SOCIAL MEDIA AND STUDENT POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN SELECTED TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS OF IMO STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study examined in-depth the effect of social media on the political participation of students in four tertiary institutions of Imo state Nigeria. Political participation in Nigeria has been characterized by dominance of gerontocrats and military governance before Nigeria embraced its nascent democracy in 1999. Students who are Youths have been marginalized in political engagements. Social media offers students opportunities to engage in political discussions and Campaign. But fewer or no studies have addressed student's political participation using social media in tertiary institutions of Imo state. The objectives of the study were to determine how personal attitudes towards the use of social media influenced students' political participations, the impact of subjective norms towards the use of social media for political participation by students and how behavioural control towards the use of social media influence student's political participation etc. in Imo state namely; Futo, Poly Nekede and Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri. The population of study was 81,355 which were gathered through online search and admission units of these schools, 398 respondents which comprises post-graduates and under- graduate students of the aforesaid tertiary Institution was sampled by use of systematic random sampling technique. Data were collected by the use of structured questionnaire, it was presented and analysed through descriptive statistics e.g. mean and percentage etc. and inferential statistics e.g. multiple regression analysis. The study was anchored on the theory of planned behaviour and uses and gratification theory. Findings show that information quality, personal altitude, subjective norms. Behavioural control significantly influenced political participation. The study recommends that policy makers should prioritize initiatives that promote transparency and access to reliable information thereby empowering students to make informed political decisions, mores so, educational institutions as focal of youth engagement must activate an environment that encourages open dialogue about political issues and emphasizes the relevance of civic responsibility etc.

Key words: social media, political participation, students

1. Introduction

Continuous changes in the environment have led to research, development and innovation. Thus technological advancement has gained traction and enhanced the development of digital devices and infrastructures e.g. artificial intelligence, smart phones, cyberdome and computers etc. Social media platforms such as facebook, instagram, youtube, whatsapp etc are used for communication purposes, such as advertisement of goods and services, ideas and for political purposes. This underscores Uwalaka's (2023) opinion that the relevance of social media platforms and digital devices have been effectively utilized in intelligence gathering, perception management and building counter offensives. Social media is defined as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). It is also interactive technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of content such as ideas, interest, and other forms of expressions among virtual communities and networks (Wikipedia). Political participation involves various activities aimed at influencing a political system, political process and public policy by key stakeholders (Khan *et al* 2019, Xia & Shen 2018), for instance, political meetings, volunteering, electioneering campaigns, voting, protest and lobbying etc.

Before the advent of social media in Nigeria, political spheres were dominated by old people and seasoned politicians unlike in developed economies such as the United States for America (USA) and United Kingdom (UK). Despite the fact that Nigeria's population is a youthful population as shown by 2017 National bureau for statistics. The contributions of the youths to political development cannot be over emphasized due to the fact that they are internet savvy and digital inclined in using social media. Youths are sidelined in participating in political activities, this poses great concern to the researchers, hence this study set to fill this knowledge gap.

Although Empirical studies have been done for the past decades on the effect of social media on political participation both in developed and developing economies, such as the work of (Mustapha &Onnar, 2020, Hamid *et al* 2022, Alarm and Yussuf, 2021, Anyanwu & Orji 2020, and Bellow & Kaufhold, 2023 etc). Some of these works have examined the impact which social media played on political participation from macro-perspective, why some have explored the role of social media on youths political participation with fewer or no studies on the impact which social media play on youths who domicile in selected tertiary institutions of Imo State Nigeria.

This study examined the indicators of social media such as information quality of social media, subjective norms, personal attitude, perceived behavioural control and use of social media in political participation of youths in selected tertiary institutions of Imo State such as Imo State University, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education and Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Imo State.

