



Al-Hikmah Journal of Politics and Public Administration

ISSN (Print): 3121-8814

Volume 1, Number 3, June 2026



INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT AMONG YOUTHS, ILORIN METROPOLIS (2015-2023): AN ASSESMENT OF ILORIN WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

HUSSEIN ABDULLAHI BABAMALE

E-mail: abdullahimallawy@gmail.com

¹Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Al-Hikmah University Ilorin, Nigeria

Abstract

This study examines the influence of social media on political engagement among youths in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. The increasing use of social media platforms, especially during the 2019 and 2023 general elections, has transformed digital media into an important tool for political communication, mobilization, and civic participation. Guided by the Uses and Gratifications Theory, the study investigates how platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok influence youths' political awareness, participation in political discussions, support for political candidates, and involvement in political activities. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Data were collected from youths in Ilorin West Local Government Area using a structured questionnaire. The findings reveal that social media has significantly enhanced political awareness and engagement among youths by facilitating access to political information, encouraging participation in political discussions, and promoting support for political candidates and parties. The study also found that social media serves as a platform through which young people express their political opinions and interact with political actors. Despite these positive contributions, the study identified challenges associated with social media use in politics, including the spread of misinformation, fake news, hate speech, online harassment, and political manipulation. These challenges have the potential to negatively influence political decisions and democratic processes. The study concludes that social media remains a vital instrument for promoting youth political engagement and strengthening democratic participation in Ilorin West. It recommends increased media literacy programmes, public sensitization on responsible social media use, and the implementation of effective policies to curb misinformation and other unethical online political practices.

Keywords: Social Media, Political Engagement, Youth Participation, Political Communication, Political Awareness.

Introduction

The advent of social media has transformed the way people communicate, access information, and participates in political activities globally. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (now X), Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok have transformed political discourse, activism, and

2 | Influence of Social Media on Political Engagement among Youths, Ilorin Metropolis (2015-2023): An Assessment of Ilorin West Local Government Area

engagement, particularly among young people. In today's digital era, social media serves as a vital tool for individuals, businesses, and organizations to interact, connect, and establish networks (Carr & Hayes, 2015). As these platforms continue to evolve, their impact on various aspects of life, including political participation, has become increasingly evident (Chadwick & Stromer-Galley, 2016).

Political participation encompasses a broad range of activities, including voting, attending political rallies, engaging in discussions, and advocating for policy changes. Traditionally, political engagement was largely influenced by conventional media such as newspapers, radio, and television. However, the rise of social media has transformed political participation by providing interactive and decentralized platforms for political discourse (Loader et al., 2016). These platforms enable individuals to share political content, mobilize supporters, sign petitions, and even organize protests without relying on traditional political structures (Tufekci, 2017). Social media has effectively broken traditional barriers to political participation, fostering inclusivity and expanding opportunities for civic engagement (Boulianne, 2020).

Studies have shown that social media can enhance political participation by increasing political awareness, facilitating civic engagement, and fostering political activism (Delli Carpini, 2019; Norris, 2020). However, concerns have also been raised about the spread of misinformation, political polarization, and the potential for manipulation by political actors (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Given these mixed effects, it is essential to investigate how social media influences political participation among youths in Ilorin, a city with a vibrant youth population and increasing digital connectivity.

Nigeria has witnessed a significant increase in the use of social media for political engagement, particularly during elections. The 2015 and 2019 general elections demonstrated the power of social media in mobilizing voters, influencing political narratives, and in holding public officials accountable (Olorunnisola & Martin, 2019). Youth-led movements such as #NotTooYoungToRun and EndSARS further illustrate how social media can drive political and social change.

The EndSARS movement, which emerged in 2020 as a protest against police brutality, highlighted the role of social media in political activism. Through platforms like Twitter and Instagram, young Nigerians organized protests, raised funds, and demanded government

accountability. This movement underscored the potential of social media as a tool for grassroots political mobilization and civic engagement.

However, the Nigerian government has also responded to the growing influence of social media by implementing regulations aimed at controlling digital content. The temporary ban on Twitter in 2021 and the proposed social media bill have sparked debates about digital rights, freedom of expression, and government censorship. These developments raise important questions about the opportunities and challenges associated with social media-driven political participation in Nigeria.

Therefore, this study seeks to fill these gaps by providing an in-depth assessment of how social media has influenced political engagement among youths specifically in Ilorin West Local Government Area from 2015 to 2023. The study will contribute to existing literature by offering localized empirical evidence on the relationship between social media usage and youth political engagement within the context of Ilorin.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Social Media and Political Participation

Social Media

Social media has transformed the way people communicate, share information, and engage with one another in society. It encompasses various digital platforms that facilitate interaction, content sharing, and networking among users. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) describe social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, allowing the creation and exchange of user-generated content.” In the Nigerian context, Olayinka (2018) observes that social media has evolved into a powerful tool for engagement, enabling citizens to participate in discussions on a wide range of socio-political and economic issues. Platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp have become central spaces where individuals, particularly youths, express their opinions, organize campaigns, and mobilize for collective causes.

The functions of social media extend beyond entertainment and casual interaction to encompass information dissemination, political mobilization, and civic engagement. Adeyemi and Salau (2020) argue that social media has significantly transformed political communication by providing an alternative to traditional mass media, which is often constrained by hierarchical

4 | Influence of Social Media on Political Engagement among Youths, Ilorin Metropolis (2015-2023): An Assessment of Ilorin West Local Government Area

communication structures. Unlike radio and television, which typically permit one-way communication, social media allows for two-way interaction, enabling citizens to both consume and create content. This participatory element makes it possible for users to shape public opinion, amplify their voices, and engage directly in the processes that affect their lives. Boyd and Ellison (2015) point out that while social networking sites were originally designed to connect individuals with friends and communities, they have expanded into vital spaces for professional networking, advocacy, education, and activism. In Nigeria, Eze (2019) notes that the accessibility and immediacy of social media have made it indispensable for advocacy and mobilization, particularly among youths who remain its most active users.

