsApp are widely used social media platforms by young youth in Nigeria for civic engagement. However, study identified barriers to civic engagement including lack of access to social media, limited digital literacy and fear of online harassment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for government and policy makers:

1. Leverage social media platforms to promote civic engagement among young adults in Nigeria through creation of social media campaigns online forums social media groups.
2. Implement digital literacy programs to improve young adults' ability to use social media for civic engagement through digital literacy training programs online resources workshops.
3. Implement initiatives to increase access to social media in rural areas through community-based internet access points mobile phone-based internet access innovative solutions.
4. Implement online safety and security measures to reduce risk of online harassment cyberbullying through online safety and security guidelines reporting mechanisms support services.

Author Address:

¹Faculty of Education, Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education (Social Studies unit), University of Delta, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria

²Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education, University of Delta, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria

³Delta State College of Education Mosogar, Delta State Nigeria

⁴Department of Economics, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

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