This study examined the following objectives; How personal attitude and use of social media influenced political participation of students, the impact of subjective norms and use of social media in

the political participation of students, how perceived behavioural control and use of social media influenced students political participation and finally how information quality of social media influenced political participation of students in the three tertiary institutions under study domiciled in Imo State such as Imo State University, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education and Federal University of Technology Owerri (FUTO) Imo State Nigeria from the objectives, research questions were drawn and hypotheses were formulated thus:

Ho₁: Personal attitude towards the use of social media do not influence students' political participation in IMSU, Alvan and FUTO.

Ho₂: Subjective norms towards the use of social media do not influence students' political participation in IMSU, Alvan and FUTO.

Ho₃: Perceived behavioural control towards the use of social media do not influence students' political participation in Alvan, IMSU and FUTO.

Ho₄: Information quality of social media does not influence students' political participation in IMSU, Alvan and FUTO.

2. Review of Related Literature

Extant relevant literatures were reviewed by the researcher, under the headlines, conceptual Review, theoretical underpinning and empirical reviews.

Conceptual Review

Information Quality: Zhuong (2012) observed that the quality of information depicts user's perception of website content that is relevant, adequate, accurate and timely (up-to-date). Social media is a forum where people shame their thoughts and transmit political information (Bode, 2016) marketing activities which are conducted by experts in political marketing/ advertising as politicians can optimize the quality and credibility of political advertisement through social media online.

Attitude: This stands for individual's negative or positive evaluation of a specific person event or object and the psychological tendency to express approval or disapproval of specific behavior (Azjen, 1980, Chenard Hung 2016).

In the context of social media marketing and youth's political participation, it involves youths disposition in using social media marketing for voting or form of political engagements.

Subjective norms and use of social media for youth political participation

Subjective norms represent the expectations of other people regarding the performance of a particular behaviour (Omotayo and Folorunsho, 2020). Subjective Norms is a perception that most people who are important to him think he should or should not perform the behaviour in question (Fishban & Ajezen, 1975). Thus subjective norms involve perceived pressure from relevant social networks such as peer group, reference group, family and friends etc. In the content of social media and youths political participation, subjective norms represent how the youths are influenced to use social media for political participation

by reference people such as families, colleagues, classmates, neighbours etc. Fishbein and Ajezen explained that intention originates from two determining feeling. The first factor is personal and it is reflects in one's attitude, while the second factor is subjective norms which reflects social influence.

Perceived Behavioural control and use of social media for political participation

The perceived behavioural control is the degree towards which an individual finds it easy to perform a behaviour (Hsu & Lin 2018.) Zhang (2018) observed that perceived behavioural control is the perception of one's ability in controlling external factors to reach a certain behaviour. He maintained that it is also the controllable degree that individuals feel when taking particular acts, which is a function of three factors, namely: capabilities, resources ad opportunities. The more capabilities, resources and opportunities individual think they own in taking particular act the less expected obstacles and stronger the perceived behavioural control individual have conversely when people lack capacity, resource, or opportunities to perform a particular basic or similar past experience may impinge perpe to implement a particular act.

In the content of social media and youth political participation behavioural control involves youths ability to use the media platforms effectively in their political engagements.

Perceived behavioural control is a function of control belief (Ajzen and Barbara, 2020). Youths may want to get actively involved in

politics but due to constraint of resources in having a good smartphone that will aid them in using social media, they may not be able to acquire it.
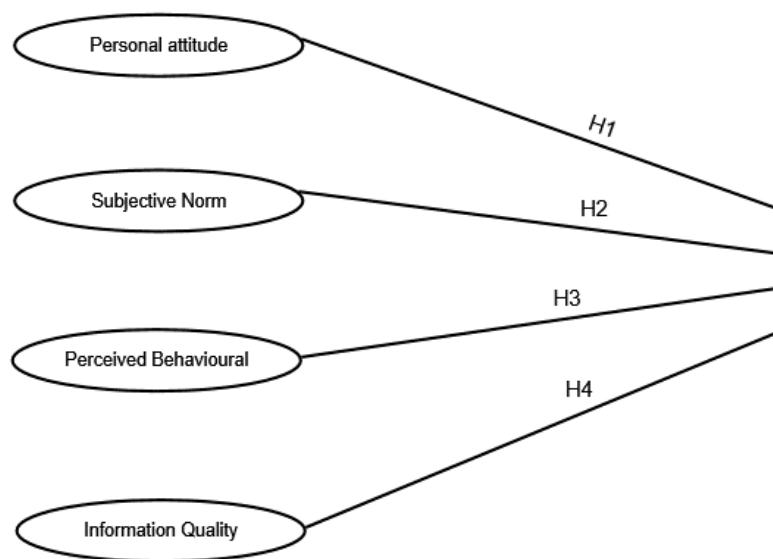
Conceptual Framework