The advantages of social media are evident in its ability to democratize information, enhance political participation, and foster accountability. Nwosu and Okechukwu (2021) emphasize that digital platforms in Nigeria have been instrumental in exposing corruption, demanding government transparency, and advocating for reforms. The #EndSARS movement of 2020 vividly illustrates the potential of social media to serve as a catalyst for social change, mobilizing millions of youths both online and offline while also drawing global attention and solidarity. Its viral and transnational nature ensured that local issues resonated beyond national borders, thereby amplifying marginalized voices. At the same time, however, social media is not without its disadvantages. Tandoc, Lim, and Ling (2018) highlight that the same openness that allows information to spread rapidly also makes platforms vulnerable to misinformation, propaganda, and fake news. In Nigeria, such disinformation has influenced elections and deepened social divisions, while issues like cyberbullying, online harassment, and addiction have raised concerns about mental health, productivity, and the quality of social interactions (Andreassen, 2015).

Political Participation

Political participation represents the various ways in which individuals and groups engage in political processes to influence governance, policy-making, and decision-making. It encompasses both conventional forms, such as voting, attending rallies, or joining political parties, and unconventional forms, such as protests, petitions, and civic activism. According to Okon (2017), political participation is the mechanism through which citizens exercise their rights, express preferences, and shape the policies that govern them. Recent scholars argue that political participation is essential to sustaining democracy, as it ensures that citizens remain active, engaged, and informed rather than reducing democracy to a mere formal structure (Ekman &

Amnå, 2017; Norris, 2020; Emeje & Uduak, 2023). Beyond elections, political participation functions as a tool for holding leaders accountable, legitimizing governments, and ensuring inclusivity in policy-making. Ojo and Ibrahim (2021) note that an engaged citizenry compels leaders to remain responsive to public needs, while Adebayo (2019) emphasizes that participation reduces the risk of authoritarianism by fostering a culture of accountability. Political participation fosters civic education, builds trust in institutions, and ensures that marginalized voices are represented in governance. Active civic education strategies, such as historically grounded conversations, have been shown to empower racially marginalized youth, enhancing their political engagement (Nelsen, 2023). Moreover, co-designed civic data infrastructures can improve transparency and legitimacy in decision-making processes, ensuring diverse community voices are acknowledged (Hughes et al., 2025).

Yet, political participation is often undermined by widespread apathy, especially among youths, who sometimes disengage due to disillusionment with governance or distrust in political elites (Adebayo, 2019). Low voter turnout has been a recurring challenge in Nigeria, weakening the legitimacy of elected governments and leaving power concentrated in the hands of a small elite (Adeyemi & Salau, 2020). Furthermore, participation can be distorted by vote buying, propaganda, or electoral malpractice, thereby eroding public trust in democracy (Yusuf & Akinola, 2020). In fragile political systems, contested participation can also fuel violence, particularly when elections are perceived as unfair (Ibrahim, 2019). The dangers of non-participation are equally significant, as disengaged citizens often face poor representation, weak accountability, and governance that does not reflect public interest. Conversely, high levels of participation broaden representation, strengthen governance, and promote social resilience.

Youths

The concept of “youth” is often defined differently depending on cultural, political, and institutional contexts. According to the United Nations (2018), youth refers to individuals between the ages of 15 and 24, although in many African countries, including Nigeria, the youth category is extended to people up to 35 years due to socio-economic and political factors. Youths are generally seen as a dynamic demographic group, characterized by energy, creativity, and the willingness to embrace new technologies. In the Nigerian context, youths represent not only a significant proportion of the population but also the most active participants in social and digital spaces (Ogunleye, 2018; Ojo & Ibrahim, 2021). According to Adeyemi (2020), Nigerian youths

6 | Influence of Social Media on Political Engagement among Youths, Ilorin Metropolis (2015-2023): An Assessment of Ilorin West Local Government Area

are among the most active social media users in Africa, leveraging digital platforms for self-expression, networking, and activism.

Social media and Political Participation

It is within this context that social media has become a transformative channel for political participation, especially among youths. Unlike traditional methods of engagement, which are periodic and constrained by physical presence, social media offers a continuous and interactive space for political discourse, mobilization, and activism (Adebayo & Yusuf, 2020). Platforms such as Facebook, X, Instagram, and TikTok enable citizens to debate policies, express political opinions, and hold leaders accountable beyond geographical and institutional barriers. Ogunleye (2018) observes that these platforms create alternative avenues for mobilization, allowing individuals to campaign for candidates, advocate for reforms, and engage in discussions on governance. During Nigeria's 2015 and 2019 general elections, social media played a central role in shaping campaign strategies, disseminating manifestos, and raising political awareness among youths (Yusuf & Akinola, 2020). Beyond elections, platforms continue to facilitate governance-related advocacy, with movements such as #EndSARS demonstrating the power of digital mobilization to amplify citizen voices and pressure governments for reforms (Okonkwo, 2021).

In conclusion, social media and political participation are increasingly intertwined, reshaping the way citizens interact with governance and one another. Social media provides unprecedented opportunities for youths to influence political processes, enhance accountability, and drive social change, while political participation ensures that democracy remains a living practice of civic responsibility. The intersection of both highlights the promise of a more inclusive and dynamic democracy in Nigeria, but this potential can only be realized if challenges such as misinformation and apathy are addressed through responsible use, digital literacy, and stronger democratic institutions.

Social media and Youths

Social media has become an integral part of modern communication, offering interactive platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp, where individuals can create, share, and exchange information in real time. Beyond its role in entertainment and information sharing, social media is now regarded as a central tool for civic

engagement, education, and networking, particularly among young people who constitute the largest group of active users (Olayinka, 2018; Eze, 2019).

Youth engagement with social media is both pervasive and multifaceted. Platforms serve as primary channels for news, peer interaction, education, and self-expression. According to Adebayo and Yusuf (2020), for many Nigerian youths, social media doubles as a public square—where ideas are debated, grassroots campaigns are born, and emerging leaders gain traction. It's a space that enables individuals without traditional platforms to broadcast opinions and reach diverse audiences rapidly.

This synergy between social media and youth engagement extends into education and career pathways. Youths harness YouTube for tutorials; LinkedIn, Instagram, and Facebook for networking; and TikTok to showcase creativity. This “digital native” identity—fluid, visual, networked—is a foundational shift in how young people learn, collaborate, and pursue opportunity (Adeyemi & Salau, 2020). What used to require formal institutions now often unfolds organically online.

Moreover, social media strengthens civic connection. During political campaigns, youths become content creators and reposters. During governance crises or civic movements, they form digital solidarity networks. The #EndSARS movement is a prime example: largely youth-driven, it was organized, sustained, and amplified online, transcending street protests to gain international visibility (Okonkwo, 2021; Nwosu & Okechukwu, 2021). This digital activism offers a glimpse into the evolving nature of democratic engagement—one shaped not just by formal structures but by online networks, creative protest symbols, and decentralized leadership. Still, this landscape has important caveats. Adetunji (2019) cautions that social media's open nature can facilitate misinformation, polarization, and hate speech, as unsupervised algorithms amplify sensational content. Cyber bullying and trolling pose psychological risks for youths, while algorithm-driven echo chambers fragment civic dialogue. The addictive design of these platforms can degrade attention spans and reduce face-to-face socialization (Andreassen, 2015). These issues underscore that while social media empowers youth, it also calls for critical literacy, regulation, and ethical use.

In essence, social media for today's youths is not just about connecting—it's about belonging, learning, creating, and leading. It reshapes how they access information, define identity, develop careers, mobilize peers, and interact with power structures. In Nigeria, this means youth political

8 | Influence of Social Media on Political Engagement among Youths, Ilorin Metropolis (2015-2023): An Assessment of Ilorin West Local Government Area

participation increasingly manifests online—from hashtag activism to citizen journalism to digital protest—rewiring the dynamics of political engagement for a new era.

Youth and Political Participation

Youths stand at the intersection of dynamic change and democratic possibility. Political participation—a concept that stretches beyond casting ballots to include protest, advocacy, civic volunteering, petitioning, and digital engagement—is the core mechanism through which citizens exert influence over governance and policy. Newer definitions emphasize that political participation includes all voluntary actions aimed at influencing decisions and power structures, a principle especially relevant for youth (Ekman & Amnå, 2017; Onyewuchi & Ofuani, 2023). In Nigeria, the story of youth participation is both one of untapped potential and emergent activism. Political participation among youth matters for several compelling reasons. First, it ensures democratic renewal. As democracies mature, youth participation plays a vital role in revitalizing political systems by introducing fresh perspectives, priorities, and energy. Second, youth engagement can enhance accountability in states where democratic norms have become weakened.

On the ground, youth show their power, especially in urban centers like Ilorin. The #EndSARS protests of 2020 demonstrated how digitally mobilized youth can drive nationwide political dialogue and demand reform (Okonkwo, 2021; Teen Vogue, 2023). Many young Nigerians, disillusioned with traditional political structures, turned out to vote in the 2023 presidential elections—notably providing strong support for Peter Obi’s reformist campaign—in part due to their prior online organizing (AP News, 2023; Wired, 2023). Youth-driven advocacy and civic culture, therefore, are not abstract theory but evidenced social change.

Inclusion of youths in political processes cannot be an afterthought. In Ilorin and beyond, youth demographic strength, technological savvy, and growing political consciousness provide both the opening and the obligation for democratic deepening. But lasting transformation demands urgent institutional reform, improved civic literacy, effective mentorship, and equitable access to political participation. Only then can youthful energy become structured, sustained, and constructive—not episodic rebellion, but democratic evolution.

Social media, Youth and Political Participation

The intersection of social media, youths, and political participation has emerged as a critical area of academic inquiry in the 21st century. Social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram,

WhatsApp, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter), have reshaped the political landscape by enabling more interactive, decentralized, and participatory modes of communication. They provide users with opportunities to disseminate information, deliberate on political issues, and mobilize collective action (Loader et al., 2016; Omede & Ojo, 2022). This transformation is particularly significant for young people, who constitute the largest demographic of social media users worldwide and in Nigeria. Given the increasing importance of youths in shaping political trajectories, understanding how social media facilitates or constrains their political participation is central to contemporary political discourse.

Social media platforms offer unique affordances that distinguish them from traditional media in the realm of political engagement. Unlike television or radios, which are largely one-way communication tools, social media encourages interactivity, real-time feedback, and participatory culture (Effiong & Udoh, 2021). For youths, these platforms are not merely spaces for entertainment or socialization; they serve as avenues for expressing opinions, organizing campaigns, and influencing governance. In the Nigerian context, where conventional political institutions have historically marginalized youths, social media provides an alternative public sphere where their voices are amplified (Adedokun & Olorunnisola, 2020).

Youth political participation through social media manifests in various forms, ranging from conventional practices like supporting candidates and political parties to unconventional activism such as online protests and hashtag movements. Campaigns such as #NotTooYoungToRun, which successfully led to constitutional amendments lowering the age requirements for elective offices in Nigeria, demonstrate how digital platforms can translate youth mobilization into tangible political outcomes (Olawale & Ajayi, 2019). Similarly, the #EndSARS protests of 2020 revealed the power of networked youth activism in mobilizing mass support, generating international attention, and pressuring the Nigerian government to respond to calls for police reform (Okoro & Nwafor, 2021). These instances show that social media is not merely an adjunct to offline politics but has become a central driver of youth-led political engagement.