Source: Designed by the researcher (2024)

Theoretical Review

This work is anchored on two theories, i.e. the theory of planned behaviour and uses and gratification theory. These theories are examined in details here.

Theory of planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

This theory was developed by Icek Ajzen in (1991). It evolved from the theory of reasoned action which describes and predicts human behaviour in terms of relationship between attitudes and behaviour.

The theory of planned behaviour states that the intention to act (or not to act) is shaped

by three factors which are attitudes towards the behaviour, subjective norms and perceived control in performing the behaviour (Crowell, 2020). In other words the theory advocates that attitudes, subjective norms and perceptual behavioural control act as independent variables that jointly influence behavioural intentions and further influence behaviour.

Uses and Gratification Theory

This theory focuses on why and how individuals use media to fulfil specific needs and gratifications. In the context of social media and youth political participation, this theory can help understand the motivations behind young people's engagement with political content on social media. It explores whether they seek information, social interaction, entertainment or other gratifications from political content and how these motivations influence their political participations. Uses and gratification theory has the following dimensions, information seeking, attention seeking, interaction and social influence. (mehrad&Tayar2016)

This research work was anchored on the afore mentioned theories because they were found to be relevant to the study. The theory of planned behaviour examined how intention to act or behave depends on attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. Thus, in using social media, youths are influenced by their peer groups, they will always like to do what their colleagues are doing and join the social media platforms which they found that their family members are using. Moreso these youth tend to get information and gratification from social media platforms such as Facebook, whatsapp, telegram etc. helps them in political participation.

Empirical Review

Hensen T. & Jensen J.M. (2007). Studied understanding voter decisions. A theory of planned behavioural approach. The overview purpose of this study was to test the ability of TPB in predicting vote. The objective of their study was to ascertain how attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control influence voting intention. The study adopted survey method. Findings show that attitude towards voting provides the significantly best fit in predicting voting intentions. While subjective norms and perceived behavioural control did not show any relationship with voting intentions.

Flasherty and Cruviel (2020) studied the theory planned behaviour applied to voting in the 2020 U.S. Presidential election. The objective of the study is to apply theory of planned behaviour to intentions to vote in college students at a mid-sized private university. The study used survey method. Findings show that attitude was more important predictor of voting intention. Subjective norms and perceived behavioural control were not confirmed

S. Hombing and Pramono (2021) studied the integration of social media to the theory of planned behaviour. The objectives of the study was to predict the intention of young voters to vote for state leader elections by expanding the theory of planned behaviour to the Indonesian content. Study adopted survey method. Findings show that information is consistent and have positive relationship with attitude formation, attitude relates positively with the intention to vote while subjective norms does not relate positively with intention to vote. While

perceived behaviorcontrol his positive relationship with intention to behave.

Hadziahmetovic *et al* (2021) studied development of social media in modern political marketing. The objectives of their study were to review that impact of social media on political marketing between 2010 – 2020. Also, the ascertain which parts of the world were the first to talk about social media and through which social media tools, which institutions and the authors that made the most impact. The study adopted content analysis. Findings revealed that there is a big connection between political campaign and social media. There was increasing use of social media tools in the hands of politicians during their compare to communicate with voters and citizens. Western politicians were the first to embrace the social media and start using them as a tool in their campaigns and their daily communication with their voters.