The benefits of social media for youth political engagement are multidimensional. First, social media lowers the barriers to political participation by offering accessible and affordable tools for information dissemination and mobilization (Bosch, 2017). In contrast to the cost and organizational demands of traditional campaigning, digital platforms enable youths to share political content, engage in debates, and coordinate collective action with minimal financial

10 | Influence of Social Media on Political Engagement among Youths, Ilorin Metropolis (2015-2023): An Assessment of Ilorin West Local Government Area

resources. Second, social media amplifies the political voice of young people by bypassing traditional gatekeepers such as mainstream media and political elites (Mhlana, 2020). Youths can directly address large audiences, challenge dominant narratives, and hold leaders accountable in ways that were previously unimaginable. Third, the viral nature of online communication allows for rapid mobilization, making social media an effective tool for organizing protests, rallies, and awareness campaigns (Emeje & Uduak, 2023). Fourth, social media contributes to civic education by exposing young people to political debates, fact-checking initiatives, and awareness campaigns run by civil society organizations and non-governmental actors (Adebayo & Yusuf, 2020).

Despite these benefits, youth political participation via social media is fraught with challenges. One major issue is the digital divide, which reflects inequalities in internet access, digital literacy, and affordability. In Nigeria, where rural areas still experience poor connectivity and economic disparities persist, youth participation on social media tends to favour urban and relatively privileged demographics (Alozie, 2021). Furthermore, the problem of misinformation and disinformation has become pervasive on digital platforms, with fake news, propaganda, and hate speech undermining the quality of political discourse (Adetunji, 2019; Effiong & Udoh, 2021). For youths with limited media literacy, distinguishing between credible and false information can be challenging, thereby exposing them to manipulation by political actors.

Empirical evidence underscores the growing significance of social media in shaping youth political participation in Nigeria. During the 2015 and 2019 general elections, social media was widely used for voter education, campaign advertising, and real-time election monitoring (Ogunleye, 2018). By 2023, the influence of digital platforms on youth political participation had become even more pronounced, with candidates increasingly leveraging social media for targeted campaigns, while youth-led initiatives focused on combating voter apathy and electoral malpractice (Eze, 2023). Beyond elections, social media has facilitated continuous political engagement, as seen in ongoing debates about governance, public accountability, and national policy issues.

Locally, within Ilorin West Local Government Area, social media has become a major avenue through which youths discuss political matters, mobilize support for candidates, and express opinions on governance issues. During the 2023 elections, many youths in areas such as Adewole, Oja-Oba, Taiwo Road, and Alanamu actively used WhatsApp groups, Facebook pages,

TikTok videos, and X spaces to share political updates and campaign messages. Political movements connected to the Labour Party, APC, and PDP gained significant online attention among youths in Ilorin West, especially during the presidential campaigns.

The global context further reinforces the transformative role of social media in youth political participation. In Kenya, youths have utilized platforms like Twitter to mobilize against electoral violence and advocated for electoral reforms (Bosire, 2020). In Tunisia and Egypt, youth were pivotal in the Arab Spring, with social media acting as a powerful catalyst for mobilization and political transformation (Tufekci, 2017; Breuer et al., 2015). In the United States, the 2020 presidential election illustrated how social media platforms served as battlegrounds for youth mobilization around issues like racial justice, climate change, and economic inequality (Gibson, 2021). These comparative insights highlight that the experiences of Nigerian youths are part of a broader global trend of digitally mediated political participation.

Nevertheless, the relationship between social media, youths, and political participation is not uniformly positive. While social media provides opportunities for inclusion, it also reproduces inequalities, exposes youths to risks of surveillance and manipulation, and can exacerbate polarization in political discourse. The challenge for democratic societies, therefore, lies in harnessing the participatory potential of social media while mitigating its negative consequences. For Nigerian youths, particularly those in Ilorin and other parts of the country, the future of political participation will increasingly depend on their ability to navigate the opportunities and pitfalls of digital engagement.

In conclusion, the interplay between social media, youths, and political participation reveals both the transformative and problematic dimensions of digital politics. Social media has empowered young people by creating spaces for political expression, mobilization, and activism that were historically inaccessible to them. At the same time, structural barriers, state repression, and the spread of misinformation complicate the effectiveness of youth political engagement in digital spaces. The Nigerian experience, exemplified by the #NotTooYoungToRun movement, #EndSARS protests, and the 2023 elections, demonstrates both the promise and the perils of social media as a tool for youth political participation. Moving forward, ensuring inclusive access, enhancing digital literacy, and protecting freedom of expression are critical to strengthening the role of youths in democratic processes through social media.

Theoretical Framework

Uses and Gratification Theory

Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Micheal Gurevich propounded The Uses and Gratification Theory in 1974. The theory posits that people use the media to their advantage more often than the media use them. It is concerned with what people do with the mass media, instead of what the mass media do to the people (Katz, Blumler & Gurevich, 1974). The individual audience makes the decision to view the media; therefore, they place the value on it by their individual decision to view it. It states that people are not just passive receivers of the messages, but active influences of the message effects. This is because they selectively choose, attend to, perceive and retain the media messages on the basis of their needs, beliefs, et cetera.

According to Katz, Blumler and Gurevich (1974), the theory assumes that individuals use media to fulfil specific needs, such as information, entertainment, personal identity, and social interaction. Therefore, they determine what is going to be absorbed and do not allow the media to influence them otherwise. Secondly, it posits that audiences are active and goal-oriented, meaning they consciously attempt to achieve their goals through the media source. Thirdly, it recognizes that media content competes with other sources of gratification, such as interpersonal communication or leisure activities. This competition drives individuals to select the most efficient and rewarding medium for their purposes. Lastly, it assumes that individuals have a certain level of awareness and understanding of their needs, enabling them to identify which media content best meets those needs.

Mobilization Theory

Mobilization Theory was propounded by Karl Deutsch in 1961. The theory posits that social communication and information flow play a central role in modern political development, as communication technologies and networks serve as instruments for mobilizing citizens toward political engagement (Deutsch, 1961). It emphasizes that communication is not merely an avenue for transmitting information, but a fundamental mechanism for organizing societies, fostering civic awareness, and integrating individuals into political life. The theory highlights that political participation often increases when communication channels—whether traditional mass media or digital platforms—facilitate access to information, political messages, and opportunities for engagement.

According to Deutsch (1961), political mobilization occurs when individuals and groups are drawn into political activities, either directly through persuasion and campaigns, or indirectly through access to information that makes them aware of their rights, roles, and responsibilities within a democratic system. The theory assumes that communication is essential for stimulating political interest and action, especially among populations who might otherwise remain passive. In the digital era, the role of social media aligns strongly with this framework, as platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp serve as mobilizing tools for creating awareness, shaping political preferences, and rallying citizens for collective action.

Methodology

This study adopts a description of the methods used in the collection of data. The descriptive survey design focusing on the Ilorin Metropolis, comprising Ilorin West, Ilorin East, and Ilorin South Local Government Areas. This region is significant due to its high concentration of educational institutions and a large, tech-savvy youth population. Data typically involves quantitative measures of frequency of social media use against indicators of political performance, such as registration for Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) and attendance at political rallies.

Research Design, Research Method, Population of the Study, Sample Size and Sampling Procedure, Research Instrument, Validity of the Instrument, Reliability of the Instrument, Method of Administration of Research Instrument, Method of Data Analysis and Ethical Consideration.

Data Presentation and Discussion of Findings

Field Performance of the Research Instrument

This section focuses on the data analysis and results gathered in the course of this research. Each table represents the frequency of data collected for each question in the questionnaire used in the collection of data using simple frequency counts and percentage to answer the research questions. The researcher distributed two hundred and ninety-six (298) copies of questionnaires to residents of Ilorin West Local Government Area in which all was filled, but 283 questionnaire was found usable for analysis, giving a final percentage rate of 94.97%, approximately 95%.

14 | Influence of Social Media on Political Engagement among Youths, Ilorin Metropolis (2015-2023): An Assesment of Ilorin West Local Government Area

Table 1: Field Performance of the Research Instrument

No. of Questionnaires Administered	Percentage Administered	No. of Questionnaires Retrieved	Percentage Retrieved	Percentage Not retrieved
298	95.97%	283	95%	5.03%

Table 2: Presentation of Population Demographics

Distribution of Respondents Based on Gender, Age, Educational Level, Political Ward of Residence, Marital Status, and Religion

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	76	25.68
Female	207	69.93
Total	283	95
Age in years		
15–19	82	27.70
20–24	135	45.61
25–29	55	18.58
30–34	11	3.72
Total	283	95
Educational Level		
Secondary	6	2.03
OND/NCE	25	8.45
Undergraduate	172	58.11
Graduate	57	19.26
Postgraduate	23	7.77
Total	283	95
Political Ward		
Adewole	177	59.80
Wara	106	35.81

Total	283	95
Marital Status		
Single	204	68.92
Married	69	23.31
Divorced	10	3.38
Total	283	95
Religion		
Islam	218	73.65
Christianity	56	18.92
Others	9	3.04
Total	283	95

Source: Field survey, 2026

Table 2 presents the demographic distribution of respondents across gender, age, educational level, political ward, marital status, and religion. The results indicate that females constituted the majority of respondents with 69.93%, while males accounted for 25.68%. This shows that female youths were more represented in the study, suggesting a higher level of participation among young women in Ilorin West Local Government. In terms of age, respondents within the 20–24 years category recorded the highest representation with 45.61%, followed by those aged 15–19 years with 27.70%. The 25–29 years group accounted for 18.58%, while the lowest representation was found among those aged 30–34 years with 3.72%. This distribution suggests that most respondents were within the youthful age range of 15–24 years, aligning with the focus of the study on young people.

With regard to educational background, the data revealed that the majority of respondents were undergraduates, accounting for 58.11%. This was followed by graduates at 19.26% and postgraduates at 7.77%, while OND/NCE holders constituted 8.45% and those with only secondary education represented 2.03%. This indicates that the sample comprised largely educated youths, with a significant proportion currently pursuing tertiary education. The distribution across political wards shows that Adewole recorded the highest number of respondents with 59.80%, while Wara accounted for 35.81%, implying that a greater proportion of the participants were drawn from the Adewole area of Ilorin West.

16 | Influence of Social Media on Political Engagement among Youths, Ilorin Metropolis (2015-2023): An Assesment of Ilorin West Local Government Area

The marital status of respondents further reflects their youthful profile, as the majority were single, making up 68.92% of the total sample. Married respondents accounted for 23.31%, while 3.38% were divorced. This is consistent with the age distribution, as most young people are more likely to be single. Finally, the religious affiliation of respondents revealed that 73.65% were Muslims, 18.92% Christians, while 3.04% belonged to other religions. This reflects the predominant religious composition of the study area, where Islam is widely practiced.

Presentation of Data based on Research Questions

Research question 1: What are the most frequently used social media platforms for political participation among youths in Ilorin metropolis?