Hamid *et al* (2022) studied the role of social media in the political involvement of millennial. The objectives of the studies were to examine the relationship of information quality of social media, social media reputation, social media political marketing activities, trust and political involvement on millennial. The study used online survey for data collection and analysed their data using partial least structural equation models. Findings show that information quality of social of media has positive and significant direct influence on reputation and trust so as other variables had positive effect on political involvement of millennial.

Xie et al (2022) studied understanding the effect social media marketing activity for promoting intention to participate in martial arts. The objective of the study was to understand the impact of social media marketing activities and user experience on the intention of people to participate in martial arts. The study adopted survey method. Findings show that social media marketing activities and user experience had a positive and significant effect on marital arts attitudes, while martial arts attitudes, subjective norms and martial arts attachment had a positive and significant effect on the intention to participate.

Mathes (2022) studied social media and the engagement of young adults: Between mobilization and distraction. The objective of the study was to find out whether social media engagement distracts or mobilizes young adults. The study adopted comparative method/study of voter turret data of young adults. Findings indicate that the gap in voters' turnout between young adults and older generation has not significantly decreased dispute of skyrocketing rise of social media use on the side of young adults and the overwhelming research evidence that social media use fosters offline political participation. The study used survey method and partial least square structural equation model (PLSSEM) to analyse the data findings indicated that social media has a favourable and considerable impact on political participation. Gender was also discovered to have a strong moderating effect on the relationship between social media use and political participation.

Alodat, *et al*, (2023) studied social media platforms and political participation. The objective of their study was to investigate the moderating effect of certain factors on the impact of social media on political involvement among Jordanian youth. The study used survey method and partial least square structural equation model

(PLSSEM) to analyse the data. Findings indicated that social media has a favourable and considerable impact on political participation gender was also discovered to have a strong moderating effect on the relationship between social media use and political participation.

Zaiter, et al (2023) studied the impact of social media on political efficacy and real-life netizens political participation (Lebanon case study). The objective of their study was to explore netizens external and internal political efficacy as being exposed to political branding on social media and to show how political branding would level up the citizens political awareness and boost their participation in voting. In the parliamentary election. The study used deductive approach based on using primary statistical data and use of SPSS V23. Findings show that there was a positive correlation of social media impact on voters political participation.

3. Methodology

The study adopted quantitative research methodology which involves collecting data with questionnaire and analysing the data with statistical tools. Survey research design was adopted. This involves gathering data about the attributes of individuals or groups and frequency of occurrence. Structured questionnaire was also for gathering data for youths in the four tertiary institutions studied mostly Imo State University, Owerri, Federal polytechnic Nekede, Owerri, Federal University of Technology, Owerri and AlvanIkoku College of Education, Owerri Imo State. Systematic random sampling techniques was adopted the researchers for this study. The research

model using four factor multiple regression model is represented thus;

$$y \quad = \quad a + bx + e$$

$$y \quad = \quad a + B_1 P_a + B_2 S_{Ns} + B_3 P_{bc} + B_4 I_q + e.$$

where y is political participation ie the dependent variable P_a is personal attitude, S_{Ns} is subjective norms, P_{bc} is perceived behaviourial control and I_q is information quality. Likert scale was used to extract answers from respondents students of the institutions studied.

Table I: Population of the Study

S/N	Institutions	No. of Students		Total
		Undergraduates	Postgraduates	
1	AlvanIkoku Federal University of Education Owerri, Imo State	8355	-	8355
2	Imo State University, Owerri Imo State	16000	8000	24000
3	Federal University of Technology Owerri, Imo State	17000	8000	25000
4	Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri, Imo State	24000	-	24000
	Grand Total	65,355	16000	81,355

Source: online search and admission unit, 2024.

The above table shows population of the study which comprises of 81,355 students.