Table 3: Response on Social Media Platforms Frequently Used for Political Participation

S/N	STATEMENT	Frequently Used (%)	Occasionally Used (%)	Rarely Used (%)	Never Used (%)
11	Facebook	92 (31.08)	43 (14.53)	79 (26.69)	69 (23.31)
12	Twitter (X)	68 (22.97)	86 (29.05)	65 (21.96)	64 (21.62)
13	Instagram	103 (34.80)	106 (35.81)	54 (18.24)	20 (6.76)
14	WhatsApp	178 (60.14)	58 (19.59)	24 (8.11)	13 (4.39)
15	TikTok	173 (58.45)	59 (19.93)	36 (12.16)	15 (5.07)
16	YouTube	112 (37.84)	84 (28.38)	46 (15.54)	41 (13.85)

Source: Field survey, 2026

The data in the table shows the frequency and percentage responses on the social media platforms frequently used for political participation among youths in Ilorin Metropolis. The result reveals that WhatsApp recorded the highest frequency of usage with 60.1%, closely followed by TikTok with 58.5%, indicating these platforms are the most preferred for political engagement. YouTube and Instagram also had significant usage with 37.8% and 34.8% respectively, although Instagram recorded the highest occasional use at 35.8%. Facebook showed moderate frequent use (31.1%), while Twitter (X) had the lowest frequent usage at 23%. This implies that visual and messaging platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are more influential in youth political participation compared to text-based platforms like Facebook and Twitter (X).

Research question 2: What is the influence of social media on political engagement among youths in Ilorin metropolis?

Table 4: Response on How Social Media Influences Political Engagement Among Youths

S/N	STATEMENT	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Remarks
6	Social media influences my interest in political matters	69 (23.31%)	87 (29.72%)	86 (29.25%)	41 (13.85%)	Agreed
7	Social media increases my participation in political conversations	64 (21.62%)	141 (47.97%)	62 (21.10%)	16 (5.39%)	Agreed
8	Social media influences my support for a political candidate or party	90 (30.62%)	125 (42.73%)	47 (16.04%)	21 (7.09%)	Agreed
9	Social media makes me attend offline political events or activities	64 (21.62%)	87 (29.72%)	96 (32.44%)	36 (12.14%)	Agreed
10	Social media helps me understand political issues and processes	84 (28.60%)	85 (28.98%)	71 (24.38%)	43 (14.76%)	Agreed

Source: Field survey, 2026

The data in the above table reveals how social media influences political engagement among youths. The table shows that, "Social media influence on respondent support for a political candidate or party", received the highest combined agreement responses 73.35%. This is closely followed by "Social media increasing respondents participation in political conversations", by 69.59%, which shows that of respondents agree that social media increases their participation in political conversations followed by the respondent agreeing that "Social media helps them to understand political issues and processes" which recorded 57.58%. "Social media influence on respondent interest in political matters" also recorded 53.03%, showing a moderate but notable impact on political interest. On the other hand, "Social media makes the respondent attend

18 | Influence of Social Media on Political Engagement among Youths, Ilorin Metropolis (2015-2023): An Assesment of Ilorin West Local Government Area

offline political events or activities” received the lowest agreement at 51.34%, suggesting that while online platforms encourage awareness and support, they do not as strongly translate into offline political participation. This general trend reflects that social media plays a significant role in shaping youth political engagement in Ilorin West Local Government Area.

Research question 3: What is the relationship between social media usage and political participation among youths in Ilorin metropolis?

Table 5: Response on the Relationship between Social Media Usage and Political Participation

S/N	STATEMENT	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Remarks
1	Social media help me to participate in political discussions online	165 (55.74%)	84 (28.38%)	25 (8.45%)	9 (3.04%)	Agreed
2	I follow political pages and politicians on social media	72 (24.32%)	132 (44.59%)	57 (19.26%)	22 (7.43%)	Agreed
3	I get politically influenced by what I see on social media	73 (24.66%)	75 (25.34%)	98 (32.77%)	37 (12.50%)	Agreed
4	I have joined political campaigns and movements through social media	65 (21.96%)	88 (29.73%)	92 (31.08%)	38 (12.84%)	Agreed
5	Social media make me more politically aware and conscious of what is happening in Ilorin Metropolis	137 (46.28%)	96 (32.43%)	30 (10.14%)	20 (6.76%)	Agreed

Source: Field survey, 2026

The data this table shows the frequency and percentage of the responses on the relationship between social media usage and political participation among Ilorin residents. The table shows that "Social media helps respondents to participate in political discussions online" recorded the

highest percentage with 55.74% strongly agreeing, followed by the respondent that agree that "Social media makes them more politically aware and conscious of what is happening" with 46.28%, and the respondent that "follow political pages and politicians on social media" with 44.59%. However, respondent that "get politically influenced by what they see on social media" show a relatively lower level of strong agreement (24.66%), with a sizeable proportion (32.77%) disagreeing, indicating that while social media exposes youths to political content, its persuasive impact may vary. Likewise, respondent that "have joined political campaigns and movements through social media" recorded one of the lowest strong agreement levels (21.96%), showing that while youths engage with political discussions online, translating this into active online mobilization remains limited. This implies that social media significantly enhances political awareness, discussions, and access to political information among youths in Ilorin West, but its effectiveness in driving active political mobilization and campaign participation is comparatively low.

Discussion of Finding

This section discusses the research findings in relation to the three research questions, drawing on relevant theories and empirical studies to explain how social media influences youth political participation in Ilorin West Local Government Area.

With respect to research question one, which examined the most frequently used social media platforms for political participation, the findings indicate that WhatsApp (60.1%) and TikTok (58.5%) are the most frequently used platforms, followed by YouTube (37.8%) and Instagram (34.8%). Facebook recorded moderate frequent usage (31.1%), while Twitter (X) was the least used with 23%. These results imply that visual and messaging-based platforms are more effective in fostering political engagement among youths compared to text-based ones. This aligns with Ajibola (2021), who emphasized WhatsApp's dominance in political mobilization due to its immediacy and network structure. The rising role of TikTok reflects more recent trends where short-form content appeals to young people as a political communication tool (Aideloje et al., 2024). These findings demonstrate that youths in Ilorin West prefer platforms that offer interactivity, immediacy, and visual appeal, which enhance the spread of political messages.

With respect to research question two, which investigated the influence of social media on political engagement, the data revealed strong effects on political conversations and support for candidates. Specifically, 73.35% agreed that social media influences their support for a political

20 | Influence of Social Media on Political Engagement among Youths, Ilorin Metropolis (2015-2023): An Assessment of Ilorin West Local Government Area

party or candidate, while 69.59% noted that it increases their participation in political conversations. Similarly, 57.58% agreed that social media helps them understand political issues and processes. However, only 51.34% agreed that social media makes them attend offline political events, showing that while social media effectively builds political interest and dialogue, it is less effective in translating this into offline participation. This reflects the logic of Mobilization Theory, which emphasizes the capacity of media to activate and engage citizens politically, but also highlights challenges in sustaining offline involvement. Empirical evidence supports this pattern: Boulianne (2020) found that social media strengthens civic dialogue, while Barati (2023) warns that online engagement often remains superficial, with limited conversion into structured offline action.

With respect to research question three, which explored the relationship between social media usage and political participation, the findings showed that 55.7% strongly agreed that social media helps them participate in political discussions online, and 46.3% strongly agreed that it makes them politically aware and conscious of happenings in Ilorin. Additionally, 44.6% follow political pages and politicians. However, fewer respondents indicated deeper levels of involvement: only 24.7% strongly agreed that they are politically influenced by what they see on social media, and just 21.9% strongly agreed that they have joined political campaigns through social media. These findings align with the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which posits that individuals use media actively to meet needs such as information and interaction (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974). They also mirror studies in Nigeria showing that while social media raises awareness and discussion, fewer youths progress to direct activism or organized campaigns (Fasola & Oyadeyi, 2021). Thus, while social media strengthens awareness and dialogue, its effectiveness in sustaining mobilization remains limited.

Collectively, these findings highlight that social media has become a central tool for political engagement among youths in Ilorin West. Platforms such as WhatsApp and TikTok are central to youth mobilization, while social media broadly enhances political awareness, conversations, and candidate support. However, the data also confirms the limitations of digital activism: while youths are active in online dialogue, translating this energy into offline political action remains a challenge. These findings underscore the relevance of both Uses and Gratifications Theory—explaining why youths seek political content online—and Mobilization Theory—which

illustrates social media's power to activate political interest but also its challenges in sustaining long-term offline participation.

Summary of the Study

The study examines the perceived influence of social media on political anticipation among youths in Ilorin metropolis. The specific purpose is to determine the most frequently used social media platforms for political participation among youths in Ilorin West Local Government Area, to investigate the influence of social media on political engagement among youths in Ilorin West Local Government Area, and to examine the relationship between social media usage and political participation among youths in Ilorin West Local Government Area.

The study answer the following research questions: what is the most frequently used social media platforms for political participation among youths in Ilorin West Local Government Area?, what is the influence of social media on political engagement among youths in Ilorin West Local Government Area?, and What is the relationship between social media usage and political participation among youths in Ilorin West Local Government Area?. Uses and Gratification Theory and Mobilization Theory was adopted for this study, the research design for the study is descriptive research design, the research method adopted for the study is quantitative survey method, the population of the study comprises residents of Ilorin West Local Government Area, and the study adopted multi-stage sampling technique. The study found that there is a strong relationship between social media usage and political participation among youths in Ilorin Metropolis. The data showed that youths actively engage in political discussions, follow political content, and use social media to express political opinions. It was also found that social media has a positive influence on political engagement by increasing political awareness, shaping political opinions, and encouraging participation in political campaigns and voting activities. The study identified WhatsApp, TikTok, and YouTube as the most frequently used social media platforms for political participation. These platforms were found to be instrumental in mobilizing youths, disseminating political information, and fostering civic engagement.

Conclusion

This study concludes that social media plays a significant role in promoting political participation among youths in Ilorin West Local Government Area. The study concludes that the youths in Ilorin use social media platforms such as WhatsApp, TikTok, and YouTube frequently for political discourse and engagement. Youths utilize these social media platforms to access

22 | Influence of Social Media on Political Engagement among Youths, Ilorin Metropolis (2015-2023): An Assesment of Ilorin West Local Government Area

political information, engage in discussions, and express their political views. Social media usage was also found to influence political behaviour by increasing awareness, stimulating political interest, and enhancing participation in electoral processes. Therefore, social media serves as an important tool for political mobilization and youth engagement in democratic governance.

Recommendations

Political stakeholders and candidates should leverage social media platforms to communicate their manifestos and engage young voters in meaningful dialogue, especially during electoral campaigns.

Government agencies and policymakers should support initiatives that promote the ethical use of social media for civic engagement and ensure that online political content is monitored to reduce misinformation and political manipulation.

The Independent National Electoral Commission should improve its digital communication strategies in order to increase youth political participation and public trust in the electoral process.

Government institutions, schools, community leaders, and non-governmental organizations should introduce continuous civic education programmes targeted at youths.

Relevant government agencies and regulatory bodies should establish effective measures for monitoring and regulating harmful political content on social media without violating freedom of expression.