Sampling Size Determination:

Using YaroYamens Formular, the sample Size for the study is thus determined

N = Population, e is the level of significance at 5 % = (0.05)

n = $N/14N(e)^2$

n = 81, 355,

Substituting in the formula

n = 81, 355/ $1 + 81,355(0.05)^2$

n = 81, 355/ 1 + 81,355(0.0025)

n = 81, 355/ 1+203.3875 = 81,355/204.381 = 398 students

n = 398 students

Data Presentation Based on the Instrument

Below is an example of how data might be presented based on the instrument (questionnaire) provided. We used a sample size of 200 respondents and summarize the data using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

Demographic Information

Demographic Variables	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	120	60%
	Female	80	40%
Age Group	18–24 years	90	45%
	25–30 years	85	42.5%
	Above 30 years	25	12.5%
Educational Institution	Imo State University (IMSU)	90	45%
	Federal	80	40%

Demographic Variables	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
	University of Technology, Owerri		
	Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education	30	15%
Level of Study	100 Level	40	20%
	200 Level	60	30%
	300 Level	50	25%
	400 Level	30	15%
	Postgraduate	20	10%
Frequency of Social Media Use	Daily	140	70%
	Several times a week	40	20%
	Once a week	15	7.5%
	Rarely	5	2.5%

The table presents the demographic characteristics of the study's respondents, detailing information on gender, age, educational institutions, level of study, and frequency of social media use.Starting with gender, the sample consists of 200 respondents, 60% of whom are male (120 respondents), while the remaining 40% are female (80 respondents).

Regarding age groups, most respondents fall between the ages of 18 and 24, accounting for 45% (90 respondents) of the total sample. The second largest group consists of those aged between 25 and 30 years, representing 42.5% (85 respondents). The smallest age group includes individuals above 30 years, making up 12.5% (25 respondents).

In terms of educational institutions, the respondents are drawn from three schools. The largest proportion, 45% (90

respondents), is from Imo State University (IMSU). Following closely, 40% (80 respondents) are from the Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO). The remaining 15% (30 respondents) attend Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education.

For the level of study, 20% of the respondents are in their first year (100 Level), while 30% are in their second year (200 Level). A smaller group, 25%, consists of third-year students (300 Level), and 15% are in their final year (400 Level). Additionally, 10% of the respondents are pursuing postgraduate studies.

Lastly, the table highlights the respondents' frequency of social media use. The majority, 70% (140 respondents), use social media daily. Another 20% (40 respondents) access it several times a week. A smaller group of 7.5% (15 respondents) uses it once a week, while only 2.5% (5 respondents) rarely use social media. The table provides a comprehensive profile of the respondents based on key demographic variables, offering insight into their distribution across different categories.

Social Media Usage for Political Participation

Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) Summary for Likert Scale Items (1 to 5)

Variable	Item Description	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Information Quality of Social Media	Political information is reliable and trustworthy	3.90	0.85
	Social media provides up-to-date political information	4.10	0.75
	Enhances understanding of political issues	4.05	0.80
	Quality of political content influences decisions	3.85	0.88
Personal Attitude Towards Social Media	Comfortable using social media for political engagement	3.75	0.90
	Use social media to express political opinions	3.60	0.95
	Social media is an effective tool for political participation	4.00	0.70
	Enjoy discussing political issues on social media	3.70	0.85
Subjective Norms	Friends encourage social media use for political activities	3.55	0.92
	Family believes I should use social media for politics	3.65	0.88
	Feel societal pressure to participate in social media politics	3.50	0.93
Perceived Behavioural Control	Find it easy to access social media for political engagement	4.15	0.65

Variable	Item Description	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
	Have necessary skills to use social media for political purposes	4.00	0.75

The table provides a summary of social media usage for political participation based on respondents' perceptions and behaviours, using Likert scale items ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) values give insight into the average agreement level and the variation in responses, respectively, for different aspects of political participation via social media.

Information Quality of Social Media: Respondents generally find political information on social media to be reliable, as shown by a mean of 3.90 and an SD of

0.85, indicating moderate agreement and some variation in perceptions of trustworthiness. Social media is also considered a timely source for political updates, with a higher mean of 4.10 and a lower SD of 0.75, showing stronger agreement and less variation. Furthermore, respondents believe that social media enhances their understanding of political issues (M = 4.05, SD = 0.80) and that the quality of content can influence their political decisions (M = 3.85, SD = 0.88), though with slightly more variability in their responses.

Personal Attitude Towards Social media: When it comes to personal attitudes, respondents feel fairly comfortable using

social media for political engagement (M = 3.75, SD = 0.90) and expressing political opinions (M = 3.60, SD = 0.95). They also see social media as an effective tool for political participation, with a mean of 4.00 and a lower SD of 0.70, showing broad consensus. Enjoyment in discussing political issues online is moderate (M = 3.70, SD = 0.85), suggesting mixed attitudes towards political debates.

Subjective Norms: Respondents feel some encouragement from friends to engage in political activities on social media (M = 3.55, SD = 0.92) and perceive that their families believe they should participate in online politics (M = 3.65, SD = 0.88).

However, societal pressure to use social media for political participation is less pronounced, with a mean of 3.50 and an SD of 0.93, indicating moderate agreement and a wide range of opinions.

Perceived Behavioural Control: Respondents generally find it easy to access social media for political purposes (M = 4.15, SD = 0.65), reflecting strong agreement and minimal variability. Additionally, they feel confident in their skills to use social media for political engagement (M = 4.00, SD = 0.75), demonstrating a high level of perceived control over their online political behaviour.

SECTION C: Political Participation via Social Media

Variable	Item Description	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)

Variable	Item Description	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Voting and Election Participation	Use social media to stay informed about elections	4.25	0.60
	Participate in election campaigns via social media	3.85	0.80
	Social media influences my voting decision	4.10	0.72
Political Discussions and Debates	Engage in political discussions on social media	3.95	0.85
	Motivated to participate in political debates	3.90	0.83
Political Movements and Advocacy	Support political movements or causes via social media	4.05	0.78
	Participate in online political advocacy campaigns	3.80	0.85

Political Participation via Social media: In the section covering political participation, respondents heavily rely on social media to stay informed about elections, with a high mean of 4.25 and a low SD of 0.60, indicating strong agreement and little variation. Many also use social media to participate in election campaigns (M = 3.85, SD = 0.80) and report that social media influences their voting decisions (M = 4.10, SD = 0.72).For political discussions and debates, respondents moderately engage in online discussions (M = 3.95, SD = 0.85) and are motivated to participate in political debates (M = 3.90, SD = 0.83). Additionally, social media serves as a platform for supporting political movements and advocacy, with respondents indicating they engage in these activities (M = 4.05, SD = 0.78) and participate in online advocacy campaigns (M = 3.80, SD = 0.85). The data shows that respondents generally trust social media for political information, are comfortable using it for political engagement, and find it effective for staying informed about elections and participating in advocacy. However, while most respondents feel they have control over their participation, subjective norms (peer and family influences) have a moderate impact

on their political involvement via social media.

Regression Model Analysis

Results Summary:

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	t-Statistic	p-value
Intercept (β_0)	β_0 (e.g., 1.5)	SE_0	t_0	p_0
Information Quality (β_1)	0.30	0.05	6.00	1.008×10^{-9}
Personal Attitude (β_2)	0.45	0.07	6.43	3.548×10^{-7}
Subjective Norms (β_3)	0.25	0.06	4.17	4.151×10^{-9}
Perceived Behavioral Control (β_4)	0.40	0.08	5.00	3.642×10^{-7}

Hypothesis Validation Interpretation:

- Hypothesis 1: The p-value for information quality is (1.008×10^{-9}), which is less than 0.05. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a

significant positive relationship between the information quality of social media and political participation.

- Hypothesis 2: The p-value for personal attitude is 3.548×10^{-7}, which is also less than 0.05. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that personal attitudes towards social media positively affect political participation.

- Hypothesis 3: The p-value for subjective norms is 4.151×10^{-9}, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and support the idea that subjective norms positively influence political participation.