References

- Adebayo, T., & Yusuf, A. (2020). Social media and civic engagement among Nigerian youths. *International Journal of Communication Studies*, 8(1), 66–81.
- Adedokun, A., & Olorunnisola, A. (2020). Digital public sphere and youth political participation in Nigeria. *African Journalism Studies*, 41(3), 77–92.
- Adeyanju, D., & Haruna, M. (2021). Political skepticism and youth participation in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Social Sciences*, 14(1), 102–118.
- Adeyemi, K. (2020). Youths and digital activism in Nigeria. *Journal of Media and Society*, 5(2), 34–49.
- Adeyemi, T., & Salau, M. (2020). Social media as alternative political communication in Nigeria. *Journal of African Media Research*, 11(4), 56–70.

- Aideloje, P., Ahmed, S., & Bello, K. (2024). TikTok and youth political communication in Nigeria. *Journal of Digital Politics*, 6(1), 12–28.
- Alozie, C. (2021). Digital divide and youth participation in Nigerian politics. *African Journal of Information Studies*, 15(2), 120–135.
- Andreassen, C. S. (2015). Online social network site addiction: A comprehensive review. *Current Addiction Reports*, 2(2), 175–184
- Barati, M. (2023). Online political engagement and offline participation among youths. *International Journal of Political Communication*, 18(1), 55–71.
- Bosch, T. (2017). Twitter activism and youth political participation in Africa. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(2), 221–232.
- Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2015). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1), 210–230.
- Breuer, A., Landman, T., & Farquhar, D. (2015). Social media and protest mobilization: Evidence from the Tunisian revolution. *Democratization*, 22(4), 764–792.
- Carr, C. T., & Hayes, R. A. (2015). Social media: Defining, developing, and divining. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 23(1), 46–65
- Chadwick, A., & Stromer-Galley, J. (2016). Digital media, power, and democracy in parties and election campaigns. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 21(3), 283–293.
- Delli Carpini, M. X. (2019). Political engagement and the changing information environment. *Political Communication*, 36(4), 575–593.
- Effiong, J., & Udoh, P. (2021). Social media interactivity and political discourse among youths. *Nigerian Journal of Communication*, 18(2), 99–114.
- Ekman, J., & Amnå, E. (2017). Political participation and civic engagement: Towards a new typology. *Human Affairs*, 22(3), 283–300
- Emeje, O., & Uduak, I. (2023). Civic engagement and democratic accountability among Nigerian youths. *African Governance Review*, 9(1), 41–59.
- Eze, C. (2019). Social media accessibility and advocacy among Nigerian youths. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 37(4), 490–506.
- Eze, C. (2023). Digital campaigns and youth voting behavior in Nigeria’s 2023 elections. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 22(2), 144–160.

24 | Influence of Social Media on Political Engagement among Youths, Ilorin Metropolis (2015-2023): An Assesment of Ilorin West Local Government Area

- Gibson, R. (2021). Social media campaigning and youth mobilization in the United States. *Political Studies Review*, 19(4), 564–579.
- Guardian. (2021, June 10). Nigeria’s Twitter ban and implications for democracy. *The Guardian Nigeria*.
- Ibrahim, J. (2019). Electoral violence and political participation in fragile democracies. *African Conflict Studies Review*, 8(2), 54–68.
- Ibrahim, M. (2023). Digital inequality and youth participation in Nigeria. *Journal of African Development Studies*, 17(1), 77–93.
- Iwilade, A. (2022). Digital repression and youth activism in Nigeria. *African Affairs*, 121(482), 112–130.
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59–68.
- Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1974). Utilization of mass communication by the individual. In J. G. Blumler & E. Katz (Eds.), *The uses of mass communications: Current perspectives on gratifications research* (pp. 19–32). Sage.
- Loader, B. D., Vromen, A., & Xenos, M. A. (2016). Performing for the young networked citizen? *New Media & Society*, 16(2), 143–150.
- Margetts, H., John, P., Hale, S., & Yasseri, T. (2016). *Political turbulence: How social media shape collective action*. Princeton University Press.
- Mhlanga, D. (2020). Social media and youth political participation in Africa. *African Journal of Governance*, 5(2), 25–39.
- Morozov, E. (2015). *The net delusion: The dark side of internet freedom*. PublicAffairs.
- Nwosu, I., & Okechukwu, J. (2021). Social media and accountability movements in Nigeria. *Journal of African Democracy*, 10(1), 89–104.
- Ogunsanya, T. (2025). Technology-enabled civic participation among Nigerian youths. *Digital Society Review*, 2(1), 60–74.
- Ogunleye, A. (2018). Social media and electoral participation in Nigeria. *Journal of African Elections*, 17(1), 85–101.
- Ojo, A. (2023). Civic mentorship and youth political empowerment. *Journal of Political Education*, 6(2), 55–70.

- Okon, E. (2017). Political participation and democratic governance in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Political Science*, 9(1), 23–38.
- Okonkwo, C. (2021). #EndSARS movement and digital activism in Nigeria. *African Media Review*, 29(2), 144–159.
- Okoro, N., & Nwafor, K. (2021). Youth activism and online protests in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Movement Studies*, 14(3), 200–215.
- Olayinka, S. (2018). Social media and public engagement in Nigeria. *Journal of New Media Studies*, 5(3), 67–82.
- Olorunnisola, A., & Martin, B. (2019). Social media, elections, and democracy in Nigeria. *International Communication Gazette*, 81(6–8), 626–645.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048518822618>
- Onyewuchi, C., & Ofuani, H. (2023). Redefining youth political participation in Africa. *Journal of African Civic Studies*, 4(2), 90–108.
- Tufekci, Z. (2017). *Twitter and tear gas: The power and fragility of networked protest*. Yale University Press.
- Yiaga Africa. (2025). Youth political inclusion and democratic participation in Nigeria. [Yiaga Africa](#)
- Yusuf, H., & Akinola, M. (2020). Elections, social media, and youth participation in Nigeria. *Journal of African Political Communication*, 11(2), 118–133.