- Hypothesis 4: The p-value for perceived behavioural control is 3.642×10^{-7}, which is below 0.05. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that perceived behavioural control significantly contributes to political participation.

This finding on hypothesis one is consistent with Hamid et al. (2022), who found that information quality positively affects political involvement among millennials. The reliability and timeliness of information play a crucial role in building trust and encouraging political participation. Similarly, Hadziahmetovic et al. (2021) showed that social media's role in political marketing has grown, particularly in increasing voters' engagement by providing timely political updates. The findings from our study are logical, as individuals are more likely to participate when they trust the information available to them.

Our result on hypothesis two is aligned with Hensen & Jensen (2007), who found that attitude was the most significant predictor of voting intention within the framework of the

TPB. In their study, attitude toward political participation provided the best fit for predicting voting behaviour, which echoes our findings. Similarly, Flasherty and Cruviel (2020) found that attitude was the most critical factor in predicting voting behavior among U.S. college students. Our findings also align with S. Hombing and Pramono (2021), who showed that social media information positively influences attitudes and the intention to vote. The logical progression is that positive attitudes towards using social media make users more likely to engage in political participation.

Hensen & Jensen (2007) and Flasherty and Cruviel (2020) found that subjective norms did not significantly influence voting intention. However, our findings align more with the broader literature, such as Hadziahmetovic et al. (2021), who demonstrated that social media facilitates political engagement, especially through peer and societal influences. Mathes (2022) also highlighted that social media can mobilize young adults, indicating that societal and peer influences play a role in political participation. The differing results between our study and earlier works may reflect evolving dynamics in how social media shapes social pressure and political behaviour.

Our result of hypothesis four is consistent with Hensen & Jensen (2007), who found that perceived behavioural control is an essential component of the TPB, although it was less influential than attitude in their study. In contrast, S. Hombing and Pramono (2021) found that perceived behavioural control had a positive relationship with voting intentions, reinforcing our study's findings. Moreover, Xie et al. (2022) found that perceived ease of use of social media

marketing activities positively affected attitudes and the intention to participate in activities like martial arts, drawing a parallel to our findings in political contexts.

Conclusion

Enhancing political participation among Nigerian university students is a multifaceted endeavour that requires a comprehensive understanding of the factors at play. By addressing the identified barriers and implementing the proposed recommendations, stakeholders can foster a generation of informed, engaged, and active citizens who are equipped to navigate the complexities of the political landscape. Empowering students to participate meaningfully in political processes is not only crucial for their development but also essential for the sustained growth and vitality of Nigeria's democracy. Through collaborative efforts, we can cultivate a politically engaged youth, paving the way for a more robust and representative democratic society.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The insights gained from this study have practical implications for policymakers, educational institutions, and civil society organizations. Policymakers should prioritize initiatives that promote transparency and access to reliable information, thereby empowering students to make informed political decisions. Educational institutions, as the focal point of youth engagement, must cultivate an environment that encourages open dialogue about political issues, equips students with the necessary skills, and emphasizes the importance of civic responsibility. Long-

term vision for enhancing political participation among students extends beyond immediate interventions. It involves cultivating a culture of active citizenship where young individuals see political participation not just as a duty but as an integral part of their identity. This transformation requires a collaborative effort among various stakeholders, including educational leaders, government officials, and community organizations, to create a supportive infrastructure that nurtures civic engagement. Moreover, as technology continues to evolve, it plays a dual role in shaping political participation. While social media can amplify the voices of young people and facilitate engagement, it also poses challenges, such as the spread of misinformation. Therefore, there is an urgent need to harness technology effectively, using it as a tool for education, advocacy, and mobilization.

Future Research Directions

Finally, this study opens avenues for future research. Investigating the effects of social media literacy programs on political engagement, exploring the role of peer influence in diverse educational settings, and examining how socio-economic factors intersect with political participation can provide deeper insights. Such research will help in developing targeted strategies that resonate with the unique experiences of different student populations across Nigeria.

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